

CHOICE OF AN APPROPRIATE STRATEGY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR THE WESTERN BORDERS OF THE COUNTRY APPLYING THE AHP METHOD

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ABSTRACT

As one of the country's western border townships, Baneh has become a destination for many travelers who want to buy imported products in recent years due to the supply of such products at lower prices. The main problem, which is generally present in border areas, is the issue of informal trade of goods (smuggling). Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to select the appropriate economic development strategy for the western borders of the country using the AHP method. At the beginning of the research, using SWOT analysis, we examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the region from an economic point of view. To design SWOT invoices, we have applied the method of interviewing the people of the region and executive officials, using the comprehensive plan of 2017 and the detailed plan of 1995, statistical yearbook 1996 to 2011 and articles written about the area under study. Because the impact of each of the SWOT factors on the economy of the area under study is not known, we used the TOPSIS multi-criteria decision-making method to regulate these factors from important to less important. To do this, comments were collected using a sequential ranking questionnaire provided to experts. The statistical population of this research included 11 experts who are generally graduates of the field of urban planning. Then, we applied TOPSIS method for ranking and consensus of experts. After ranking the SWOT factors, we should define some strategies to implement a suitable economic model. These include SO (creation of free trade zone (aggressive)), WO (investment in the economic infrastructural areas of the region (adaptive)), ST (planning to strengthen the economic foundations (necessary)) and WT (trying to maintain the existing economic conditions (defensive)).

Keywords: Economic Development Strategy, Multi-Criteria Decision-Making, Baneh Township

INTRODUCTION

Due to their special physical and geographical location, the western border areas of Iran are a good platform for implementing the economic model of a free trade-industrial zone. Given these opportunities, these areas can create jobs, increase revenue, increase production, and grow industries. This growth and development leads to a reduction in insecurity in the border areas, prevent the migration to the central regions, reduce border crimes and raise the living standards of the residents of these areas.

The improvement and development of border areas revolves around theories of regional development based on regional imbalance as the focus of their discussion. Since border areas have their own characteristics and are different from the central areas, the theoretical

foundations of preparing border area are based on regional development theories. Economic incentives for development, whose symbol was regional development financial aids in the 1980s, have been so far the most important policy-making tool (Kalingors, 2008: 84).

There are various definitions of free zones, but at the same time, one can see the common denominator between those definitions; this common denominator implies that in these areas, there are not limitations in terms of customs and trade barriers, conditions of investment, foreign ownership, etc. are lower than other regions of the country (Mohammadi Alamouti, 1995). Therefore, free zones are geographical political areas where raw materials and goods are imported through air, sea and land transit without customs duties and taxes and are produced and exported after special processes with packaging and new quality (Beyk Mohammadi, 1: 1999).

In simple terms, free zones are quasi-independent political units that perform their duties adjoining the mother political unit. The management of the free trade zone also has the authority to create international obligations and is able to establish relations with foreign governments, foreign investing individuals and companies and providing the necessary guarantees and obligations for the non-nationalization of their capitals (Hafeznia *et al.*, 1998: 227).

On the other hand, smuggling and underground economy affect the flow, level and structure of production and employment and affect the distribution of income and wealth among different sections of society. The existence of the informal sector in the economy increases, due to the tax evasion of this sector, the tax burden of other sections of the people who work in the official sector. In terms of income, smuggling of goods leads to the formation of an extremely rich class in society; in contrast, the process of impoverishment of the lower strata of society increases sharply (Shahnavazi, 2010).

Extreme economic deprivation and high levels of unemployment in the border areas have had a profound effect on the increase in illegal human trafficking and, consequently, the smuggling of goods, drugs, weapons, fuel, livestock and other items that disrupt border security. Residents of border areas are often people who do not have a favorable background for healthy employment, so they turn to smuggling and illegal activities to earn money. In the meantime, the profitability of smuggling is one of the most important reasons for this inclination. This profit is due to the difference in prices between the domestic market and neighboring countries. Geographical status is a most important factor that causes the spread of smuggling in the country, due to the existence of common water and land borders with neighboring countries. Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to select the appropriate economic development strategy for the western borders of the country.

RESEARCH THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Free trade zones

Prior to 1966, the only free trade zone on the Asian continent was the Kandala Free Trade Zone in India. During the years 1966-70, two free trade zones were established in Kaohsiung of Taiwan and Batan in the Philippines. Between 1971 and 1975, 15 free zones were established in five Asian countries, nine of which were in Malaysia alone, and two regions in South Korea and Taiwan, as well as one region in India and Indonesia.



The rapid growth of free trade zones led to the emergence of nineteen free trade zones in Malaysia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Thailand in the early 1980s. Of course, in recent years, due to intense competition of free trade zones, various countries have set up science and technology parks to counter this, as well as due to the return of user industries to industrialized countries. In fact, these areas have created a link between free traditional trade zones and research and development centers.

In a 2005 article, Arado Agarol compared the performance of North Asian export processing regions in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. In this research, factors such as location of areas, quality of infrastructures, quality of government and policy of privileges and special features of the region have a direct impact on the success of such areas in the three countries. The analysis of the mentioned factors in the form of econometric models was done using descriptive-combined statistics of three countries in both national and regional levels.

Jung Hur and Cheolbeom Park (2011) examine the relationship between a country's growth and the degree of openness of that country, through the studying the effect of the free trade agreement on the economic growth of member states. Theories of international economics, such as Ricardo's model of comparative advantage, or the model of endogenous growth of two developed countries provided by Grossman and Helpman (1991) and Feenstra (1996), can be a rationale for the formation of free trade agreements.

Dollar (1992), Sachs and Warner (1995), Edwards (1998), Dollar and Craay (2004) provide supportive evidence for the positive impact of free trade on economic growth through the use of a variety of open trade measures.

Harrison (1996), Rodriguez, and Rodrik (guez (2000), Welch, and Vacziarg (2004) found that free trade had a negative effect on economic growth.



Background of studies

In the years since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, with the outbreak of the imposed war, economic siege, import restrictions, rising prices and limited economic activity, residents of the border areas have once again taken advantage of the benefits of the law on cross-border exchanges. Since 1982, border residents established border cooperatives. These cooperatives have been importing and exporting authorized goods on behalf of members (Mahmoudi, 2000, 31). Researchers have done some studies in this area.

Hafeznia, Zoghi Barani, Ahmadipour (2009) examine the effect of the dual pattern of political space management on the functions of free zones. The will of national sovereignty over the spatial area of free zones is exercised in two ways: one through the model of political space management (Ministry of Interior and governor-generalships) and the other through specific management (free zone organization) and in terms of the dual management model applied in it. There are differences with other free zones in the world, and the effect of these patterns on the functioning of free zones has been analyzed.

In a research entitled "effect of factors other than liberalization policy on attracting foreign direct investment in Iran's free trade-industrial zones", Taghavi and Mirzaei (2007) emphasize that measures beyond liberalization for spending foreign capital to succeed in attracting foreign investment are needed in the regions. In a research entitled "A Geopolitical Geoeconomic Look at Aras Free Trade-Industrial Zone", Vali Gholizadeh and Allah Verdi Zadeh (2010) analyze the

role of Aras Free Trade-Industrial Zone in northwestern Iran. They regard the geopolitical realities of the region (Spatial, linguistic and cultural connections and geopolitical connections of the Azerbaijani region of Iran with the geopolitical spheres of the Caucasus, Asia and Anatolia) as Iran's gateway to CIS countries and its geoeconomic role and potentials in the heart of this area as a geopolitical and geoeconomic node of the region.

Ghasemi (2004) points out that free trade zones in its general sense have been generally formed based on the concept of free trade. Iran's free zones were created in an environment where more than eighty percent of the economy was state-owned; that is why there is no consensus on its nature and functions. In his MSc thesis, Karimi Amiri (2002) conducted a research entitled "Study of potential and actual capacities of Iran's free trade zones to realize the strategy of export development" at the University of Tehran.

In his MSc thesis entitled "Study of the effects of job creation of free zones on the country's economy and a comparative study of the performance of free zones of several selected countries (Mauritius, Dominican Republic, Singapore, Taiwan) and our Country's free zones, Rahmani (1997) conducted a study in the Faculty of Economics of Al-Zahra University. In an article, entitled "Geopolitical Factors Affecting Border Function" and his other article (2008) entitled "Geopolitical Factors Affecting Border Security", Zarghani (2007) mentioned. In a book entitled "An Introduction to the Geography of Borders", Akhbari and Nami discussed Border Management Strategies (Akhbari and Nami, 2010: 45-47). In his book, "Basic Theory of Border Areas Preparation Principles", Andalib (2001) examines the subject of border area preparation. In a research entitled "Explaining the Barriers to Optimal Management of the Borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan", Pishgahi Fard and Mirzadeh Koohshahi (2011) provide solutions for the optimal management of the borders of this region.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, using SWOT analytical model, we tried to provide a suitable strategy for the development of the area under study. Therefore, the necessary information was collected using library methods, questionnaires and taking into account the opinions of the residents of the area under study and officials and managers of the city; we also tried to complete the research by referring to statistical centers and existing statistical yearbooks. For this purpose, we used the statistical population of 11 people, including university professors and urban planning experts. In this research, we benefited from sequential questionnaire design technique (for TOPSIS model) and pairwise comparison (for ANP model) which are different types of decision methods based on pairwise comparisons. Since the SWOT model is a qualitative model, it causes some limitations. Therefore, in this research, we combined the SWOT model with the MADM model to analyze the feasibility of creating free trade zones for economic development of the western borders of the country.

FINDINGS

The township Baneh, with its strategic location and commercial position in the country, can gain a much better position in the region's trade. This position is achieved if the skilled experts



conduct basic studies; we should defined and implemented a suitable strategy with knowledge of the resources of the region.

Step 1: Designing SWOT factors

In order to design a SWOT model, comprehensive studies should be conducted in the region. For this purpose, we considered the detailed plan of 1995 (Consulting Research and Civil Engineers, 1996) and Comprehensive Plan of 2006 (Consulting Engineers of Naghsh Piravash, 2006) of Baneh and the plans for the development of the city; we studied the strengths and weaknesses and threats of the region. By conducting interviews with the residents of the region and city officials, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the region were examined from the perspective of people who are directly exposed to economic, social, cultural, etc. conditions. Using the statistical yearbook of the 80s to 90s, information has been obtained about the rate of economic change in the region, especially in the services and trade sectors. Studies and articles that already have been published about Baneh have been the main sources in this research, for designing SWOT factors.

1. Internal factors

Table 1: factor of SWOT strengths

Strengths (S)	Sources of extraction
Appropriate strategic and geopolitical position	Reza Veisi, Nabiullah Bigdeli (The role of border bazaars in the sustainable development of border cities. Case study: Baneh border bazaar)
Promoting public trust in trade with the region's border residents	Interview with Baneh township officials
Suitable background as a business area	Statistical Yearbook 1991-2011
Enjoying the benefits of a special economic zone	According to the law on the establishment and administration of the Special Economic Zone in 2010, Baneh became a special economic zone.
High income and capital of Baneh Municipality (high turnover)	Baneh municipality website



Table 2: factor of SWOT weaknesses

Weaknesses (W)	Sources of extraction
Doing not use the usual patterns of the business world and continuing the traditional business	Field visit
Invasion of informal exchanges (smuggling)	Kurdistan governorate website
Lack of sufficient and appropriate infrastructure	Statistical Yearbook 1370-1390
Physical expansion of the city outside the approved plan	Mahmoud Salimi (Crossing Comprehensive Strategic Planning)
Lack of production and industrial workshops	Reza Veisi, Nabiullah Bigdeli (The role of border bazaars in the sustainable development of border cities is a case study of Baneh border bazaar)

2. External factors

Table 3: factor of SWOT Opportunities

Opportunities (O)	Sources of extraction
Possibility of merging trade with the ecotourism industry	Place of tourism in the policies and programs of free zones, Samira Boji
Possibility of transit of goods and products to Mediterranean countries	Kurdistan Province Customs Site
Geopolitical position and the possibility of playing an active economic role with neighboring countries	Field visit
Possibility of concluding a free trade agreement with Iraqi Kurdistan	Do Free Trade Agreements Increase Economic Growth of Member States? JUNG HUR, CHEOLBEOM PARK
Ability to create temporary industrial areas for processing imported raw materials and re-exporting them	Effect of factors other than liberalization policy on attracting foreign direct investment in Iran's commercial-industrial zones, Taghavi-Rezaei 2007

Table 4: factor of SWOT threats

Threats (T)	Sources of extraction
Coming and going of investment by the private sector due to security problems on the western borders	Comprehensive plan for 2006 (Naghsh Piravash Consulting Engineers, 2006)
Being single and lack of economic diversity	Mahmoud Salimi (Passing from Comprehensive Planning to Strategic Planning)
Lack of comprehensive and general planning	Comprehensive plan for 2006 (Naghsh Piravash Consulting Engineers, 2006)
Declining agriculture due to land shortages	Interviews with local people
Change of macroeconomic policies	Mahmoud Salimi (Passing from Comprehensive Planning to Strategic Planning)

Step 2: Use of the sequential scale to rank SWOT factors

We used sequential scale method to rank SWOT factors. In this scale, the relative position of objects or people or situations without determining the distance between them is measured based on a certain attribute. The necessary condition for measuring in this scale is to observe the criterion for ranking objects, individuals or situations. In this step, according to the economic model of creating a free trade zone, the economic model of economic investments in the commercial sectors of the region, the economic model of planning to strengthen economic foundations and the economic model of trying to maintain the existing economic conditions, we identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Step 3: Use of the TOPSIS method (MCDM engine software) for the final ranking of SWOT factors

After the questionnaire is completed among 11 experts, most of whom are the experts of urban planning, the results are reviewed and ranked based on the frequency of the scores given to the SWOT factors, but this ranking is not complete and correct. This is because in this ranking, the

weight of the strategies designed according to the SWOT factors and the economic conditions of the region has not been applied. To apply the importance coefficient of these strategies, we use TOPSIS method and MCDM engine software.

The next step is to identify the positive ideal solution and the negative ideal solution. To do this, according to the following definition and according to the purpose of the research, three strategies of SO, WO and ST are considered as positive factors (C_1^+ and C_3^+, C_2^+), because they are a step in the economic development of the region, and the WT factor is considered as a negative factor (C_4^-). The strategies and indices (Criteria) are as follows:

Table 5: Strategies Suggested for SWOT Analysis

Explanation	Strategy	Indices
1. Creating a free trade zone (offensive)	SO	C_1^+
2. Investments in the economic infrastructure of the region (adaptive)	WO	C_2^+
3. Planning to strengthen economic foundations (necessary)	ST	C_3^+
4. Efforts to maintain existing economic conditions (defensive)	WT	C_4^-

1. Creating a free trade zone (offensive)

- Reduction of unloading and loading costs due to non-compliance with customs controls
- Increasing foreign exchange earnings
- Increase in employment and helping attract skilled force
- Relatively cheap local workforce and simple and hassle-free employment structure, ease of employment regulations
- Attracting foreign capital and greater access to international markets



Allocation of indirect subsidies for the purchase of local raw materials and semi-finished goods

- Achieving up-to-date and advanced technology
- Emphasis on the development of commercial tourism due to the relative advantages for the development of this type of tourism
- Promotion of public services and other social facilities
- Using the strategy of information processing and establishing new industries that have been exempt from taxes for several years and had special privileges.

2. Investments in the economic infrastructure of the region (adaptive)

- Investment in order to implement development projects such as: Grade separations etc.
- Allocation of capital and budget for the expansion of higher education centers
- Leading economic investments in industry and the development of industrial and sustainable activities and occupations
- Efforts to increase and organize urban constructions and legalize them in order to prevent heterogeneous and horizontal growth of the city and facilitate affairs for balanced development of cities around Baneh.

3. Planning to strengthen economic foundations (necessary)

- Using strategic planning as one of the efficient models to systematically deal with urban problems and balanced planning and development of the region.
- Optimal allocation of resources and implementation of incentive plans
- Performing basic infrastructural studies correctly and reliably
- Development of new information techniques and decision making and its application in policy making
- Improving the government budgeting system according to the third principle of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran

4. Efforts to maintain existing economic conditions (defensive)

- Encouraging people and investors to invest in industry and other diverse economic sectors
- Providing facilities, welfare-tourism infrastructure and facilities and planning to attract tourism
- Management of the exploitation of environmental attractions and conservation measures to preserve and maintain forest cover and natural wildlife

The following ranking is for SWOT weaknesses:

Table 6: SWOT weaknesses

Weaknesses (W) (Internal factors)
W ₁ - Not using the usual patterns of the business world and continuing the traditional business
W ₂ - Lack of sufficient and appropriate infrastructure
W ₃ - Lack of production and industrial workshops
W ₄ - The prevalence of informal exchanges (smuggling)
W ₅ - Physical expansion of the city outside the approved plan (development side)

Table 7: SWOT Opportunities

Opportunities (O) (External factors)
O ₁ - possibility of merging trade with the ecotourism industry
O ₂ - Geopolitical position and the possibility of playing an active economic role with neighboring countries
O ₃ - possibility of concluding a free trade agreement with Iraqi Kurdistan
O ₄ - Ability to create small industrial units for processing incoming raw materials and re-exporting them
O ₅ - Possibility of transit of goods and products to Mediterranean countries

Table 8: SWOT threats

Threats (T) (External factors)
T ₁ - Coming & going of investment by the private sector due to security problems on the western borders
T ₂ - Being a single role and lack of economic diversity
T ₃ - variability of macroeconomic policies
T ₄ - Lack of comprehensive and general planning
T ₅ - Declining agriculture due to lack of land

Scale of AHP, ANP

Table 9: Table of the hourly scale

Explanation	Definition	Score
Two elements are equally important.	Same importance	
One element is moderately superior to the other.	Moderate superiority	
One element is much superior to the other.	High superiority	
One element is far superior to another.	Too much superiority	
One element is extremely superior to the other.	Extreme superiority	
Intermediate cases in judgments	Intermediate values	
When an element i is compared to j, one of the above numbers is assigned to it. Also, by comparing the element j with i, the inverse value of that number is assigned. $\frac{1}{x_{ij}} = x_{ji}$		

Table 10: Strengths and weaknesses sorted by degree of importance

Strengths (S) (Internal factors)	Weaknesses (W) (Internal factors)
S ₁ - Appropriate strategic and geopolitical position	W ₁ - Not using the usual patterns of the business world and continuing the traditional business
S ₂ - Enjoying the benefits of a special economic zone	W ₂ - Lack of sufficient and appropriate infrastructure
S ₃ - Suitable background as a business area	W ₃ - Lack of production and industrial workshops
S ₄ - High income and capital of Baneh Municipality (high turnover)	W ₄ - prevalence of informal exchanges (smuggling)
S ₅ - Promoting public trust in trade with border residents	W ₅ - Physical expansion of the city outside the approved plan

Table 11: Opportunities and threats arranged by degree of importance

Opportunities (O) (External factors)	Threats (T) (External factors)
O ₁ - possibility of merging trade with the ecotourism industry	T ₁ - Coming & going of investment by the private sector due to security problems on the western borders



O ₂ - Geopolitical position and the possibility of playing an active economic role with neighboring countries	T ₂ - Being a single role and lack of economic diversity
O ₃ - possibility of concluding a free trade agreement with Iraqi Kurdistan	T ₃ - variability of macroeconomic policies
O ₄ - Possibility of creating small industrial units for processing incoming raw materials and re-exporting them	T ₄ - Lack of comprehensive and general planning
O ₅ - Possibility of transit of goods and products to Mediterranean countries	T ₅ - Declining agriculture due to lack of land

Strategies presented according to the identified factors:

Table 12: Suggested Strategies Based on SWOT Analysis

Explanation	Strategy
Creating a free trade zone (offensive)	SO
Investments in the region's economic infrastructural sectors (adaptive)	WO
Planning to strengthen economic foundations (necessary)	ST
Efforts to maintain existing economic conditions (defensive)	WT

CONCLUSION

Free zones have been considered as a tool of economic development in recent decades. The use of these tools has been successful in most countries and has been organized as a continuous and stable movement to compensate for economic and social backwardness. Accordingly, countries have put the achievement of progress, growth and development, as well as the entry into the field of production and global trade on their agenda. Thus, we should regard it as a tool for economy (industry, commerce, tourism, etc.) in every country. Goals, policies, and strategies chosen for the free zones must be in line with the goals and strategies of the national economy. A free zone can meet the requirements for freedom of production and trade when it attracts technical and managerial expertise, and capital needed during the country's industrialization, and be a factor in mobilizing the national economy and the movement of capital and the promotion of the labor force, management and industrial capabilities; it should provide at least the following conditions:

- Economic policies of the government should create an environment that is not contrary to the motivation of the private sector.
- Maintaining economic balance and stability at the macro level.
- In the free zone, public and infrastructure facilities should be provided at the level of meeting the needs.

- The executive management of the free zones should have the administrative, technical capability, the necessary awareness to follow their far-sighted policies and be able to attract private and foreign capital in these areas with appropriate marketing tools.
- The government should constantly support the goals of the free zones and establish the necessary facilities for the presence of these zones in the world markets.

The research results showed that after ranking the SWOT factors, we should define some strategies to implement a suitable economic model. These include SO (creation of free trade zone (aggressive)), WO (investment in the economic infrastructural areas of the region (adaptive)), ST (planning to strengthen the economic foundations (necessary)) and WT (trying to maintain the existing economic conditions (defensive)).

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