

Sociology Study of Tourist Attractions in Ardabil Province and Its Role in Sustainable Development

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Abstract:

Tourism is traveling for recreational, leisure, or business purposes, usually for a limited duration. Tourism is commonly associated with trans-national travel, but may also refer to travel to another location within the same country. Iran is world famous for kind hospitality, friendliness, and beautiful landscapes and villages. Beautiful historical areas, like Ardabil, have been visited by many foreign and domestic tourists. Therefore, the main purpose in this paper is to investigate the aspects of tourism in Ardabil from a sustainable and sociological view and also to study and introduce Ardabil's Tourist Attractions. The method in this paper is qualitative and also action research and tools of data collection are documental and interviewing research participants. It is worth mentioning that the present research, in its theoretical framework and data analysis, follows the Butler theory. Findings of the study show that Ardabil province has significant potentials for tourist attraction.

Key Words: Sociology, Tourist Attractions, Ardabil Province, Sustainable Development

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1. Introduction and Statement of Problem:

With the development of the tourism industry and with the creation of various infrastructures, such as roads and transportation networks as well as the provision of facilities for tourists, we may witness economic growth and also development in quality of domestic people's lives. On the other hand, the growth and prosperity of tourism, can increase information and social awareness of inhabitants, while preserving the country's environment and natural heritage, can also increase foreign exchange and jobs creation. However, creating a job opportunity in the tourism industry requires less capital than other industries. According to McCool (2015), local communities benefit from sustainable tourism through economic development, job creation, and infrastructure development. Tourism revenues cause economic growth and prosperity in attractive tourist destinations which can raise the standards of living in destination communities. Sustainable tourism operators commit themselves to create jobs for local community members. Any increase in tourism revenue in an area acts as a driver for the development of increased infrastructure. As tourist demands increase in a destination, a more robust infrastructure is needed to support the needs of both the tourism industry and the local community (McCool, 2015.p.15). There are many unidentified touristic attractions in Iran which if noticed and considered, can contribute and cause boom in tourism industry by itself. One of the potential tourist attractions in Iran is Ardabil province, a place with several thousand years' history, very favorable climate, and with unique perspectives which can be claimed as a region that has the most important tourism attractions. Accordingly, the main issue of this study is to introduce the tourism features of Ardabil and the significant role of the region plays in sustainable development.

2. Importance and significance of the Study:

In addition to economic aspects, the tourism also has other dimensions, including the complex relationships which are the issues that exist before, during, and after traveling ; that can be referred as the psychological, environmental, political, and cultural effects, cultural relevance. Tourism before becoming an economic activity, is an activity which represents cultural communication. Today the terms

cultural tourism and heritage tourism are used interchangeably (Kazemi, 2006.p. 153). The cultural significance of tourism is to the extent that the culture of the host community and tourists may interact with each other for a long time and lead to cross-cultural convergence over time (Homayoun, 2002). The cultural and natural heritage found in remote areas , under the influence of tourism approach can transform into tourist attractions which in turn can give a significant identity to local communities and finally result in a positive impact on the sustainability of these communities. Tourism is considered a tool for generating international empathy, understanding and identity as well as achieving world peace. Politically, the role of tourism is also important in that human beings are benefited from the bitter and sweet experiences of governance throughout history and in different civilizations. And they look at other cultures at a wider angle and make the political relations of civilizations more balanced on the basis of economics and the understanding of nations (Kazemi, 2006.p.7). When tourists arrive in an area, they must pay certain costs, such as the cost of food and accommodation, the hotel, the cost of entertainment, the cost of transportation, the cost of patrols, as well as the cost of buying souvenirs and native goods, and the cost of entering a museum or sightseeing costs; these costs through the currency and foreign exchange that enter the host country, can cause prosperity in the host nation. This boon, in turn, increases employment and is very beneficial for the people of Ardabil Province, which is facing a young and demanding population.

3. Aims and Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of this study are the followings:

- To understand and analyze the relation between Sociology, culture and tourism;
- To introduce tourist attractions of Ardabil province;
- To understand and analyze the positive and negative aspects of Ardabil tourism and its role in sustainable development.

4. Methodological considerations:

The method in this paper is qualitative and also action research and tools of data collection are documents and interviewing participants. The theoretical framework of 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 tourist 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 tourist decreases.

Consolidation Level: The annual income from each tourist decreases.

Inflationary Stagnation and Falling Level: In this level the regions 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.

5. 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.

6. Sustainable development:

Sustainable development is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while simultaneously sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. The desired result is a state of society where living conditions and resources are used to continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the natural system. Sustainable development can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations. While the modern concept of sustainable development is derived mostly from the 1987 Brundtland Report, it is also rooted in earlier ideas about sustainable forest management and twentieth century environmental concerns. As the concept developed, it has shifted to

focus more on economic development, social development and environmental protection for future generations. It has been suggested that "the term 'sustainability' should be viewed as humanity's target goal of human-ecosystem equilibrium (homeostasis), while 'sustainable development' refers to the holistic approach and temporal processes that lead us to the end point of sustainability" (shaker:2015).

7. Sustainable tourism:

Sustainable tourism is the concept of visiting somewhere as a tourist and trying to make a positive impact on the environment, society, and economy. (Lisse :2015). Tourism can involve primary transportation to the general location, local transportation, accommodations, entertainment, recreation, nourishment and shopping. It can be related to travel for leisure, business and what is called VFR (visiting friends and relatives). (Dubois: 2010). There is now broad consensus that tourism development should be sustainable; however, the question of how to achieve this remains an object of debate. (Peeters and others: 2004).

8.Characteristics of the Location of the study:

8.1.Ardabil Province:

Ardabil Province is one of the thirty-one provinces of Iran. It is in the northwest of the country, in Region 3, bordering the Republic of Azerbaijan, the provinces of East Azerbaijan, Zanjan, and Gilan. Its administrative center is the city of Ardabil. (Hamshahri Online: 2014)

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Photo No1: Location of Ardabil within Iran
Source :Data Geography .com

8.2. Climate and geography:

Many tourists come to the region for its cool climate (max 35 °C) during the hot summer months. The winters are bitterly cold, with temperatures plummeting to -25 °C. Its famous natural region is the Sabalan mountains. The province is considered the coldest province in Iran. Large parts of the province are green and forested. Ardabil's capital stands about 70 km from the Caspian Sea and has an area of 18011 km². Neighbouring the Caspian Sea and the Republic of Azerbaijan, the city is of political and economic significance.

8.3. Administrative divisions:

The province is divided into 10 counties: Ardabil, Bilasavar, Germi, Khalkhal, Kowsar, Meshginshahr, Namin, Sarein, Nir, and Parsabad. District of Arasbaran was transferred to the province of Ardabil from East Azerbaijan in 2010 and now appears on the more recent maps of Ardabil Province produced by the Iranian official organs. (Alehashem: 2020)

8.4. Population and religion:

At the 2015 census, Ardabil's population was 1,270,429. The dominant majority in the city is ethnic Iranian Azerbaijanis and their religion is Shia Muslim.

8.5. Language:

The primary language of Ardabil province is Azerbaijani, a Turkic language. Other languages in Ardabil include Tati and Talysh. (Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations: 2002)

8.6. Economy:

The economy of Ardabil is partially agricultural, partially tourist-based, with some industries in operation. The Iranian government in 2006 announced plans to build "the largest textile factory of its kind in the Middle East" in Ardabil. Arta Industrial Group (AIG) has one of the largest textile conglomerates in Iran, which is located in the provinces called Qazvin and Ardabil. The group has received numerous awards for being one of the top 20 exporters and industrial groups in Iran since 1998. It is the first company to produce high-density fiberboard (HDF), medium-density fiberboard (MDF), laminated flooring and multi-layer films in Iran. AIG has the first private industrial site in Iran in the city of Ardabil, which has fifteen main factories owned by (AIG). This Industrial zone covers an area of 100 hectares and Residential Area for engineers and managers of the company. (Iran Tourism & Touring Organization)

9. History

The province is believed to be as old as the Achaemenid era (ca. 550–330 BCE). It is mentioned in the Avesta, where Prophet Zoroaster was born by the river Aras and wrote his book in the Sabalan Mountains. During the Parthian era, the city had special importance among the cities of Azerbaijan. Some Muslim historians attribute the foundation of Ardabil to the king Peroz I of the Sassanid Empire. The Persian poet Ferdowsi also credits the foundation of the city to Peroz I. Ardabil suffered some damages caused by occasional raids of Huns from the 4th to 6th century CE. Peroz repaired those damages and fortified the city. Peroz made Ardabil the residence of provincial governor (Marzban) of Azerbaijan. Due to its proximity to the Caucasus, Ardabil was always vulnerable to invasions and attacks by the mountain peoples of the Caucasus as well as by the steppe dwellers of South Russia past the mountains. In 730–731, the Khazars managed to get past the Alan Gates, defeated and killed the Arab governor of Armenia named Al-Jarrah ibn Abdallah on the

plain outside the town of Ardabil, and subsequently captured the town, as they continued their conquests. (Planhol: 2016) During the Islamic conquest of Iran, Ardabil was the largest city in north-western Iran, ahead of Derbent, and remained so until the Mongol invasion period. Ardabilis fought the Mongols three times; however, the city fell after the third attempt by Mongols, who massacred the Ardabilis. Incursions of Mongols and subsequently the Georgians, who, under Tamar the Great, captured and sacked the city with some 12,000 citizens reputedly killed, devastated the city. The city however recovered and was in a more blossoming state than before, though by this time the principal city in the Azerbaijan region had become Tabriz, and under the later Ilkhanate, it had become Soltaniyeh.

Safavid king Ismail I, born in Ardabil, started his campaign to nationalize Iran's government and land from there, but consequently announced Tabriz as his capital in 1501. Yet Ardabil remained an important city both politically and economically until modern times. During the frequent Ottoman-Persian Wars, being close to the borders, it was often sacked by the Ottomans between 1514 and 1722 as well as in 1915 during World War I when the former invaded neighboring Iran. In the early Qajar period, crown prince Abbas Mirza, son of then incumbent king (shah) Fath Ali Shah Qajar (r. 1797–1834) was the governor of Ardabil. (Bosworth, 2016). With Ardabil already once being sacked by the Russians during the Russo-Persian War of 1804–1813, and this being the era of the Russians steadily advancing into the Iranian possessions in the Caucasus, Abbas Mirza ordered the Napoleonic general Gardane, who served the Qajars at the time, to strengthen and fortify the town with ramparts. During the next and final war, the Russo-Persian War of 1826–28, the ramparts were stormed by the Russian troops, who then temporarily occupied the town. The town's extensive and noted library, known as the library of Safi-ad-din Ardabili, was taken to St. Petersburg by General Ivan Paskevich with the promise that its holdings would be brought to the Russian capital for safekeeping until they could be returned, a promise never fulfilled. (Bosworth: 2016).

After the Russo-Persian Wars, Iran ceded its territories in the Caucasus to Russia under the terms of the Treaty of

Turkmenchay (1828). As a result, Ardabil was situated only 40 kilometers from the newly drawn border, becoming even more important economically as a stop on a major caravan route along which European goods entered Iran from Russia. After he visited Ardabil in 1872, German diplomat Max von Thielmann noted, in his book published in 1875, the extensive activity in the town's bazaar, as well as the presence of many foreigners^(Planhol:2016) and estimated its population at 20,000. During the early Iranian Constitutional Revolution, Russia occupied Ardabil together with the rest of Iranian Azerbaijan until the eventual collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917. (Bosworth: 2016).

9.1. Prehistoric and ancient works:

Meshginshahr Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department announced the discovery of the site in the plains of this city saying 15 areas with stone carvings have been identified so far. Head of the department, Imanali Imani said on Wednesday that in the plains of Meshginshahr, there is a treasure trove of art belonging to thousands of years ago. "This is an example of the oldest human habitat that helps us to see the evolution of human life since thousands of years ago," he added. He underlined that with the efforts and follow-ups of his department, the new regions of stone carvings have been identified and their files are being prepared to be registered in the list of national heritage. "The petroglyphs, which are the best tools to decrypt the pre-historic era, are among the oldest documents of ancient human life and a manifestation of their community, culture, art, knowledge and ecology, as well as environmental representations, customs, beliefs, myths, dreams, prayers, hunting scenes and battles."



Photo No2: Plant Fossils Found in Ardabil Date Back to Millions of Years Ago

He stated that the images on the ancient stones indicate the period when humans turned to the first tools of hunting and taming animals, and then agriculture and planting. Imani said these engravings belong to the Bronze Age stating that the customs and beliefs of the people of this period and the importance of some animals in agriculture, war, etc. are mentioned in these carvings.

Meshginshahr is located 90 km northwest of Ardabil with dozens of ancient monuments. The historical site of Yeri city with tens of stone statues belonging to eight thousand years ago is located in this city. The historical site of Yeri belongs to eras of the middle Pal eolithic, bronze and iron ages, during which life began in this region about 8,000 years ago. This area has many historic places such as a large stone cemetery with about 300 graves, temple, castles, stone walls, gates, and ancient caves. (By IFP Editorial Staff:2020)

10. Souvenirs:

Ardabil is well known for its honey, sweets, roasted sunflower seeds, felt products, woodwork, earthenware and carpets:

10.1. The Ardabil Carpet:

The famous Ardabil Carpets originate from this city. These 16th century carpets were a pair that once adorned the Sheikh Safi al-Din Shrine. After an earthquake damaged the shrine, they were sold off to fund its renovation. Today, the larger carpet, which is considered the

oldest dated and one of the most beautiful and historically important carpets in the world, is housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum of London. The other smaller carpet is housed in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. (www.toiran.com) Old, beautiful and important: The Ardabil Carpet is exceptional; it is one of the world's oldest Islamic carpets, as well as one of the largest, most beautiful and historically important. It is not only stunning in its own right, but it is bound up with the history of one of the great political dynasties of Iran. Carpets are among the most fundamental of Islamic arts. Portable, typically made of silk and wools, carpets were traded and sold across the Islamic lands and beyond its boundaries to Europe and China. Those from Iran were highly prized. Carpets decorated the floors of mosques, shrines and homes, but they could also be hung on walls of houses to preserve warmth in the winter.

Design and Pattern: The rich geometric patterns, vegetative scrolls, floral flourishes, so typical of Islamic art, reach a fever pitch in this remarkable carpet, encouraging the viewer to walk around and around, trying to absorb every detail of design. That the design of the carpet was not arbitrary or piecemeal, but was well-organized and thoughtful can be seen throughout. Considering the immense size of the carpet—10.51m x 5.34m (34' 6" x 17' 6")—this is impressive. A central golden medallion dominates the carpet; it is surrounded by a ring of multi-colored, detailed ovals. Lamps appear to hang at either end. (Essay by Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis, 2015)

11. Tourism centers and attractions of the Ardabil province:

Ardabil Province attracts a large number of tourists every year due to its favorable

Cool weather. The northwestern province has natural wonders, historical monuments, many tourist attractions as well as scores of mineral water springs.

Hereunder are must-see sites in Ardabil province with breathtaking views:

11.1. Dasht-e Mughan:

Dasht-e Mughan or Mughan Plain consists of three counties: Germe, Bileh-savar and Parsabad. Situated in Ardabil province's northern part, the plain is bound on the north and east by the Republic of

Azerbaijan, on the south by the city of Meshkinshahr, and by Arasbaran region on the west. The nature of Mughan area is divided into three parts: mountains, foothills and plains. The mountainous part includes the southern, south-western and western highlands of the region, which reaches from a minimum height of 100m to 700m in the south and west with a slope of more than 10 percent. The plain areas in the north of Mughan region, on the other hand, extend to the banks of the Aras River with a very gentle slope – less than 5%. The plains mainly consist of agricultural lands due to their fine-grained, sedimentary, fertile alluvial soils; and are densely populated. The greenest north-western border strip of Iran is located in Mughan plain: the stunning region of Mouran in Germe county, which includes 63 villages. A large part of the region is covered by a lush vegetation, which is known as the land of two springs. In April and May, also September, this part of plain is full of colourful spring flowers. Despite its pristine, spectacular nature and numerous historical monuments, Germe is among the lesser known tourist areas of Ardabil province.

11.2. Fandoqlou Forest:

Fandoqlou is located 25 kilometers from Ardabil so it is a short drive from the city to the forest. You can either set up a camp in the forest or rent a cottage in case you don't feel like sleeping in a tent. It is the largest hazelnut hub of the country and annually hosts tens of thousands of visitors.

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Photo No 3: Fandoqlou Forest:

11.3. Neor Lake:

Neor Lake is a natural lake located in the border line of two provinces of Gilan and Ardabil. It has provided a suitable environment for living different kinds of fishes because of the fresh water, rainfall and good weather; so that, it is an attractive destination for tourists especially in warm seasons. As a part of the protected area of Lisar, Neor Lake is located in 48 km of southeast of Ardabil along the route of Khalkhal. Talesh region is also placed in the south of Neor Lake. The lake has been supported by Environmental Protection Administration since 1348 SH and it is now one of the main research centers on aquatics in this organization. Neor is a highly suitable habitat for one species of trout namely rainbow trout and many tourists come to this place in order to experience fishing. It should be said that all fishes of Neor Lake are gathered every year before cold seasons start. Because constituting a thick layer of ice on the water of lake in the winter makes the life of aquatics impossible. After cold seasons the breeding fishes are released in the lake.



Photo No 3: View of the Neor Lake

The walking route of Neor Lake to Soubatan Highlands is one of the popular paths for nature lovers and mountain climbers. Located in 19km of southeast of Neor Lake, Soubatan has a wonderful landscape of wooden cottages and livestock pasturing. The walking route is highly cold in winter, however, the region has a pleasant weather in summer. It is why many travelers from the province and other regions come here to use the beautiful and pristine nature and experience the sport fishing in the best time for walking in this pleasing route, that is from the beginning of Ordibehesht (the late April) to the end of Khordad (the late June), before the summer starts. (www.visitiran.ir)

11.4. Shorabil Lake

Shorabil Lake boasts healing minerals and a picturesque landscape. It is a sightseeing site and the main habitat for migratory birds. However, facilities have been built around the lake for the leisure, entertainment, and comfort of the coming visitors as well. There are several restaurants and coffee shops, indoor and outdoor amusement parks, a couple of international hotels and a zoo in the proximity of the lake. There are also running tracks and bike lanes around the lake,

so activities such as running, cycling and also sailing on small boats are also available.

This lake, with a surface area of 16 acres, is the largest lake in Iran within a city. Originally the basin was covered with mud and high concentrations of salt and other minerals so that no fish could survive. In 1998, in order to dilute the lake, rivers were linked to it and reduced the amount of salt. Now, lots of salmons are living in Lake Shorabil (Alehashem, 2020). One of the most ancient cities in Iran is Meshkin Shahr. It is located in the north-west of Iran in Azerbaijan, 839 kilometers from Tehran. It is the closest city to the Sabalan Mountains. In the past, it was called "Khiav", "Orami", and "Varavi".

11.5. Sabalan Heights

Sabalan, with an altitude of 4,811 meters, is the third highest peak in Iran. It is an inactive volcano. There is a small lake on top of the summit. Sablan is also home to Alvares Ski Resort.

11.6. Sareyn:

Sareyn is a city in and the capital of Sareyn County, in Ardabil Province, Iran. Sareyn is known for its hot springs. The population is about 8000, and increases to more than 20000 in the summer because of the many tourists who go there due to the charming climate. It stands 25 km from Ardabil and total area is 1.28 square km². At the 2006 census, its population was 4,478, in 1,135 families. (Census of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2006) The Sareyn springs are near an inactive volcano in mount Sabalan and its water contains sulphur particles and it is believed that it is good for bone and joint pains. The word Sareyn in the Persian dictionary means "spring's Outlet". The climate and hot springs are the first attractions to tourists who travel to this region from different parts of Iran and the world.

Sareyn is also famous for its 'Ashe Doogh' (Yogurt Soups), during the busy summer periods; it is not uncommon for many of the local shops to be seen selling and preparing this soup. Hot springs (spa) have always been in Sarein but the 1990 Manjil–Rudbar earthquake caused some of them to get colder or hotter. The water is heated largely by the Sabalan mountain which is Iran's second highest mountain after Damavand. Many tourists visit Sabalan. Its most interesting feat is the 'crater' top which contains a lake of acidic water. Sareyn is also very

famous for its honey, again like the soup, many of Sareyn's shops sell honey which is produced locally by the Bee keepers of the area.

The main language of Sareyn is the Azeri dialect, however Persian is understood.

There are 9 hot springs in Sarein, with 'Gavmesh Goli' being the hottest, with water reaching 67 degrees, and turning out around 80 liters per second from the source. There is also several cold water springs nearby, with the most popular being situated in a small village nearby called 'Vila Dareh' – the water here is fizzy and is very good for the kidneys. The climate is by far a great asset, and many Iranians from Tehran and other big cities escape to the tranquility and good weather that Sarein has to offer.

Sareyn Springs: (Sarein City Gudde)

- Qarah Soo (A'saab) Thermal Spring
- Sari Soo Thermal Spring
- Gavmish Goli Thermal Spring
- General Thermal Spring
- Besh Bajilar Thermal Spring
- Qahveh Suei Thermal Spring
- Pehenlu Thermal Spring



Photo No 4: Sarein hot water springs

11.7. Ardabil mausoleums:

The mausoleums of Sheikh Safieddin Ardabili and Sheikh Kalkhoran are symbols of Islamic-Iranian architecture. Sheikh Safieddin Mausoleum is located near Ardabil's Aali-Qapu Square. It also includes a mosque, library, and school. The mausoleum has an Islamic architecture. Sheikh Kalkhoran Mausoleum belongs to Aminoddin Jebreil, the father of Sheikh Safieddin Es'haq, the ancestor of Safavid kings. It is located in Kalkhoran Village in Ardabil.

12. Interviewing the research area's participants

Interviewing the local participants about the sociology of Ardebil indicated that people of Ardebil believe that Ardabil is inhabited by the most heartwarming and kind ethnolinguistic groups in Iran, the Azeris, who speak the Iranian version of Azeri/Turkish language, a dialect hard to comprehend for none-Azeris. They also claim that Ardabil is a true testimony to the glorious history of Azeris and has couple more intriguing features in additions to homing genuinely welcoming people, in terms of culture, natural landscape. However, the natives of Ardebil believe that other factors make this historical

city globally known. Things like its diverse architectural marvels of different eras and dynasties, exceedingly rich culture, draw-dropping exquisite hand-woven rugs, nearby mineral-rich hot/cold spring towns, and mysterious old villages pull thousands of tourist to this holy city. The scholars of Ardebil believe that Ardabil cultural influence played a significant contribution to the Islamic civilization. The summary of the items mentioned by the people from Ardebil and extracted from the interviews are:

1. Enjoying the natural attractions, cultural and historical (lakes, rivers, mineral waters, monuments and cultural heritage, etc.) as the field of tourism development.
2. Existence of Rangeland resources, diverse vegetation for the development of forestry activities, animal husbandry and beekeeping.
3. Existence of rich resources of the soil for developing the Mechanized farming activities at provincial level.
4. High production of agricultural products as the ground for development of processing industries and packaging.
5. Existence of border and customs terminals (co-border with Azerbaijan) to develop commercial activities.
6. Availability for mineral resources and deposits such as Rubble stone, travertine, marble, calcite, copper, silica and...
7. having a variety of horticultural crops produced in the cities of the province.
8. Availability for foreign investment by neighboring countries and adjacent areas of the province.
9. Availability for regional exchange in the province and field of activity in the capital market.

12. Conclusion:

Today, achieving sustainable economic growth is one of the key indicators of progress for developing countries, while tourism as a source of income and job creation at the national level can be an approach to economic development in the national territory and overshadow all economic sectors. At the same time on ecological, economic, cultural and social dimensions, utilizing a holistic approach to tourism development, bottom-up planning, pollution control, attention to increasing awareness of local communities and paying attention to justice.

In general, sustainable tourism, relying on the concept of sustainable development, wants the tourism industry to have the least impact on host societies and the environment, with concurrent economic profitability. In the meantime, due to the variety of potentials in Ardabil Province; if planned and developed in advance, sustainable tourism in addition to reducing unemployment and alleviating social and cultural problems can create direct and indirect economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits and make a significant contribution to the national development. 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 that we are already facing in this region. Therefore, in order to attract larger number of tourists, the development of this place and also, its unique values are essential .

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