

## **Obstacles to sustainable development of tourism in the coastal city Tonekabon**

**Soda Mohamadi Delband\***

*Ph.D student of Urban Design, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran*

**Sara Ghahri Lalkallo**

*Ph.D student of Urban Design, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran*

**Frahnaz Khadem Fasghandis**

*Ph.D student of Urban Design, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran*

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### **Abstract**

*Among the various factors that can affect the urban sustainable development, are tourism and the consequences of it. So that a comprehensive review of the impact of tourism development in an urban area, requires to examine it in terms of sustainable urban development. In this regard, the paper aims to identify and analyze the obstacles to the sustainable development of tourism in the coastal city of Tonekabon. The method of this study is descriptive-analytical and data collection was carried out by a questionnaire. Using Cochran formula, samples are obtained from 323 household caregivers in Tonekabon, who were selected randomly. In order to assess the obstacles to the sustainable development of tourism in the coastal city of Tonekabon, using the factor analysis, 38 variables in four dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social, environmental and physical) were tested. Finally, constraints were classified into seven factors separately, the results show: Stability obstacles accounted to 74.75% of the total variance and the physical-environmental dimension accounted to 16.12% of eigenvalue variance to be known as the main obstacle. Also, the results for rotation of the factors by the Varimax method show that out of the 38 variables entered in the exploratory factor analysis, only 25 variables with a factor load above 4% remained.*

**Keywords:** *Sustainable urban development, tourism, coastal city of Tonekabon, factor analysis.*

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*Corresponding author: Fardad\_classic@yahoo.com*

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### **Introduction and definition of the problem**

Due to the technological, cultural, political, social and economic infrastructures created in the twenty-first century, the phenomenon of tourism is an inevitable reality of human behavior and action to satisfy the spirit of its curiosity. Traveling to other places, whether actual, real or virtual (via film, video, DVDs, internet, and books), with various motivations, is one of the requirements of the life of the twenty-first century, and forms a stream that is beyond national and international borders, and will have an approach beyond the government and the nation (Mohseni, 2009: 151-150). Today, the tourism industry has developed widely in the world, and many countries have been able to improve their situation to a considerable extent and cover many of their problems, such as unemployment, low income levels, per capita income, and lack of currency income. Given the significant effects that tourism activities have on the economies of the tourist destinations, much attention is paid to this area of activity. The complexity and density of urban life make a lot of people aware of nature, and moreover, areas with more natural capabilities are more noted. Therefore, tourism flows are formed in this direction to enjoy the tranquility and beauty of nature (Alizadeh, 2003: 55).

The importance of urban tourism in the cities of the developed countries is such that mayors compete in creating new infrastructure and tourist attractions and introducing their city. Officials from tourism cities like Paris, Beijing, and Madrid are trying to help the city grow with the growth of the tourism industry. In Italy, there is a huge competition between the mayors of different cities and they are seriously promoting their services for tourist agencies (Dinari, 2005: 16). Today, tourism activities are considered as the fourth part of human activities after agriculture, industry, and services, and experts predict that it will become the most profitable industry in the world in 2020, thus they call it the invisible export (Najafi Kanni, 2009: 2). In fact, sustainable tourism is the result of efforts to achieve sustainable development in all fields (Ebrahimzadeh et al., 2012: 103). The

importance of tourism as a means to social and economic development is adopted by the international community through numerous projects and has established its heavy dependence on natural heritage and biodiversity and its effect as a strategic tool. Tourism is a change in the mindset of the community that seeks to protect the environment as an essential element for promoting tourism destinations (World Tourism Organization, 2014). Given that sustainable development is defined as a continuous flow of long-term economic, socio-cultural and environmental changes for the increase of welfare of the entire community, it is a multi-dimensional quest that is seeking stably to unify economic, social, cultural and environmental goals. Therefore, tourism development is called sustainable when it is not destructive and provides the opportunity to preserve soil and water resources, genetic, herbal and animal resources for the future. In fact, sustainable tourism is a tourism that can continue in an environment of unlimited duration and does not harm the environment in human and physical terms and is active in a way that does not damage the development of other social activities and processes. (Butler, 2000: 29).

Today, coastal tourism is considered as one of the important factors in the development of coastal areas. In this regard, Caspian sea has many tourist attractions such as lush forests, accessible foothills and mountains, historic monuments and proper amenities are available from the sea and the beaches. In this context, the city of Tonekabon, with its abundant facilities and abilities to attract tourists, which owes much of it to natural and environmental attractions, hosts a large number of tourists who arrives in the area to use these facilities and attractions each year, including the beautiful beaches of the sea and the forests. This city is located in the west of Mazandaran province and between two cities of Chalous and Ramsar, and along with these two cities is among the largest poles of tourism in Mazandaran province and Iran. This research seeks to answer this fundamental question: With the large number of tourists who come to this city each year, what is the role of tourism in the sustainable development of Tonekabon? What are the main obstacles and constraints for sustainable tourism development in Tonekabon?

### **Subject literature**

In terms of the concept, tourism is a human activity and involves a

journey from the origin to the destination for entertainment or business, this concept also includes cultural, economic, and social exchanges. These elements are closely interrelated. (Gun, 1994: 85-101). According to Francois Auscher, tourism is an economic activity that one can say it buys and sells our cultural and natural heritage (Boniface, 138: 17). The tourism category, therefore, is referred to as the "tourism industry", in order to create it, industries need to be transformed into direct contact with tourists, such as all types of infrastructure, construction industries, types of networks communication and transportation industries, medical and therapeutic equipment, etc., in fact, tourism is more of a production system, to lunch production in this system, major industries should be created (Heydari and Hussein Dolazi, 2003: 61).

Today, tourism in many regions has made many changes in the social and economic foundations of urban societies (Anabestani et al., 2013: 159). Cities and tourism have complementary ties because all types of tourism in some way require urban centers and services. Therefore, any planning for tourism development should take into account the ability of cities to provide direct and indirect services. Urbanization has led to the expansion of tourism activities due to rising incomes, the relative increase in leisure time, and the ease of access and communication (Talea, 1993: 33). Therefore, the development of tourism in the city should reinforce the following, improvement of the vitality and happiness of the host society, the creation of sustainable employment, the fair sharing of profits among the citizens of the city, and prevent the destruction of the city's environment, disturbing the peace and compromising security of the city and the threat to culture, and valuable traditions of the city (Shahabian, 2011: 128-127).

Among the various cities, coastal cities have the facilities and capacities for tourism development. Coastal tourism is considered one of the fastest growing tourism areas. On the basis of this, although the growth of coastal tourism has had many benefits to coastal areas, its proliferation has also led to negative environmental impacts. For instance, with no good planning, sewage from the development of tourism activities has led to the destruction of offshore marine biomasses or boat rides as one of the main activities of coastal tourism has affected the marine habitats that support biodiversity treasures.

Also, the discharges of large amounts of sediments from the construction of coastal tourism development projects and related activities and the collection of coral and other marine samples for commercial purposes can be named as other harmful effects. These facts clearly indicate that the balance between tourism and the environment is very sensitive and maintaining this balance through proper planning and sustainable management of tourism in coastal areas is essential (Pourvakhshouri, 2001: 3). In this context, natural tourism resources are composed of three major parts:

Part I: The primary elements of tourism that are in fact considered to be major factors in attracting tourists include visiting places such as forests, seas, rivers, wildlife, caves, waterfalls, etc., and places which are made for tourism activities such as natural museums, art galleries, theaters, and so on.

Part II: Secondary elements of tourism include residential facilities, shopping malls, exhibitions, and so on.

Part III: Other elements that provide guidance and tourism services, such as the tourist guidance board, tour operators and travel agencies (Biranvand, 2008: 28).

Coastal areas, especially sandy beaches, are particularly important due to the fact that they are interspersed between a lot of water and dry land, and this is also important, this area is inherently absorbent and has the potential to attract the masses of tourists. In fact, coastal tourism has been considered as one of the most important ecotourism subdivisions as a source for value-added and special income for coastal cities. Today, along with all kinds of tourism, ecotourism is important with an emphasis on beaches, but the point to be remembered is that "coastal ecology of the coast is very sensitive and vulnerable, and the pressure from the tourist activities can disturb the ecological balance of the environment (CD, 2014: 28).

There are two effective strategies for theoretical fundamentals of urban coastal tourism:

1. Coastal tourism as a strategy for urban development: In this approach, coastal tourism was introduced as the development engine. The reasons for this are: (a) It is the source of employment and income. B) Creates a chain of economic and service activities. C) Utilizes environmental resources in coastal cities. (D) Urban tourism

raises the demand for handicrafts, traditional arts and activities that require more workforce.

2. Coastal tourism, a tool for sustainable development and conservation of natural resources: This approach establishes a triangular relationship between host society, its land, the community of visitors and the tourism industry. Coastal tourism can contribute to the economic diversification of sustainable development and by creating employment and income, the development of undeveloped areas will be. The dimensions of sustainable tourism, firstly, lead to the creation of sustainable income opportunities for local communities in the economic dimension. Secondly, from the ecological point of view, it protects the environment. Thirdly, it is related to cultural and social values (Veysi et al., 2012: 3).

But the difference between the negative effects of coastal population growth in developed countries with developing countries are that in developing countries, these effects also come with the effects of outdated and non-flexible urban plans, while it is not so in developed countries (Shams et al., 2011: 65). For example, in Iran there is no difference between coastal and non-coastal cities in developing a development plan, and urban planning for all cities follows a single set of rules. While the application of a comprehensive plan model in a coastal zone such as the Caspian Sea coast has led to that the applications are determined without considering the needs of the region and the lands are divided into single-hull villas or residential complexes for leisure purposes of the community, instead of allocating these lands to tourism residences and recreational complexes for public use, has led to the severe destruction of the coastal strip from the 1350s to the present day.

Growth of population in different urban areas necessitates the expansion of its areas in geographical space (Shams & Malayeri, 2009: 76). This expansion is very important in coastal areas due to their fragile environments. In addition to territorial development, the pattern of population distribution in coastal areas is also important because in developing countries, this pattern also indicates an imbalance in the population deployment network and the utilization of land facilities and resources (Shams, 2006: 116).

## **Research background**

For the sake of clarity and being precise, some of the recent research on sustainable development and tourism has been presented in the following table.

**Table 1: Results of some studies conducted with an approach of tourism and sustainable development**

Author	Research title	Summary of results
Lotfi and Babakhanzadeh (2014)	Study of the Effect of Urban Sustainable Tourism on City Residents, Case Study: Javanrood Town of Kermanshah	Economic development has, however, boosted economic growth and created job opportunities but also had environmental problems.
Karami (2012)	Measuring tourism sustainability from the perspective of the local community in Niasar	The interests of the host community are not included in the process of implementing sustainable tourism development in Niasar City, and so far this industry has not brought sustainable benefits from tourism development to local residents.
Qadami(2012)	Estimating the development of destination tourism in the framework of sustainability in Tameshkal rural area of Tonekabon	The process of tourism development with resource degradation, the dissatisfaction of the tourists community and the negative attitude of local residents are far from the principles and criteria for sustainable development of tourism and uses an unsustainable pattern.
Veysi et al. (2012)	Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies in Coastal Cities, Case Study of Nour City	By identifying the strengths and threats in the managerial, economic, social and physical dimensions, access to a sustainable tourism development can be provided.
Saraskanroud et al (2011)	Measuring the Impact of Tourism Expansion on Sustainable Development Dimensions, Case Study of Hashtroud County	In spite of the generally positive economic effects in some social and often environmental aspects, there are negative consequences that contribute in a variety of ways to regional urban instability.
Popesc & Corbos (2010)	The role of tourism in the development of the Brasso region	Tourism has had a positive impact on the development of the Brasso Region
Harun & Samat (2013)	Challenges to ensure sustainable tourism development on the island of Langkawi	The tourism sector has significantly contributed to the economy and socioeconomic development on the island of Langkawi. At the same time, this activity has brought negative consequences for the environment.
Jung Hsieh & Far kung (2013)	Analysis of the relationship of the environmental impact of tourism industry	The tourism industry has more harmful environmental effects than other service sectors, other than hazardous industrial waste. Also, the damaging effects of air pollution in the tourism sector are higher than other service sectors.

Source: Authors: 2017

## **Methodology of research**

The research method is descriptive-analytical and data collection tool is a questionnaire. The statistical population of the present study included household caregivers living in Tonekabon city. The sample size was obtained using Cochran's formula of 323 Tonekabon households and samples were selected randomly. In order to assess the obstacles and constraints of sustainable tourism development in Tonekabon coastal city, 38 variables were analyzed using factor

analysis model in the framework of four dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social, environmental and physical). Processing and analysis of data using SPSS software were done in the form of the statistical method of factor analysis.

### **Range of study**

The city of Tonekabon is located in Mazandaran province, in the geographical coordinates of 51 degrees and 10 minutes east and 36 degrees and 70 minutes north. According to the census of 90, the population of this city is 45338 people and has an area of 10.1 square kilometers and is located in the western part of Mazandaran province. This touristic city with unsurpassed tourist attractions from the north to the Caspian Sea, from the east to Nashtaroud, and from the south to the Alborz mountain range and from the west to the city of Ramsar. This city is one of the beautiful and touristic cities of Mazandaran province, located in a plain region, along the coast of the Caspian Sea (<https://fa.wikipedia.org>).

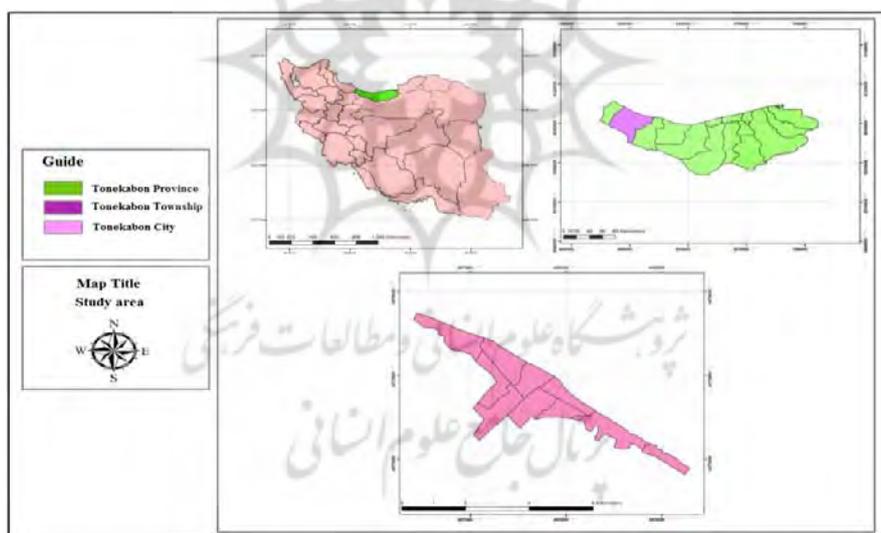


Figure 1: Location of Tonekabon city in Mazandaran province and country  
Reference: authors

### **Analysis and research findings**

#### **Descriptive findings (individual characteristics of respondents)**

Based on field findings, from a total of 323 people in the Tonekabon touristic city 293 (91%) were men and 30 (9%) were women. Also, the lowest age among respondents is 24 and the highest age is 74

years. The findings of this study indicate that the most frequent level of education in Tonekabon city is of Diploma and associate degree (Post Diploma) with 146 people. About marital status, 90% of respondents are married and 9% are single. The results of the findings on employment status indicate that the highest number of respondents with a total of 159 (49%) is in a self-employment status and 135 people (41%) in an employment status.

**Analytical Findings**

In this study, economic, social, environmental and physical components have been used to study the obstacles and constraints of sustainable tourism development in coastal cities. For this purpose, 38 questions have been designed in the Likert spectrum and in five options (very low, low, moderate, high and extreme), which are examined separately below.

**Table 2: The obstacles and constraints of Sustainable Tourism Development in Coastal Cities**

row	Obstacles and constraints on sustainable tourism development	row	Obstacles and constraints on sustainable tourism development
1	Speculation and Irregular purchase and sale of land and real estate	20	environmental pollution
2	Inflation and general price increases	21	Contamination of running waters
3	Seasonal Tourism Jobs	22	Destruction of gardens, fields, and vegetation
4	cultural differences between tourists and host societies	23	Destruction of natural resources as a result of the development of tourist facilities
5	Upsetting the balance between local and non-local populations	24	Improper constructions in the coastal strip
6	Insecurity and chaos caused by the arrival of the tourist	25	Outbreaks of contagious diseases
7	Migration from villages around to the city	26	Noise and noise pollution
8	Tourists are consumers	27	Massive volumes of trash around passages and beaches
9	Revealing clothes of tourists and its negative effects on residents	28	Opening contaminated sewage of coastal settlements to the sea and the river
10	Expansion of luxury and consumerism	39	Reducing farmland levels around the city
11	Threatening the richness and cultural origin of the society	30	attempts to change the land use of the city and increase the density of construction
12	Seasonal population over-growth	31	Uneven City Growth
13	interruptions caused by tourists to residents	32	Increasing low-quality construction
14	The loss of the general peace of society	33	Negative changes in urban landscape due to increased construction costs
15	Congestion of the city as a result of the development of tourism sector	34	Dispersed Urban Texture Development
16	Increased consumption of alcoholic beverages	35	Destruction of Traditional Texture of the Area
17	Rape and Ribbing	36	Increased traffic jams for cars and pedestrians
18	Increasing robbery and insecurity	37	Lack of systematic, Comprehensive and Basic Studies for Tourism Development
19	loss of privacy	38	Lack of proper local control in guiding of the tourism development

Source: Research findings: 2017

As Table 2 shows, the KMO value of obstacles and constraints on sustainable development of tourism in coastal cities is equal to (0.669) and a significant level of 99%, which is a results of a complete correlation of the input variables for factor analysis.

**Table 3: The amount of KMO coefficient for obstacles and constraints on sustainable development of tourism in coastal cities**

title	KMO	Bart let test	Sig
obstacles and constraints on sustainable development of tourism in coastal cities	0.669	2557.970	0.000

Source: Research findings: 2017

The results of Table 3 indicate that the obstacles and constraints of sustainable tourism are categorized into seven factors. As environmental-physical threats are the most important obstacles, including environmental pollution, degradation of natural resources as a result of the development of constructions, improper construction in coastal areas, noise pollution, increased unlicensed and low quality construction, negative change in urban landscape due to increased construction, dispersed urban texture, destruction of traditional texture of the area and increase in traffic onboard and pedestrian with the specific amount of 5.37% and special variance of 16.12%, the next one cultural threats, including cultural differences between tourists and host societies, increased consumption of alcoholic beverages and loss of health, with the special variance of 14.26%, is known as the second factor. Also, the third and fourth factors, the general barriers; speculation and irregular purchase and sale of land and real estate, consumerism, the threatening the richness and cultural origin of the society and the massive volume of trash around passageways and coastal and socioeconomic, the seasonality of tourism occupations, seasonal population over-growth, congestion of the city make up 11.26% and 9.63% of the variance, respectively. Fifth factor is the health threat; the prevalence of contagious diseases with 9.23% of the eigenvalue is known as the fifth factor. The socio-environmental challenge; interruptions caused by tourists to residents, the rape and ribbing and contamination of running waters with 7.73% of the eigenvalue is the sixth factor and the economic-physical inflation phenomenon; inflation and the general rise of prices and the city's uneven growth with 7.51 percent of the eigenvalue is the seventh constraint to sustainable tourism development in Tonekabon. Also, the studied components in total is 75.74% of the total variance of the

obstacles and constraints of sustainable tourism development in Tonekabon. And about 24.26 percent of the remainder are related to the factors not studied in this study.

**Table 4: Results from factor analysis of the obstacles and constraints**

factors	eigenvalue	Variance% of the eigenvalue	Collective% of the eigenvalue
Environmental-physical threat	5.37	16.12	16.12
Cultural threats	4.67	14.26	30.38
General obstacles	3.52	11.26	41.64
Socio-economic obstacles	2.89	9.63	51.27
Health threats	2.81	9.23	60.5
Socio-environmental challenges	2.56	7.73	68.23
Economic-physical inflation	2.48	7.51	75.74

Source: Research findings: 2017

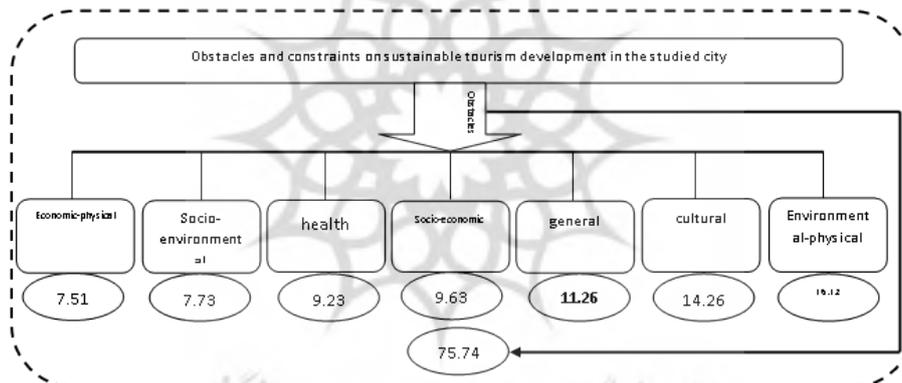
Also, the results of Table 4 illustrate the status of a set of variables related to the subject of the research, namely the study of the role of tourism in the sustainable development of coastal cities. So that according to the extracted factors, assuming the establishment of variables with factor loads greater than 4%, after rotating the factors by the varimax method and naming the factors, finally 38 variables entered in exploratory factor analysis as points of strength, or opportunity and challenge, 25 variables with factor load above 4% are classified according to table 4.

**Table 5: Identification of major obstacles and constraints as weaknesses in the sustainable development of tourism in Tonkabon**

obstacles and constraints	dimensions	variables	Factor load
Environmental-physical threat		Environmental pollution	0.400
		degradation of natural resources as a result of the development of constructions	0.570
		Improper constructions in the coastal strip	0.549
		Noise and noise pollution	0.618
		Increasing low quality constructions	0.621
		Negative change in urban landscape due to the increased construction of the city	0.517
		Dispersed Urban texture development	0.428
		Destruction of Traditional Texture of the Area	0.433
		Increased traffic jams for cars and pedestrians	0.591
		Cultural threats	
Increased consumption of alcoholic beverages	0.648		
Loss of privacy	0.599		

General obstacles	Speculation and Irregular purchase and sale of land and real estate	0.591
	Tourists are consumers	0.568
	Threatening the richness and cultural origin of the society	0.702
	Massive volumes of trash around passages and beaches	0.413
Socio-economic obstacles	Seasonal Tourism Jobs	0.676
	Seasonal population over-growth	0.709
	Congestion of the city as a result of the development of tourism sector	0.519
Health threats	Outbreaks of contagious diseases	0.775
Socio-environmental challenges	interruptions caused by tourists to residents	0.435
	Rape and ribbing	0.685
	Contamination of running water	0.602
Economic-physical inflation	Inflation and general price increases	0.792
	Uneven city growth	0.650

Source: Research findings: 1396



**Figure 2: Results of Factor Analysis Model of obstacles and constraints on Sustainable Tourism Development in Tonekabon Coastal City**

Source: Research findings: 2017

### Conclusion and Applicable Suggestions

Tourism is one of the activities that has been developing with the expansion of urbanization and the increase of industrial and administrative jobs. Tourism phenomena, as well as other related spatial phenomena between human activities and the geographical environment, can have positive or negative consequences in different dimensions. Therefore, in the present paper, the obstacles and constraints of sustainable development of tourism and its effects on sustainable development of Tonekabon city have been measured and evaluated using factor analysis model in four dimensions of economic, social, environmental and physical factors. The results showed that the

development of tourism in Tonekabon has several implications for sustainable development of this city. Based on the results of statistical analysis of factor analysis, these effects were classified into seven categories: environmental-physical threats, cultural threats, general obstacles, socio-economic obstacles, health threats, socio-environmental challenges and economic-physical inflation, and amounted to about 75.74% of negative tourism effects variance on sustainable development of Tonekabon city. Among them, the physical-environmental threat with 16.12% of the eigenvalue is known as the most important obstacle, after which cultural threats, general obstacles, socio-economic obstacles, health threats, socio-environmental challenges and physical-economic inflation, with 14.26%, 11.26%, 9.63%, 9.23%, 7.73% and 7.51% of the variance respectively are second to seventh factor of the second factor. Also, the results for rotation of the factors by the Varimax method show that out of the 38 variables entered in the exploratory factor analysis, only 25 variables with a factor load above 4% remained and classified separately in seven categories. According to the results, the environmental-physical obstacles, are the most important and main obstacle to the sustainable development of tourism in the city of Tonekabon. The present study is consistent with studies carried out by Saraskanroud et al. (2011), Qadami (2012), Lotfi et al. (2014) Harun & Samat (2013) and Jung Hsieh & Far kung (2013) who acknowledged the negative effects of tourism on natural resources, and called the environmental and physical aspects of sustainable development vulnerable in the development process of tourism. Accordingly, it can be admitted that in order to reduce the obstacles to sustainable tourism development and the role of the development process on sustainable development of the city, considering the following points is important and inevitable:

- Utilization of organizational capability, laws and regulations, with the aim of reducing the ecological and environmental hazards and pollution in recreational and urban areas,
- Establishing security patrol units for monitoring and controlling the work of garbage collection units and observing general hygiene at the city and recreational centers,

- Establishing health and social security in the recreation centers and tourism zones of the city,
- Active and continuous monitoring of the activities of the purchase and sale of goods and services required for citizens and tourists in order to control the level of prices and the quality
- Avoid horizontal development in urban zones and areas in order to increase the control capacity of urban authorities in preventing the use change and degradation of agricultural land by organizing socio-economic activities in different areas and neighborhoods of the city.

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