

## **A Sociological Study of Religious Tourism in Khorasan Province**

**Hamid Reza Karimi Dermani\***

Dept. of Sociology, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

**Fariba Mir Eskandari**

Dept. of Sociology, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

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### **Abstract**

*Religious tourism, also commonly referred to as faith tourism, is a type of tourism, where people travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure purposes. The world's largest form of mass religious tourism takes place at the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca. Religious tourism is one of the earliest forms of tourism. The idea of the religious pilgrimage begins almost with the dawn of humanity. Almost since the dawn of history human beings have traveled to holy sites. Religious tourism has increasingly won in popularity in recent years. Khorasan province, due to some places of pilgrimage especially the holy shrine of Imam Reza has always been a suitable place for attracting tourists and pilgrims. Therefore, the main purpose in this paper is a sociological study of religious tourism in Khorasan Province. It is mentioned in the theoretical framework that the present research for its analysis of data, is based on Butler's theory. This article is based on a qualitative method and the tools of data collection are informal interviews and participant observations which comprise the methods of data collection.*

**Keywords:** Khorasan Province, Religious tourism, Sociology.

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\*Corresponding author: karimidermani@gmail.com

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### **Introduction and Statement of Problem**

Religious tourism is one of the earliest forms of tourism. The idea of the religious pilgrimage begins almost with the dawn of humanity. Almost since the dawn of history human beings have traveled to holy sites. By the Biblical period important religious centers had become not only a part of the cultural landscape, but they also had become major players in local marketing and important parts of the economy of those cities that hosted religious centers. In the western world, cities such as Jerusalem, Rome and Mecca continue to attract millions of visitors on a yearly basis. Religious-oriented travel then has occurred since the first pilgrimages. In recent years, however, religious travel and tourism has developed into a much larger and more segmented market. Today's religious travel includes multiple sub-niches that range from the luxury pilgrimage market to backpacking and from religious institutional travel to volunteer-oriented experiences meant to help those in some form of need.

Khorasan province in Iran, due to a varied landscape consisting of alteration of mountain ranges, deep valleys, unique folklore and some places of pilgrimage has always been suitable place for Attract tourists. Therefore, the task is to identify, to compile and to collect different Iranian culture to introduce tourists.

### **Significance and Justification of Study:**

The development of tourism in all areas, both nationally and regionally and internationally regarded planners, government and private companies have been. Many countries are increasingly a fact recognized that to improve its economy must take the initiative to spend and trying to find new ways to cope. Community awareness of tourism as a source of foreign exchange incomes in the economy is looking very good and significant puts a country's economy, which has a very broad concept of tourism in various aspects of economic, social, cultural, and found as the main source of income, employment, private sector growth and development of infrastructure as Although

in different areas, different circumstances, but tourism has always been an important factor for economic development is considered For countries such as Iran, In fact, a kind of economic rents as oil revenues have been no direct induction effects in terms of raising productivity in the economy is. The tourism industry continues to face some economic activities, mutual dependence and its prosperity, in terms of increased revenues in the host country's economy has a great impact. The development of tourism, the economy out of a single-mode stability and economic stability to the revenues from tourism for the country will attract.

According to the World Tourism Organization, an estimated 300 to 330 million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites every year.

According to the U.S. Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, Americans traveling overseas for "religious or pilgrimage" purposes has increased from 491,000 travelers in 2002 to 633,000 travelers in 2005 (30% increase).

In Khorasan province in Iran, some places of pilgrimage have always been suitable place for Attract tourists. Therefore, the task is to identify and introduce them to tourists.

**Aims and Objectives of the Study:**

The objectives of this paper are limited to the followings:

- To study and definition of Religious Tourism and its characteristics ;
- To study and to definition different Types of Tourism;
- To understand and analyze the relation between Sociology, culture and Religious tourism;
- To introduce Tourist Attractions of Khorasan Province;
- To understand and analyze of positive and negative aspect of tourism.

**Methodological Considerations:**

This article is based on quality method and tools of data collection are Informal interviews and participant observations comprise the methods of data collection. The qualitative data has been collected with the help of:

- i. Informal, In-depth and open ended Interviews with the help of an interview guide.
- ii. Participant, Empirical observations Structuralism theory.
- iii. documental

**Research hypothesis:**

Considering that this research is descriptive so there's no need for a hypothesis.

**Theoretical Framework:**

It is mentioned in the theoretical framework the present research for its analysis of data, is based on the Butler theory. This theory shows the evolution of the tourism system at one point, in his opinion this evolution has started from the discovery stage and it is progressing all the time, but if necessary actions for preventing its negative effects don't happen really soon, it will lead to the destruction of this system, the evolutionary cycle levels are:

Discovery, Partnership, Development, Consolidation, Inflationary stagnation and Falling.

**Discovery Level:** At first the number of tourists is limited and they only organize their travel plans individually and usually in this level the social and cultural effect of tourism is not much to be seen.

**Partnership Level:** The number of tourists increases and people will benefit from the positive economic effects of this increase but the social and cultural effects will appear gradually.

**Development Level:** In this level foreign investors come to the region. And the look and space of the region changes and a lot of changes appear and the relationship between the residents and tourists decreases.

**Consolidation Level:** The annual income from each tourist decreases.

**Inflationary Stagnation and Falling Level:** In this level the region's status declines and if there is no revitalization or an appropriate plan and management, there will be many economic and cultural-social problems in that region.

**Definition of tourism:**

**Tourism and Tourist:** In the early of nineteenth century, the conditions of the time caused the aristocrats to travel around the world to achieve experiences and get familiar to the other culture. The word tourism has been used for this type of trip since that time (Heidri, 2011: 9). In the Webster's Dictionary, tourism refers to someone who travels in order to enjoy entertainment times and cultural affairs (kazemi, 2007: 31). From the point of Peters, "people who travel to the foreign country in a period of 24 hours or more to be called "Tourist"(14:1999).

Tourism also means that: Tourism is a multidimensional concept that is related to the various factors which is a set of interaction between

governments, guest and host. The factors of tourism are: tourism, governments, people, tourist agencies, hotels, the economic structure, transportation and communication networks and tourism attractions, historical and cultural aspects and Culture heritage (Zahedi, 2011: 17). Tourism is travel for recreational, leisure, or business purposes, usually of a limited duration. Tourism is commonly associated with trans-national travel, but may also refer to travel to another location within the same country. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes".

Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. Tourism can be domestic or international, and international tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country's balance of payments.

**Types of Tourism:**

Tourism can be classified into the following types:

- Inbound International tourism: Non-residents traveling in the given country.
- Outbound International tourism: Residents traveling in another country.
- Domestic tourism: Residents of the given country traveling only within this country.

Most popular categories of tourism:

The Tourism industry has developed through the years and presently is one of the most diversified, customized and specialized industries. We would like to introduce some of the most popular types of tourism worldwide where tourists are categorized by the purpose of their visit.

**Leisure Tourism:**

Leisure time can be defined as "*free time*", not doing any work. It is that time to do things that you normally have no time for in your daily life. Leisure tourism includes a holiday with the following:

- Leisure activities
  - Relaxation: Sleep, relax, reading, walk on the beach, taking a scenic drive
  - Sport activities: swimming, surfing, running
  - Visit places of interest and local attractions
  - Visiting friends and relatives

○ Shopping for goods that will be used by the tourist.

**Business Tourism:**

Business tourism or business travel is a more limited and focused subset of regular tourism. During business tourism (traveling), individuals are still working and being paid, but they are doing so away from both their workplace and home.

Some definitions of tourism tend to exclude business travel (Lennon, 2003). However, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines tourists as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes".

Primary business tourism activities include meetings, and attending conferences and exhibitions (Garrod, 2012).

Despite the term business in business tourism, when individuals from government or non-profit organizations engage in similar activities, this is still categorized as business tourism.

**Cultural Tourism:**

Cultural tourism is the subset of tourism concerned with a country or region's culture, specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, the history of those people, their art, architecture, religion(s), and other elements that helped shape their way of life. Cultural tourism includes tourism in urban areas, particularly historic or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and theatres. It can also include tourism in rural areas showcasing the traditions of indigenous cultural communities (i.e. festivals, rituals), and their values and lifestyle. It is generally agreed that cultural tourists spend substantially more than standard tourists do. This form of tourism is also becoming generally more popular throughout the world, and a recent OECD report has highlighted the role that cultural tourism can play in regional development in different world regions (OECD, 2009).

**Adventure Tourism:**

Adventure tourism is an outdoor activity that generally takes place in an unusual, remote or a wilderness area. This adventurous activity can take place in the sea, in rivers, in the air, in mountains and is associated with low or high levels of physical activity. There are many types of products and services that fall within the Adventure Tourism

category such as: bungee jumping, mountaineering expeditions, rafting, rock climbing, diving, wind surfing and many more.

**Wellness Tourism:**

Wellness tourism is one of the fastest growing forms of international and domestic tourism. This form of tourism involves people who travel to a different place to pursue activities that maintain or enhance their personal health and wellness, and who are seeking unique, authentic or location-based experiences. Wellness tourism include massages, body treatments, facial treatments, exercise facilities & programs, weight loss programs, nutrition programs, pre- and post-operative Spa treatments and mind/body programs.

**Eco Tourism:**

Ecotourism, also known as ecological tourism, is responsible travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strives to be low impact and (often) small scale. It helps educate the traveler; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights. *Take only memories and leave only footprints* are a very common slogan in protected areas (Soifer, 2008).

**Sports Tourism:**

Sports tourism refers to international travel either for viewing or participating in a sporting event. Examples include international sporting events such as the Olympics, world cup (soccer, rugby, and cricket).

There are several classifications on sport tourism. Gammon and Robinson suggested that the sports tourism are defined as *Hard Sports Tourism* and *Soft Sports Tourism*, while Gibson suggested that there are three types of sports tourism included *Sports Event Tourism*, *Celebrity and Nostalgia Sport Tourism* and *Active Sport Tourism*( Heather , 1998)..

**Wildlife Tourism:**

Wildlife tourism is the observation of wild (non-domestic) animals in their natural environment or in captivity. It includes activities such as photography, viewing and feeding of animals. This form of tourism offer tourists customized tour packages and safaris and is closely associated with eco-tourism and sustainable-tourism.

**Medical Tourism:**

Medical tourism or health tourism is the travel of people to another country for the purpose of obtaining medical treatment in that country. Traditionally, people would travel from less developed countries to major medical centers in highly developed countries for medical treatment that was unavailable in their own communities, The recent trend is for people to travel from developed countries to third world countries for medical treatments because of cost consideration, though the traditional pattern still continues. Another reason for travel for medical treatment is because some treatments may not be legal in the home country, such as some fertility procedures.

Some people travel to obtain medical surgeries or other treatments. Some people go abroad for dental tourism or fertility tourism (McFedries, 2006). People with rare genetic disorders may travel to another country where treatment of these conditions is better understood. However, virtually every type of health care, including psychiatry, alternative treatments, convalescent care and even burial services are available.

**Rural Tourism:**

Tourism growth potential can be harnessed as a strategy for Rural Development. The development of a strong platform around the concept of Rural Tourism is definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 74% of the population resides in its 7 million villages. Across the world the trends of industrialization and development have had an urban centric approach.

**Religious tourism:**

Religious tourism, also commonly referred to as faith tourism (Gannon:2017), is a type of tourism, where people travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure (fellowship) purposes. The world's largest form of mass religious tourism takes place at the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. North American religious tourists comprise an estimated \$10 billion of the industry(Washington Post.com).

Modern religious tourists are more able to visit holy cities and holy sites around the world. The most famous holy cities are Mecca, Medina, Karbala, Fátima and the Vatican City. The most famous holy sites are the Great Mosque of Mecca, the Sanctuary of Our Lady of

Fátima in Cova da Iria, the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Religious tourism has existed since antiquity. A study in 2011 found that 2.5 million people visited Karbala on the day of Arbaeen in 2013 to understand and appreciate their religion through a tangible experience, to feel secure about their religious beliefs, and to connect personally to the holy city (*Sebastian :2011*).

### **The Sociology of Tourism**

Tourism is progressively becoming a norm in varying societies. In different communities, tourism is viewed as a routine activity as many individuals as well as families have made it a tradition to get away from their place of residence or dwelling once in a while to a destination either for pleasure or business purposes. Therefore, Sociology in tourism is an important discipline to be considered when shedding light on the tourism sector and how it affects different societies around the globe.

Sociology is a term which is emanated from the Latin word 'socius' meaning a companion and the Greek word 'logos' meaning a the 'study of 'thus Sociology literally means the study of the process of companionship (Holden, 2005 as cited Mcleish, 1993). Auguste Comte was penned as the first individual who sort to pursuit the comprehension of the society from the philosophical point of view to a scientific ground. It is recorded that Auguste Comte's interests lied with concern of corroborating a steady knowledge of the behaviors of humans that could go as far to contribute to the improvement of social welfare (Holden, 2005 as cited Giddens, 2011). Sociology plays a major role in tourism; "*The sociology of tourism is an emergent specialty concerned with the study of touristic motivations, roles, relationships, and institutions and of their impact on tourists and on the societies who receive them*"(Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 10 (1984), pp. 373-392). The sociology of tourism, studies the rapport that the tourism industry has with the society and also how they communicate with each other.

Sociology in tourism enables us to know the attitudes and behaviors of tourists in order to improve their lives or to attain quality of live. When we are appreciative of the values of different cultures,

different people and different countries, we tend to treat them better and perhaps not underestimate or look down on them. Sociology in tourism also empowers the tourism industry to research on solutions that can curb societal problems and bring a lasting way of living to the society through tourism and this is done by critically analyzing the impacts that the tourism industry brings to the society and using active mechanisms to solve these problems.

**Location of the study:**

**Khorasan Province:** Khorasan was a province in north eastern Iran, but historically referred to a much larger area east and north-east of the Persian Empire. The name *Khorasan* is Persian and means "where the sun arrives from." The name was given to the eastern province of Persia during the Sassanid Empire. Khorasan was the largest province of Iran until it was divided into three provinces in September 2004.

**Razavi Khorasan Province:** Is a province located in northeastern Iran. Mashhad is the center and capital of the province. Other cities are Quchan, Dargaz, Chenaran, Sarakhs, Fariman, Torbat-e Heydarieh, Torbat-e Jam, Taybad, Khaf, Roshtkhar, Kashmar, Bardaskan, Nishapur, Sabzevar, Gonabad, Kalat. The counties of Razavi Khorasan Province are Khalilabad County, Mahvelat County, Chenaran County, Dargaz County, Kalat County, Quchan County, Mashhad County, Sarakhs County, Nishapur County, Firuzeh County, Khoshab County, Jowayin County, Joghatai County, Davarzan County, Sabzevar County, Bardaskan County, Bajestan County, Kashmar County, Gonabad County, Khvaf County, Roshtkhar County, Taybad County, Bakharz County, Zaveh County, Fariman County, Torbat-e Jam County, Torbat-e Heydarieh County & Torqabeh and Shandiz County. Razavi Khorasan is one of the three provinces that were created after the division of Khorasan Province in 2004. In 2014 it was placed in Region 5 with Mashhad as the location of the region's secretariat. The Greater Khorasan has witnessed the rise and fall of many dynasties and governments in its territory throughout history ( Wikipedia).

**Mashhad city:** Mashhad, also spelled Mashad or Meshed' is the second most populous city in Iran and capital of Razavi Khorasan Province. It is located in the northeast of the country, near the borders with Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. It has a population of 2,782,976

inhabitants (2011 census), which includes the areas of Mashhad Taman and Torqabeh. It was a major oasis along the ancient Silk Road connecting with Merv to the East.

The city is named after Imam Reza, the eighth Shia Imam. The Imam was buried in a village in Khorasan, which afterwards gained the name Mashhad, meaning the place of martyrdom. Every year, millions of pilgrims visit the Imam Reza shrine. The Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid is also buried within the shrine.

Mashhad has been governed by different ethnic groups over the course of its history. Arab, Turkic, Mongolian, and Afghan tribes have greatly influenced the language, ethnicity and culture of the city. The city enjoyed relative prosperity in the Mongol period.

Mashhad is also known colloquially as the city of Ferdowsi, after the Iranian poet who composed the *Shahnameh*. The city is the hometown of some of the most significant Iranian literary figures and artists, such as the poet Mehdi Akhavan-Sales, and Mohammad-Reza Shajarian, the traditional Iranian singer and composer. Ferdowsi and Akhavan Sales are both buried in Tus, an ancient city that is considered to be the main origin of the current city of Mashhad (Khorasan newspaper. 9 Aban :2016).

The analysis looked at the different aspects of cultural heritage, namely the historic, religious, and social ones. Religion was identified as having the biggest impact and influence in the country (Council on Foreign Relations, 2008). Several cities were studied in order to recognize those that incorporated religion into their cultural heritage. These cities include Mashhad, Tabriz, Isfahan, Tehran, amongst others. Mashhad was classified as an important location for the Muslim religion.

It is the religious 'capital' of Iran and after Mecca, the most important pilgrimage place in the Muslim world (Persia). The city offers religious and cultural points of interest that attract regional as well as international travelers (Iran Travelling Center.com, n.d.).

### **Tourist Attractions in Khorasan**

**Imam Reza Shrine Complex:** The Imam Reza Shrine Complex, known as the *Haram-e Razavi*, dominates the city center

and needs several visits to properly appreciate the scope of its magnificence.



Picture No1: Imam Reza Shrine Complex

With seven massive courtyards, and a total area of nearly 600,000 square meters, by some measures it is the largest mosque in the world. The millions of pilgrims who flock to the shrine all year round from all over the world endow this part of the city with a decidedly multicultural atmosphere, and there is a tangible sense of the spiritual as visitors demonstratively mourn the 8th Imam's martyrdom. Intricate blue tile work and Arabic calligraphy are virtually omnipresent across the numerous iwans and minarets, and an impressive golden dome stands centrally above the shrine itself. Non-Muslims are not permitted into the inner sanctuary, and (confusingly) only camera phones are permitted.

**Shrine Complex Museums:** The numerous museums contained within the shrine complex house a curious mixture of exhibits, ranging from stamp collections commemorating the storming of the US embassy, to medals won by Shia athletes. The carpet section has some stunning (as well as bizarre) pieces, but the most fascinating item is the previous tomb encasement (known as 'zarih') which was replaced in 2001. If you are keen to know more about the history of the shrine, seek out the 'Foreign Pilgrims Assistance Office' where friendly employees will provide you with some free literature on the topic. Beware the guards with feather-dusters who will brush you if you're not dressed modestly enough.

**Kuh-E Sangi Park:** Kuh-e Sangi is Mashhad's best park, and a great spot for afternoon or early evening picnicking. A small stream runs through its center, which you can cross by climbing the rock formations or hopping across stepping-stones. Ice cream and other

treats are readily available. The park is filled with Iranian families most evenings, and boasts excellent views of the city from its highest point. If you're lucky, you may stumble across groups of old Iranian men singing national songs at the weekend.

**Mashhad Bazaar:** Mashhad is the saffron-center of the world, and you won't get a better deal anywhere where else than in the bazaars around FakalehAb square. The spice, which is gram-for-gram more expensive than gold, makes for an excellent souvenir or present. Mashhadi carpets are also particularly revered, so be prepared to haggle your way to a good price. Pilgrimage memorabilia lines the streets too, having your portrait superimposed in front of the Imam's shrine is a especially quirky crowd favorite.

**Boq'eh-Ye Khajeh Rabi:** The Boq'eh-ye Khajeh Rabi is an ornate mausoleum for one of the apostles of the Prophet Mohammad, located in northeast Mashhad, just off Khajerab Street. Completed in 1612, and touched up in the Qajar era, the tomb features familiar Iranian blue tile work, delicate floral motifs, and a pleasingly symmetrical central dome. It is surrounded by a large cemetery, where wealthy Iranians can still purchase a burial plot.



Picture No 2: Tomb of Khajeh Rabi

**Tomb of Ferdowsi, Tus:** About 40 kilometers outside of Mashhad is the small town of Tus, which is synonymous with the burial site of Iran's national poet, Ferdowsi. The author of the epic poem, the *Shahnameh* (the Persian Book of Kings), Ferdowsi died in 1020 A.D, and his remains have rested in Tus ever since. The mausoleum's current form, a massive stone structure that imitates Achaemenid architecture, was developed in the 1960s, and is the centrepiece of a surrounding park.



Picture No3: Tomb of Ferdowsi

**Tomb of Omar Khayyam, Neishapur:** The quatrains of the 12th-century astronomer-poet Omar Khayyam are perhaps Khorasan's most famous export around the globe. Popularised by Edward Fitzgerald's 19th-century translation, Khayyam is beloved for his pithy musings on life, death, and love. The present-day mausoleum is another unique modernist structure, built in 1963. Located in Neishapur, just over an hour outside of Mashhad, the town also houses the tomb of Attar, a Persian Sufi poet, for those wanting to tick off every box on the poetry tour.

**Kang Village:** Rural Khorasan has many off-the-beaten track delights to discover, often hard to access by public transport, but worth the effort of hiring a private taxi. The quaint village of Kang, about an hour's drive from Mashhad, is one particularly charming example. Filled with mud-brick houses, stacked along the foothills of the mountains, here is a wonderful opportunity to explore one of the few communities that still practice such an authentically traditional way of life.

**Radkan Tower:** For enthusiasts of esoteric ancient architecture, it may be worth the trip to the village of Radkan to contemplate the function of a 13th century tower located nearby. On the summit of a hill to the west of the village, the cylindrical, cone-topped tower was probably a site for taking astronomical measurements. Visiting Radkan is also an opportunity to witness some breath-taking, unspoilt landscapes, and old mud ruins.

**Bazehur Fire Temple:** In the small village of Robat Sefid, around 70 kilometers southwest of Mashhad, lie the ruins of the ancient Bazehur Fire Temple. Probably built in the Sassanian era, this Zoroastrian religious site is well preserved but relatively unknown, so it may take a little perseverance to make it there. The modest, stone-brick remains contrast starkly to the splendour of the Islamic architecture throughout

the rest of the region, a must-see for anyone interested in Iran's ancient religions. (<https://theculturetrip.com>).

**Positive and Negative tourism effects:**

Tourism can bring many economic and social benefits, but mass tourism is also associated with negative effects. Tourism can only be sustainable if it is carefully managed so that potential negative effects on the host community and the environment are not permitted to outweigh the financial benefits.

**Economic effects**

Positive effects: Tourism creates jobs, both through direct employment within the tourism industry and indirectly in sectors such as retail and transportation. When these people spend their wages on goods and services, it leads to what is known as the "multiplier effect," creating more jobs. The tourism industry also provides opportunities for small-scale business enterprises, which is especially important in native communities, and generates extra tax revenues, such as airport and hotel taxes, which can be used for schools, housing and hospitals.

Negative effects: Successful tourism relies on establishing a basic infrastructure, such as roads, visitor centers and hotels. The cost of this usually falls on the government, so it has to come out of tax revenues. Jobs created by tourism are often seasonal and poorly paid, yet tourism can push up local property prices and the cost of goods and services. Money generated by tourism does not always benefit the local community, as some of it leaks out to huge international companies, such as hotel chains. Destinations dependent on tourism can be adversely affected by events such as terrorism, natural disasters and economic recession.

**Environmental effects**

Positive effects: Tourism, particularly nature and ecotourism, helps promote conservation of wildlife and natural resources such as rain forests, as these are now regarded as tourism assets. It also helps generate funding for maintaining animal preserves and marine parks through entrance charges and guide fees. By creating alternative sources of employment, tourism reduces problems such as over-fishing and deforestation in developing nations.

Negative effects: Tourism poses a threat to a region's natural and cultural resources, such as water supply, beaches, coral reefs and heritage sites, through overuse. It also causes increased pollution through traffic emissions, littering, increased sewage production and noise.

### **Socio-cultural Impact**

Positive Socio-cultural Impact: The native people will learn the modern culture. They will learn to come out of their traditional values and beliefs. They will adopt different practices of modern society. Since the income from tourism is much higher than what rural people can earn from agriculture and other allied services.

- Education and health of the native community will improve
- Provide higher standard of living for the native people
- Cultural understanding through fairs and festivals
- Exchange of cultural beneficial for both
- Foreign tourist will bring cultural change faster
- Demand for education will increase
- Reduce migration of native people to urban areas

Negative Socio-cultural Impact: Poorly planned tourism can affect the natives. It can disrupt the native culture; it may affect the traditional and cultural practices, agriculture and other allied activities.

- Can create disharmony in development
- Modernization can affect their traditional values and cultural practices
- Traditional products will be replaced by modern products
- Traditional houses are replaced by modern buildings
- Overcrowding in schools
- Can increase the rate of crime
- Native people may shift from traditional business to tourism activities
- Native people try to copy tourist can affect their daily life
- Decline in participation in rural traditional and cultural practices follows.

### **Conclusion**

As stated, religion tourism is a type of tourism, where people travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure purposes. Religious Tourism will be an important role in the existence of the Iranian growth and development, because it offers several

advantages ,Religious tourism can be a way for Iranian areas community development; Religious tourism is a complementary activity to industry, and the economic development.

Religious tourism is a source of income for people. Although tourists may be cause pollution and can damage the environment especially from the point of sociology cause cultural destruction, such as modernization (world mono-culture), freezes culture as performers, loss language, religion, rituals, material culture.

As stated in the theoretical framework the present research for its analysis of data, is based on Butler theory. According to Butler theory tourism has both positive and negative effects and if tourism is well planned and developed from cultural and social aspects it can have some noticeably positive social-cultural effects. And whereas disorganization in tourism and over acceptance of foreign cultures can lead to many social-cultural problems those we are already facing in this region. Therefore, in order to attract larger number of tourists to religion destinations and also, their unique values, it is essential to develop.

### **Suggestions**

- Tourist and recreation sites and good facilities in Mashhad city, package tours and leisure activities;
- Credit facilities and availability of funds for religious tourism business;
- Professional education to increase benefits awareness of Religious Tourism;
- System of promoting tourist services, including reservation, tours and general information;
- legal protection of ecologically sensitive parts of destination areas and historic architecture;
- to make High standard hotels, self-catering homes and campsites;
- Attractive food outlets, particularly traditional restaurants and native inns.

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