



## Proposing a Structural Equation Model for Feasibility of Rural Tourism Development (Case Study: Gaikan Village of Aligudarz County)

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### Abstract

**Purpose-** Rural tourism can be considered a country-related experience that includes a wide range of attractions and activities. They can be related to agriculture and might increase opportunities to provide services to local communities. In the same time, they can change the nature of geographical landscapes. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the feasibility of rural tourism development using the structural equation model in Gaikan Village of Aligudarz County.

**Design/methodology/approach-** This is applied study, in terms of purpose, and in terms of method, it is descriptive-analytical. To fulfill the purpose of the study, field study and survey were used. Using Cronbach's alpha test, the reliability for two feasibility components (attractions and capabilities of rural tourism, and obstacles and problems of rural tourism development), were 0.79 and 0.80, respectively, which indicates the good fit of the research tool. The statistical population consisted of three categories of experts, tourists and villagers (270 people in total: 13 experts, 129 tourists and 128 villagers) who were selected by simple random sampling. In order to analyze the data, exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling in SPSS20 and AMOS software were used.

**Findings-** The findings showed that the most important attractions and tourism capabilities of Gaikan Village are in four main categories: cultural and religious attractions, use of organic product, rural welfare facilities and services, and natural attractions. Also, the most important restrictions and obstacles of tourism development in this village are: lack of proper investment, avoidance of using agricultural products and related industries, ignorance of local people about the benefits of tourism, lack of amenities, and creating environmental pollution. The last one has a significant relation with tourist development.

**Research limitations/implications-** Lack of proper access to transportation infrastructure, roads, and accommodations in the area of Aligudarz County has created limitations for the development of tourism in the study area. Moreover, access to tourists and key informants of rural issues (statistical population of the study) was one of the problems in the research.

**Practical implications-** Due to the lack of transportation, accommodation, and public infrastructure in Gaikan Village, establishing the accommodations such as hotels as well as camps are suggested in the region.

**Originality/value-** The feasibility of tourism development can lead to understanding the tourism process in accordance with the local systems and finally, designing a suitable local model.

**Keywords-** Feasibility, Rural tourism, Structural Equation Model, Gaikan village, Aligudarz County.



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## 1. Introduction

For the developed economies, rural tourism can be considered a country-related experience that includes a wide range of attractions and activities. They may (or may not) be in the field of agriculture and increase opportunities to provide services to local communities. Moreover, they can change the nature of geographical landscapes (Oriade & Rabinson, 2017). These geographical spaces or landscapes are crucial items in rural tourism and must be protected. In other words, the importance of conserving habitats or nature has become an integral part of the rural economy (JamshidZehi Shahbakhsh & Moradi, 2020). Rural tourism brings visitors to tourism destinations who tend to find goods and services that improve their expected lifestyle. Otherwise stated, the development of rural tourism can lead to job opportunities and improve economic development in an area. Rural tourism can also be associated with other matters such as economic, environmental, and social issues, especially the cost of living, cheap housing, and second homes. Despite these potential challenges and shortcomings, tourism development has yet seen as a viable tool for rural areas restoration. Therefore, ensuring the preservation of a sense of community identity is important, so it should be developed in a way that does not jeopardize wellbeing and quality of life in the local community. This can be achieved through planning, controlled growth, and community participation during the development process (Howe et al., 1997).

Developing economies, on the other hand, vary in terms of geographical area and population size. They could have certain features in common. Their population is mainly agricultural, although urban areas usually have a dualistic nature with technical progress ranging from modern to very modern. Economic activity is usually concentrated within and around cities, and one of the problems facing these countries is the rapid rural-urban migration due to the lack of opportunities in the rural sector. This contributes to the growth of poverty, inequality, and the existence of an informal sector in urban areas. On the other hand, developing economies are increasingly dependent on the tourism sector not only to stimulate growth and generate foreign exchange earnings, but also to

strengthen their backward rural economies by providing employment opportunities (Oriade & Rabinson, 2017). The World Bank (2015) classifies the economies as generally low-income countries (\$ 1,045 or less), low and middle-income countries (\$ 1,045 to \$ 4,125), and middle and high-income countries (\$ 4,125 to \$ 12,736). Not all of these types of economies in these groups face the same development challenges. Rural economies are often characterized by weak or even not having basic infrastructure and services. Among these, tourism as one of the most important tools for development in the world, has an endless growth (Ziaee et al., 2014), and it has been mentioned as an effective tool for economic and social reconstruction and development of rural areas (Ghadir Masoom et al., 2013). The product of rural tourism begins with a study of tourism capital. According to Bourdieu, capital is a resource that affects a particular area and allows the individual to make a certain profit through being part of it (Wogget, 1993). The capitals are natural, historical, and cultural such as traditional landscapes, fresh air for relaxation, the ability to engage in sports activities, and customs related to rural culture (Trauer, 2006).

Iran, like other developing countries, is facing the problem of poverty and inequality, which is now a real phenomenon in some parts of rural society (Salehi & Vali Shariat Panahi 2019). Tourism as a multidimensional development tool can contribute to both meeting the needs of tourists, making major changes in the host community (Dwyer et al, 2009). According to the 20-Year Vision Plan for tourism, Iran should have 20 million foreign tourists by 1404 AH (2025 AD) (Karami Dehkordi et al. 2015). According to the forecast of the World Travel Organization in 2020, the income from tourists entering Iran will reach 1.5 billion dollars, which is equivalent to 2.4 percent of Iran's total exports (World Tourism Organization, 2011, as cited in Jamshidzehi Shahbakhsh & Moradi, 2020). Lorestan Province is one of the most important tourism and ecotourism destinations in the country. Based on its geographical advantages, natural capacities (water and soil), it has a high capacity to create suitable spaces for tourism, especially in rural areas. This province has many geotourism capabilities, which is considered as the geotourism capital of the country (Yarahmadi & Sharafi, 2016). Gaikan Village, as one of the tourism target villages of Aligudarz County, has many tourism

attractions and capacities such as rich cultural resources (especially nomadic lifestyle), natural tourism attractions and connecting the two tourist destinations of Lorestan and Isfahan (Darvishi et al., 2014). Therefore, studying rural tourism development, in accordance with the objective facts and based on the framework of economic development of the villages targeted for tourism can be an important step in the growth and development of rural and tourism in Aligudarz County. Therefore, this study aims to assess the feasibility of rural tourism development in Gaikan and seeks answers to this fundamental question that regarding the five elements of tourism products (attractions, access, infrastructure facilities, services and hospitality, and organizational and institutional elements) how Gaikan Village has been effective in establishing the tourism landscape of this region.

## 2. Research Theoretical Literature

Tourism industry is a wide range of activities aimed at satisfying tourists on the one hand, and benefiting the people and the local community at the destination on the other hand (Ranjbarian & Zahedi, 2000). Today, rural tourism is one of the important parts of economic activities that can provide the development of small business and entrepreneurship (Rostami & Ehsanifar, 2018). The definition of tourism in the study of rural development areas is ambiguous. Tourism is defined by Leiper (1990) as the movement of people from a tourist providing area to a tourist destination, where they stay for a period of time. Rural tourism is also defined as “a multifaceted activity that takes place in an environment outside of urban areas” (Killon, 2001, p. 121). This activity is part of the industry that is carried out by small-scale tourism businesses and is applicable in areas where land is used by agricultural businesses. This activity should be done as a suggestion in a variety of experiences (in which) the emphasis is on the experience of tourists that use the products and activities in rural areas. Farm holidays, agritourism (agricultural tourism), special interest holidays, ecotourism (nature tourism), hiking, cycling, horseback riding, mountaineering and adventure tourism, sports tourism, health, medical and wellbeingfare tourism, hunting, fishing, food tourism, religious tourism and almost all other possible forms of tourism include events, festivals and even visiting friends and relatives. In creating a

wide range of such activities, considering the nature and supply conditions in rural areas is of particular importance (Jamshidzahi Shahbakhsh & Moradi, 2020). In urban destinations, there are many multinational corporations, small chains and independent businesses that offer tourism experiences. In rural areas, the supply of these activities is offered with a larger number of small and medium capital. This leads to evident need for a balance of supply and demand in rural areas to encourage indigenous (and non-indigenous) people to develop their jobs in most rural economies. This leads to an opportunity to maximize the positive effects of these activities (Oriade & Rabinson, 2017).

Tourism attractions are the main reason for tourists to visit rural destinations and is considered as the key element in locating tourism sites. In other words, the development of tourism is based on the existence and arrangement of tourism attractions. Although attractions are a vital element in the tourism system, tourism is a framework in which the interaction among its components forms the tourism system. According to Leiper (1990), tourism consists of three interrelated sub-sectors that form the entire tourism system. These three sections are the regions of departure, transition, and destination. Accordingly, when the destination area is identified, both departure and the transition areas are related to it, which needs to be recognized, arranged, and planned. Different theories have been presented on the way of identifying and introducing the region (Leiper, 2004).

On the other hand, tourism is also grounded in the basic factor of travel and transportation. Therefore, their changes are subject to various changes such as travel motivation and means of transportation. The considerable effects of tourism in reducing unemployment, increasing income, providing energy resources and the prosperity of the handicraft market are only some parts of the special benefits of this industry, in which more than 10 million people are occupied (Mousavi, 2019). In other words, tourism can be considered as an issue in which millions of interactions take place, and has its own history and a body of knowledge, and the information is accumulated in it. Millions of people are involved in this economic process (Murti, et al, 2015, as cited in Roozbehani et al. 2020).

Other pillars of tourism are tourism facilities and services. In the culture of tourism, the set of

facilities and equipment related to transportation, accommodation, hospitality, entertainment and side services related to tourism are called tourism facilities and services. Residential facilities mainly are: Hotels and guest houses, tourist camps, boarding houses and motels and catering facilities also consist of restaurants, food stalls, cafes and coffee shops, etc. Recreational facilities include parks, swimming pools, sports fields, clubs, etc. In addition to these facilities, there is a series of service activities that indirectly serve tourism. These services mainly are: Gas stations, automobile repair shops, airports, railways, passenger terminals, banks, travel agencies, security centers and many other required side services (Aghajani, 2004). Tourism facilities and services, that is, supplying increasingly in the tourism industry, bring the highest volume of revenue to the host communities. It should be noted that providing infrastructure must be among the first priorities for the desired tourism facilities and services, as infrastructure is a major part of this pillar. The tourism product differs not only from physical goods and products, but also from other services. In other words, this product is experienced in a period of time and during different stages. This makes it difficult and complicated to evaluate. In the second

stage, this product is risky for tourists, because in addition to having costs, the wasted time cannot be compensated. In the third stage, a part of this product is according to the personal desires of tourists, including relief from the pressures of life, gaining new experiences, entertainment and fun. Therefore, tourism planning and development requires the identification of these types of motivations and demands. Recognizing the motivations and demands of tourists is one of the tourism market tasks. At the end, the tourism product has a duality in capability. It means that the products are not only used by non-native tourists (Zhang et al., 2009: 1-14).

Table 1 summarizes the most important research conducted in this field. According to the researches, the study of feasibility study of tourism development of Gaikan Village using the model of structural equations and based on the five elements of tourism product is a new topic that has been less addressed. According to the studies, the most important factors affecting the development of rural tourism are the five elements of the tourism product in rural destinations, including attractions, access, infrastructure and facilities, services and hospitality, and organizational and institutional elements that can be listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Summary of the background literature of the extracted variables and components affecting the development of rural tourism**

Row	Researcher (year)	Five elements of the tourism product
1	Pouriani et al. (2020)	Attractions, infrastructure and facilities: The findings from the point of view of tourists indicate that the existing capacities in the social, cultural, environmental and physical fields are inadequate. Also, the findings of the ANOVA test also indicates, there are no entrepreneurial capacities in the social, cultural, environmental and physical entities in the county.
2	Salehi & Vali Shariat Panahi (2019)	Attractions, access, and infrastructure and facilities: Natural capital (environment) and cultural capital (handicrafts) are the most important factor in planning and attracting tourists, which are augmented by human capital (ability to work and provide services to tourists), social capital (people's trust in each other and village managers in tourism) and physical (existence of roads communication and road).
3	Einali et al. (2018)	Attractions, access, services and hospitality, and organizational and institutional elements: Tourism development has a positive impact on economic, socio-cultural and physical indicators and a negative impact on the environmental indicators.
4	Bayat & Badri (2017)	Attractions, access, services and hospitality, and organizational and institutional elements: The findings of the study indicate the positive effects of tourism in economic, environmental (physical-spatial), and social dimensions, on the other hand the negative effects of tourism are the environment, social, security and cultural, respectively.
5	Orooji et al. (2016)	Attractions and organizational and institutional elements: Findings showed that the tourism economy of Abyaneh Village was evaluated through this model which showed the relative economic effects of tourism on the village. Also, according to the results obtained from Abyaneh Village, the economic effects of tourism in this village have been evaluated in terms of desirability, normal and relative. Despite that it has also played an important role in migration and reducing its trend from rural to urban areas and has had favorable effects on investment and employment in the service sector, it seems that the mental image of the village is not conducive and people are not very satisfied with tourism. This is an important negative factor in the relative value of the economic effects of tourism in Abyaneh Village.

Row	Researcher (year)	Five elements of the tourism product
6	Karami Dehkordi et al. (2015)	Attractions, access, infrastructure and facilities, services and hospitality, and organizational and institutional elements: Problems are related to infrastructure, marketing, health, souvenirs and handicrafts, government and tourism, human resources, planning and research, ethnic and tribal prejudices, climate change, diminishing cultural attractions.
7	Pazoki & Yourdkhani (2015)	Attractions, access, infrastructure and facilities, services and hospitality, and organizational and institutional elements: Causal conditions: Reduction of norms of interactive practice, pessimism about the presence of tourists, migration; Interfering conditions Prioritizing immediate (not future) benefits that have led to land use change; Strategies: Changing the structure of life, changing the texture of the village, feeling dis-empowered confronting economic problems and consequences: Underdevelopment of the village, delay in the growth of self-confidence and self-reliance.
8	Darvishi et al. (2014)	Access, infrastructure and facilities, services and hospitality, and organizational and institutional elements: According to the results (training, spatial-physical and social organization of villagers, creating a suitable mechanism for public and private sector investment in tourism facilities and services and employment-generating activities, laying the groundwork and promoting tourism culture and creating solidarity among the local community and tourists) as a offensive strategy is suggested to achieve tourism development in Gaikan Village.
9	Wang, et al. (2021)	service and organizational and institutional elements: Although rural tourism can help reduce the rural-urban economic gap by providing additional income opportunities, the literature is limited, especially in developing economies. Therefore, in the first stage of the study, this issue was investigated using the model of fixed effects of panel data at the semi-micro level, focusing on eight regions of Fujian Province, China. The results showed that when the GDP of tourism in rural areas increases, the income gap of villagers decreases.
10	Nugroho et al. (2021)	Attractions Indonesia has allocated 72 trillion IDR rural funds in 2021 for the rural development program, in which rural tourism is the main sector after infrastructure, education and health. A survey of 700 tourists and 70 rural tourism managers found that the words "tourism attraction", "economic activities" and "curiosity" attract tourists, while rural tourism managers focus only on "tourism attraction" as the focus of the strategy management. There was a knowledge gap between tourists and tourism managers because tourists preferred to see "originality" while managers wanted to create "artificial" attractions.
11	Kozic (2012)	Attractions, access, infrastructure and facilities, services, and organizational and institutional elements: Data analysis indicates different levels of stability (economic, social and environmental indicators) in different regions. Finally, planning in different time periods, according to the type of instability in each region was recommended.
12	Iorio & Corsale (2010)	Infrastructure and facilities: The results showed that rural tourism has increased the living standards of rural families and tourism has adapted to other livelihood methods in the villages of this country.
13	Harrison et al. (2007)	Infrastructure and facilities: The operation, with the emphasis on the protection of the resources and natural life of the river and the constructions since 2004 have led to attracting many tourists and increasing the economic potential of the region.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Geographical Scope of the Research

Aligudarz County is located between 49 degrees and 42 minutes east longitude and 33 degrees and 24 minutes north latitude. Aligudarz is placed in the northern half of the county. This city is connected through the northern route with the cities of Khomein, Mahalat, Arak, and through the southern route with the cities of Izeh and Fereydunshahr, through the eastern route with the cities of Daran, Golpayegan and Khansar, and through the western and northwestern route with the cities of Azna, Doroud, Boroujerd, and Khorramabad. In terms of political divisions, this city is located in the Central District and within

the Khomeh Rural District. The city of Aligudarz is 152 km far from Khorramabad, 120 km from Boroujerd, 128 km from Arak, 233 km from Isfahan, and 380 km from Tehran ([General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, 2017](#)). In terms of communication position to the provincial routes, this city has a pivotal role. Most of the residents of Aligudarz migrated to other big cities of the country such as Tehran, Isfahan, and Arak, while a large number of rural and nomadic residents have settled in this city. Aligudarz was the second largest city in the country after Mashhad (before being divided into three provinces). In Lorestan province, Aligudarz is the largest county. Gaikan Village is located

near Aligudarz County and is a great destination for spring and summer trips due to its high altitude and snow-inclination. This village also has a long historical background, so in addition to a great nature tourism, it is worth getting to know more about the history of this region. Imamzadeh (shrine) of Gaikan village, which is known as Imamzadeh Ibrahim, is one of the attractions of this area that has many visitors. The spring of

Gaikan Village is another sight of Aligudarz in this area, which attracts many tourists to this area due to its refreshing climate and nature (General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, 2017; Statistics Center of Iran, 2016). Figure 1 shows the map of the political divisions of Lorestan Province, Aligudarz County, and Gaikan Village.

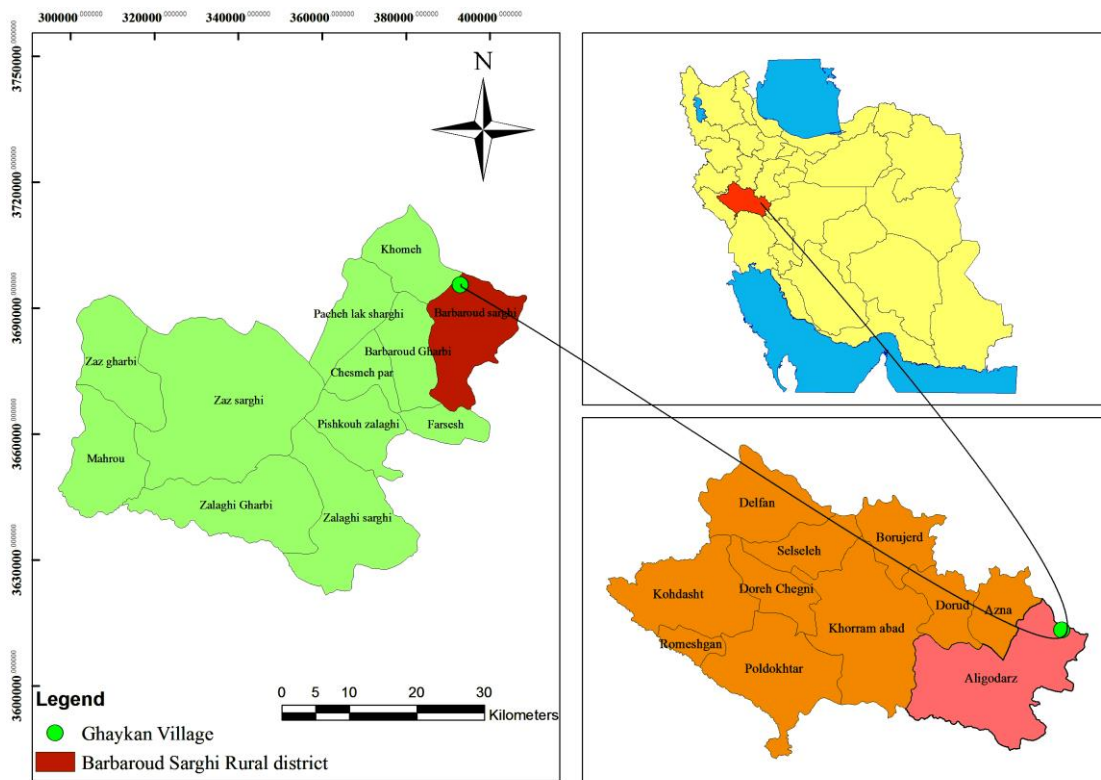


Figure 1. Political divisions of Lorestan Province, Aligudarz County, and Gaikan Village

### 3.2. Methodology

This research is applied. It used a descriptive-analytical method and a causal and logical model. The statistical population consists of three main groups; the first group includes villagers living in Gaikan (the population of this village according to the last census in 2016 is estimated at 898 people). Gaikan is one of the unique villages and has attractions such as walnut gardens, herbal plants and beekeeping. To determine the sample size of the villagers, a simple random sampling method was used. Based on Cochran's statistics, 131 of these villagers were selected as the sample members. After referring to the study area, 128 questionnaires were successfully collected. The second group consisted of 13 available

practitioners in the field of tourism in Lorestan Province (experts of the Aligudarz Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization). This group was selected by purposive sampling method. The third group consisted of 129 tourists at the entrance to Aligudarz County (Gaikan village) who had traveled to the region more than twice. Finally, from a total of three statistical populations, 270 people were selected as the sample size for sampling.

The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire that consisted of three parts and its face and content validity were confirmed based on the collective opinion of professors and experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha test, which indicated the

appropriateness of the research tool (attractions and capabilities of rural tourism with an alpha coefficient of 0.79, obstacles and problems facing rural tourism with an alpha coefficient of 0.80, and components affecting development village tourism has an alpha coefficient of 0.78 (Table 2). SPSS20 software was used for descriptive and inferential tests to analyze the data and achieve the research objectives. A five-point Likert scale was used to analyze the factors and variables. Items in this range included very low, low, medium, high, very high and none which was added for cases where the item did not exist for the respondent. For items from "none" to "very

high", scores of 0 to 5 were considered, respectively.

The structural equation model (Amos) was used for data processing. This method is a statistical modeling technique that includes other techniques such as multivariate regression, factor analysis, and path analysis, and its main focus is on latent variables (structures) which are determined using measurable indicators and explicit variables. Given that cause-and-effect relationships between latent variables can be inferred that are not directly observable. The degree of correlation and intensity of each effect on the other can be analyzed (Bentler et al, 1980). The variables measured by the research are listed in the Table 2.

**Table 2. Different sections of the questionnaire, research variables and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each part**

Row	Part	Subpart	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Measuring tool	References
1	Demographic characteristics	-	-	-	Researcher-made questionnaire	Pouriani et al. (2020), Salehi and Vali Shariat Panahi (2019), Einali et al. (2018), Bayat and Badri (2017), Nugroho et al (2021), Kožić (2012), Harrison and Schipani (2007), Wang et al. (2021), Pazoki and Yourdkhani (2015), Karami Dehkordi et al. (2015), Iorio and Corsale (2010), Darvishi et al. (2014), Oroji et al. (2018).
2	Attractions and tourism capabilities	Use of organic product (dairy products, vegetables and fruits, etc.)	5	79/0		
		Cultural and religious attractions	3			
		Rural welfare facilities and services	3			
		Natural attractions	3			
3	Obstacles and bottlenecks in rural tourism development	Lack of proper investment	3	80/0		
		Avoidance of using agricultural products and related industries	3			
		Ignorance of local people about the benefits of tourism	4			
		Lack of amenities	3			
		Creating environmental pollution (noise, physical, etc.)	2			

## 4. Research Findings

### 4.1. Descriptive findings

Based on the data of Table 3, the results of descriptive statistics show that out of 270 respondents, 139 (51.48%) were male and 131 (48.51%) were female. Also, 47.8% of the respondents were tourists, 47.4% were villagers and 4.8% were experts in tourism industry. The

income level of more than 40% of the villagers was very low (less than 500 thousand Tomans). 38.5% of the respondents believed that the rate of planned and legalized tourism in Gaikan Village is high, while 53.8% of the respondents believed that private and public sector investment in the tourism sector of Gaikan village is very low.

**Table 3. Summary of descriptive statistics of research variables**

Row	Variable	Level	Frequency	Percent
1	Gender	Male	139	51.48
		Female	131	48.51
2	Type of respondents	Experts	13	4.8
		Villagers	128	47.4

Row	Variable	Level	Frequency	Percent
		Tourists	129	47.8
3	Income level (Toman)	much Low (less than 500 thousand)	62	48.4
		Low (500 thousand to one million)	42	32.8
		Medium (1-2 million)	9	7
		Much (2-3 million)	9	7
		Too much (more than 3 million)	6	4.7
4	The rate of planned and legalized tourism in Gaikan Village	Very low	0	0
		Low	2	7.7
		Medium	5	8.30
		High	4	38.5
		Very high	1	23
5	Private and public sector capital in rural tourism development	Very low	1	53.8
		Low	2	15.4
		Medium	1	7.7
		High	2	15.4
		Very high	7	7.7

According to the collected data, 8.3% of experts are 20 to 25 years, 0.5% are 26 to 45 years, 25.0% are 46 to 65 years and 16.7% are 66 years old or above. 0.30% of the rural respondents are 20 to 25 years old, 48.3% are 26 to 45 years old, 0.15% are 46 to 65 years old and 6.7% are 66 years old or more. Moreover, the age of 31.8% of tourists are 20 to 25 years, 53.5% in the age group 26 to 45 years, 13.2% in the age group 46 to 65 years and 1.6% 66 years and older. Also, the education level of 16.7% of experts is diploma, 0.50% are

undergraduate and 33.3% of them are postgraduate and above. 9.5% of the respondents of the Gaikan local group are illiterate, 42.9% have a less than diploma degree, 36.5% have a diploma, 7.1% have an undergraduate degree and 0.4% have a postgraduate degree or higher. In the tourist's group, 3.1% of them are illiterate, 15.7% have a less than diploma, 28.3% have a diploma degree, 30.7% have an undergraduate degree and 22.0% have a postgraduate degree or higher.

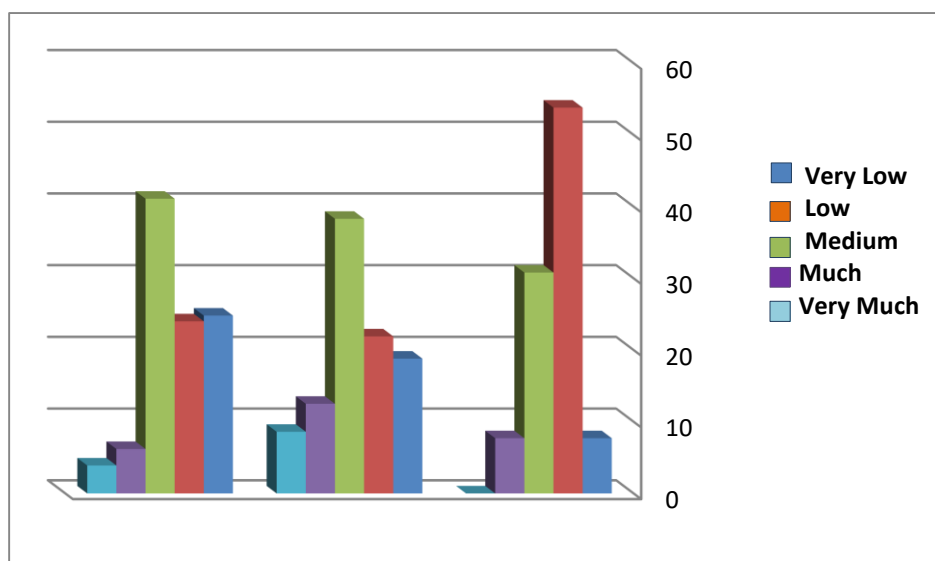


Figure 2. Frequency distribution diagram of the adequate facilities in the region



Regarding accommodation, 53.8% of the experts stated that the accommodation of tourists in Gaikan Village is in open space (personal tents), 23.1% is the house of relatives and friends and 23.1% is Malik-e-Ashtar camp. Villagers believe that 38.3% of tourists accommodate in open space, 4.7% stay in the house of relatives and friends and 57.0% in Malik-e-Ashtar camp. However, the data collected from tourists show that 59.1% of them stayed in the open air, 13.4% of them stayed in the house of relatives and friends and 27.6% of them stayed in Malik-e-Ashtar camp. In this regard, the opinion of the villagers were more in line with the real data collected from the tourists. According to the frequency distribution of the facilities adequacy in the region (Figure 2), the experts believe that the facilities in the region are very low (7.7%), low (53.8%), medium (30.8%), and high (7.7%). According to the villagers, the facilities of the village that can meet the needs of tourists are

18.8% very little, 21.9% low, 38.3% moderate, 12.5% high, and 8.6% very high. However, the tourists believe the adequacy is 24.8% very low, 24.0% low, 41.1% medium, 6.2% high, and 3.9% very high. Also, the economic profitability for the villagers from tourism is shown in Figure (3).

According to experts, tourism in this village has benefit for villagers with a rate of very low 7.7%, low 46.2%, medium 15.84% and high 30.8%. According to the villagers, the profitability of the village is 18.8% very little, 21.9% low, 38.3% medium, 12.5% high, and 8.6% very high. Moreover, tourists believed that the profit from tourism was 20.2% very low, 18.6% low, 38.0% medium, 17.1% high, and 6.2% very high. According to findings, 45.7% of tourists travel to Gaikan Village once a year, 16.3% twice a year, 9.3% three times a year, and 26.4% of them traveled 4 or more times a year. Satisfaction with the facilities among tourists were 7.7% very high, 30.8% high, 38.5% medium, and 23.0% low.

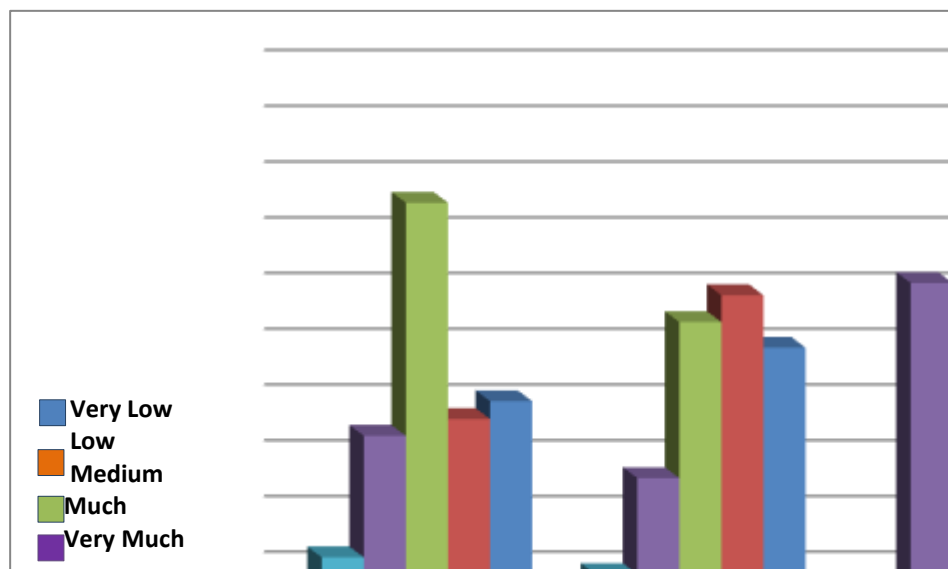


Figure 3. Frequency distribution diagram for tourism economic profitability in Gaikan Village

#### 4.2. Inferential findings

A model of rural tourism development of Gaikan Village

Gaikan rural tourism development model is based on structural equations. This technique is one of the main and new methods for solving complex models with cause and effect relationships in social sciences that allows the researcher to show the various effects of variables on each other by emphasizing the

role of measurement errors (Ramin Mehr & Charsetad, 2012). The structural equation model consists of two parts: measurement and structural equations. In the first part, it is determined how the latent variables are measured in relation to observable variables and how valid and reliable they are. In the second part, structural equations determine the causal relationships between latent

variables, and they describe the causal effects and the variance.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to evaluate the measurement model. For this purpose, the data were entered into AMOS software. To assess the validity of the data, fit indicators were used, and to evaluate the validity and reliability of latent variables (structure), convergent validity, diagnostic validity (average variance extracted (AVE)), and combined reliability (CR) were utilized, respectively. These indicators are used to confirm the goodness of fits of the theoretical model of research. Table 4 shows the fit indicators of the measurement model. The Chi-square is significant, and it shows no difference between the model and the data, so

this indicates an acceptability of the fit of model (Table 4). According to the proposed and calculated criteria for fit model (Table 4) as well as the factor loads of variables (Figure 4), it can be concluded that the latent variables or components can measure the components of rural tourism development and the model is an appropriate fit.

Therefore, after confirming the measurement model and calculating the validity of structure, in this stage, the relationships between the research structures can be tested. For this purpose, the model was implemented in Amos software; the causal relationship between the variables was tested by structural equation modeling.

**Table 4. Degree of model compliance with fit indicators**

Fit index										
Indexes	Root mean square residual	Standardized root means square residual	df Degree of freedom	Chi Square/df ratio	Goodness of fit index	Normed Fit Index (NFI)	Non-normed fit index (NNFI)	Incremental fit index (IFI)	Comparative fit index (CFI)	Root mean square error of approximation, RMSEA
Normal limit	Close to zero	Close to zero	Greater than zero	Less than 3	0.9 and above	0.9 and above	0.9 and above	0.9 and above	0.9 and above	Less than 0.08
Observed value										
Organic products	0.04	0.05	4.2	2.1	0.92	0.90	0.95	0.94	0.91	0.055
Cultural and religious attractions	0.07	0.08	4.1	2	0.97	0.94	0.94	0.99	0.90	0.04
Rural welfare facilities and services	0.06	0.05	4.4	2.5	0.99	0.96	0.96	0.95	0.96	0.05
Natural attractions	0.07	0.07	2.9	1.4	0.94	0.95	0.94	0.95	0.94	0.033
Lack of proper investment	0.05	0.04	3	1.3	0.97	0.92	0.96	0.92	0.90	0.068
Avoidance of using agricultural products and related industries	0.06	0.07	3.8	2.2	0.97	0.93	0.97	0.99	0.92	0.034
Ignorance of local people about the benefits of tourism	0.06	0.06	2.9	1.1	0.97	0.96	0.96	0.97	0.95	0.126
Lack of amenities	0.05	0.06	4.6	2.7	0.92	0.93	0.96	0.92	0.99	0.057
Environmental pollution by tourists	0.04	0.05	2.7	1	0.95	0.93	0.97	0.92	0.97	0.061

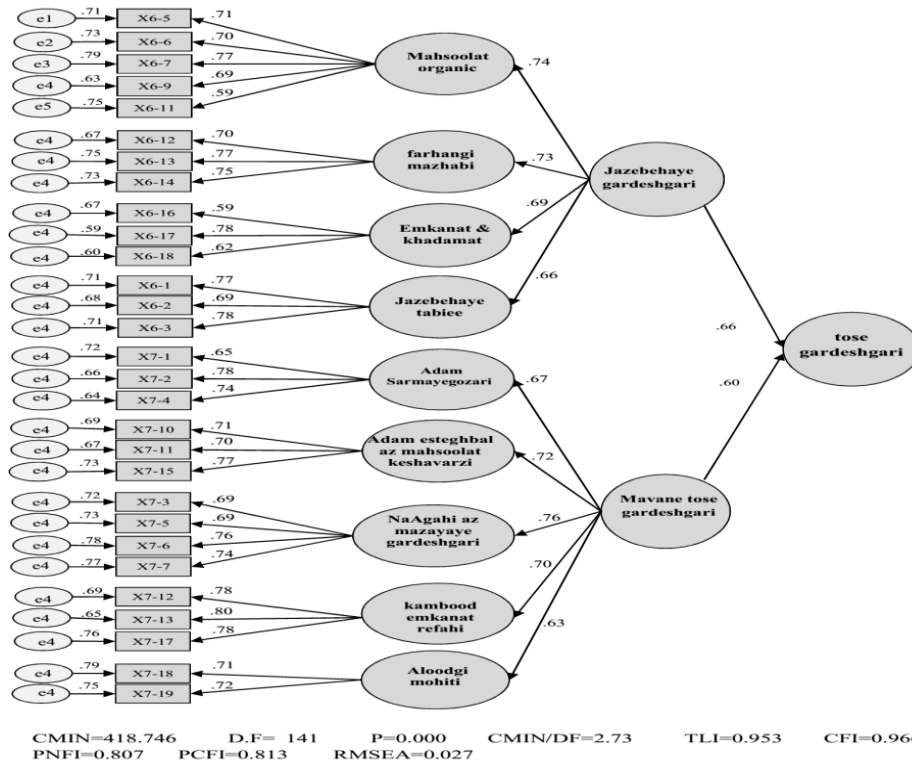


Figure 4: Final approved pattern diagram based on significance coefficient

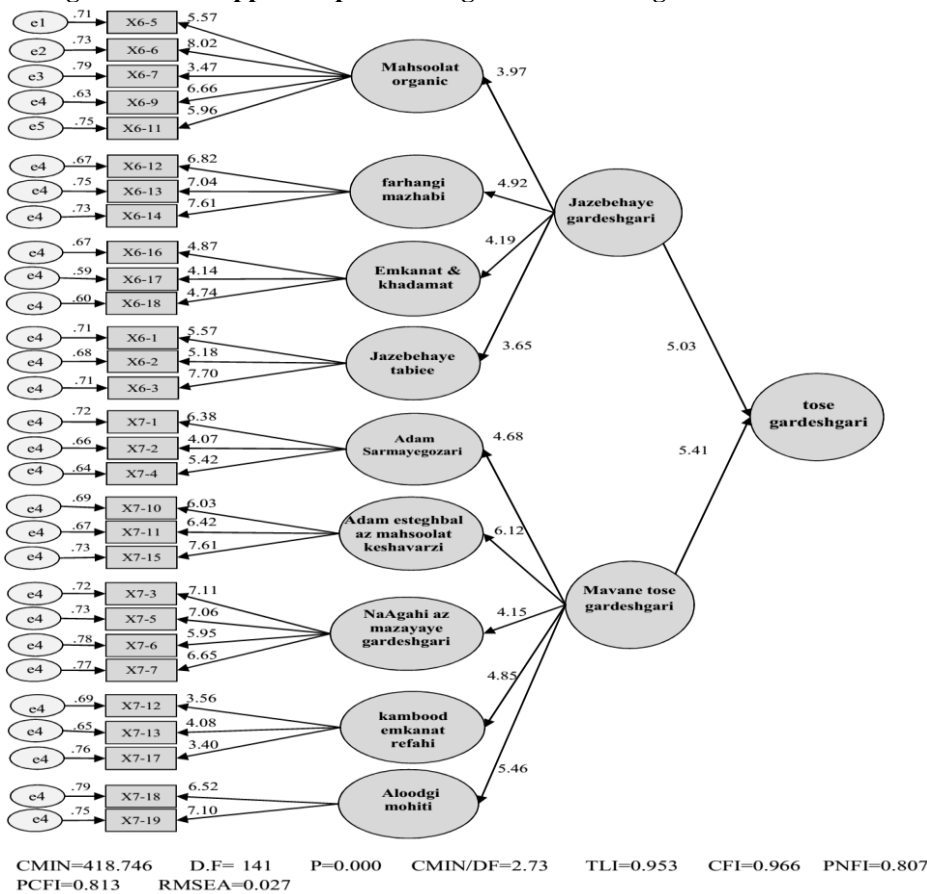


Figure 5: Final approved pattern diagram based on to standardized coefficients

Given that the value of Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) for the structural model is 0.027, or less than 0.08 (Figure 5), there is no need to make corrections to use this structure in designing the structural model, and the model has a good fit. The model can be considered reliable statistically and is able to be used to test hypotheses. Moreover, the chi-square to the degree of freedom ratio (CMIN / DF) is 73.2, adaptive fit indexes are 0.95 and destination indexes are above 0.80. And RMSEA index with a value of 0.027 indicates the feasibility of the model. In order to prioritize the attractions and tourism capabilities of Gaikan Village and to investigate the obstacles and bottlenecks of rural tourism development, Friedman test was used, which is

illustrated in Tables 5, 6, 7, 8. The results of Friedman test show that there is a significant difference between the average rank of attractions and tourism capabilities of Gaikan Village. The obstacles and bottlenecks of tourism development of Gaikan Village also shows a significant difference at the level of 99% confidence (1% error). According to the results of Table 5, the value of the chi-square test is 465.185. According to the results obtained from the mean rank (Table 6), the components of “use of organic product” (3.78), “cultural and religious attractions” (2.62), “rural welfare facilities and services” (2.25), and “natural attractions” (1.36), respectively, have the highest rank and importance in the development of tourism in Gaikan Village.

**Table 5. Significance of Friedman test**

Results of Friedman test	
244	Number of samples
465.185	Chi-square
3	df
0.000	Significance level

**Table 6. Ranking of attractions and tourism capabilities in Gaikan Village**

Row	Components	Rank average
1	Use of organic product	3.78
2	Cultural and religious attractions	2.62
3	Rural welfare facilities and services	2.25
4	Natural attractions	1.36

Based on the results of Table 7, the value of the Chi-square test is 439.644. Moreover, according to the results obtained from the mean rank (Table 8), the components of ignorance of local people about the benefits of tourism (4.42), avoidance of using agricultural products (3.26), lack of proper

investment (3.14), lack of amenities (2.62) and environmental pollution (noise, physical, etc.) (1.56), respectively, rank the most important obstacles and bottlenecks of tourism development of Gaikan Village.

**Table 7. Significance of Friedman test**

Results of Friedman test	
244	Number of samples
439.644	Chi-square
4	df
0.000	Significance level

**Table 8. Obstacles and bottlenecks in rural tourism development of Gaikan Village**

Row	Components	Mean rank
1	Use of organic product	3.78
2	Cultural and religious attractions	2.62
3	Rural welfare facilities and services	2.25
4	Natural attractions	1.36

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The findings of the structural equation model of rural tourism development in Gaikan evidently confirm that natural attractions (value = 3.97) with the effect of 0.74, rural amenities and services (value = 4.92) with the effect of 0.73, cultural and religious attractions (value = 4.19) with the effect of 0.69 and using organic products (value = 3.65) with the effect of 0.66, sequentially have the greatest impact on the development of tourism in Gaikan Village. Moreover, the results indicate that the identified indicators are confirmed and has a good fit, so the relevant model is approved. The results of the study on the attractions and capabilities of rural tourism in the region are consistent with the findings of [Pouriani et al. \(2020\)](#), [Salehi and Vali Shariat Panahi \(2019\)](#), [Einali et al. \(2018\)](#), [Bayat and Badri \(2017\)](#), and [Nugroho et al. \(2021\)](#). The results of factor analysis for these variables are correspondingly: lack of proper investment (value = 4.68), with the effect of 0.67, avoidance of using agricultural products and related industries (value = 6.12), with the effect of 0.72, Ignorance of local people about the benefits of tourism (value = 4.15), with the effect of 0.76, lack of amenities (value = 4.85) with the effect of 0.70, and creating environmental pollution (value = 5.46), with the effect of 0.63. The identified indicators of obstacles and bottlenecks were approved and have a good fit. Therefore, the relevant model is approved. Findings of research on barriers to tourism development in the region are in consistent with the results of [Wang et al. \(2021\)](#), [Pazoki and Yourdkhani \(2015\)](#) and [Karami Dehkordi et al. \(2015\)](#).

The results of Friedman test show that the components of using organic products, cultural and religious attractions, rural welfare facilities and services, and natural attractions have the highest rank and importance in the tourism development in Gaikan Village. In addition, the most important obstacles of tourism development are ignorance of local people about the benefits of tourism, avoidance of using agricultural products, lack of proper investment, lack of amenities, and environmental pollution (noise, physical, etc.).

Based on the observations in Gaikan Village, in the context of rural tourism, the spatial patterns include recreational and natural attractions, which is one of the effective factors and perhaps the

most important factor of tourism in the region. The reason for this can be changes in livelihood pattern of the people and the transition from rural and agricultural society to industrial and urban communities, which caused people to distance themselves from nature. Also, urban lifestyle characterized by problems such as pollution, traffic, monotony, etc., has broadened the need of citizens and people for rural spaces and nature. Threats of tourism and lack of effective and sustainable planning in rural tourism will result in adverse consequences such as pollution of water resources and natural environment, destruction of natural landscapes, increased migration, stagnation of agricultural activities, and consequently raise of unemployment. Proper planning and utilization of tourism opportunities and capacities in this area for sustainable rural tourism achievement can be effective for sustainable development. Therefore, the need for effective planning and management of tourism activities is essential for the development of sustainable rural tourism.

In general, this study showed that the physical effects and consequences of tourism on the region have been less connected to economical and social impacts, and to some extent, it made damages for the environment. Since the Gaikan region has a lot of capacities for tourism, this sector can greatly increase the income of local and rural people, increase the sale of agricultural products, and the prosperity of handicrafts. Moreover, the supply of dairy products and the expansion of the village's external relations with neighboring areas can promote economic growth to the village. In general, considering the capabilities of the region, by doing the necessary activities and facilitating services in the villages or the region, tourism can have favorable economic, social and environmental effects (expansion of green spaces) in Gaikan Village and surrounding areas. Therefore, according to the obtained results, the following practical suggestions can be presented:

- Since from the experts' point of view, the most important attractions and capabilities of the region are the use of organic agricultural products, cultural and religious attractions, rural welfare facilities and services, and natural attractions, it is recommended to invest in the mentioned capabilities and fields;

- Given the lack of transportation, residential and public infrastructure in the region, establishing the accommodations such as hotels as well as camps are suggested in Gaikan region;
- Creating and improving road infrastructure, public transportation between the cities as well as temporary accommodations;
- Training specialized personnel by the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage of Lorestan Province, in order to maximize rural tourism, as well as training the rural tour guides by travel agencies;
- Guide tourists by tour managers, and raise awareness by printing brochures, etc., about avoiding noise and environmental pollution and not damaging agricultural products.
- Organizing, coordinating, controlling, and supervising the development and support of non-governmental organizations pertaining to cultural tourism and rural tourism;
- Appropriate introduction of rural tourism attractions such as natural attractions, clothing, productions (baking bread, animal oil, and dairy products), handicrafts (weaving, rugs, carpets), cultural ceremonies (weddings, mourning, etc.),

- local music, local folklore, musical instruments, etc. These capabilities can be augmented by the use of the Internet and social networks;
- Training the villagers and make them familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of rural tourism and encouraging them to accept tourists, as well;
- Allocating the required and low-interest bank loans to investors interested in working in the field of rural tourism;
- Creating a clear and appropriate mechanism for rural people to capture the benefits from the revenues of rural tourism;
- Mentioning the employment and economic potential of rural tourism to related organizations and as a result creating sufficient integration in government agencies for planning and supporting the development of rural tourism in Lorestan Province.

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## طراحی مدل معادلات ساختاری امکان‌سنجی توسعه گردشگری روستایی (مطالعه موردی: روستای گایکان شهرستان الیگودرز)

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### چکیده مبسوط

#### ۱. مقدمه

تنها با کالاها و محصولات فیزیکی، بلکه با سایر خدمات نیز تفاوت‌هایی دارد. به عبارت دیگر در مرحله نخست این محصول در یک دوره زمانی و طی مراحل مختلف تجربه می‌شود و همین امر ارزیابی آن را دشوار و پیچیده می‌کند. در مرحله دوم این محصول برای گردشگران پر مخاطره است، زیرا علاوه بر داشتن هزینه‌های فرصت، زمان از دست رفته را نمی‌توان به دست آورد. در مرحله سوم بخشی از این محصول مبتنی بر امیال شخصی گردشگران از جمله رهایی از فشارهای زندگی، کسب تجربه‌های نو، تفریح و خوش گذرانی است. بنابراین برنامه‌ریزی و توسعه گردشگری مستلزم شناسایی این نوع انگیزه‌ها و تقاضاهاست، شناخت انگیزه‌ها و تقاضای گردشگران از وظایف بازاریابان گردشگری است و در نهایت محصول گردشگری دارای قابلیت بهره‌برداری دوگانه است. یعنی این محصولات فقط مورد استفاده گردشگران غیر بومی قرار نمی‌گیرد (خینیان، ۲۰۰۹: ۱-۱۴).

#### ۳. روش تحقیق

این پژوهش، به لحاظ هدف کاربردی، و به روش توصیفی - تحلیلی است و برای حصول به هدف پژوهش از روش‌های میدانی و پرسشنامه برای گردآوری داده‌ها استفاده شد. پایایی آن با استفاده از آزمون آلفای کرونباخ برای ۲ مؤلفه امکان‌سنجی (جاذبه‌ها و قابلیت‌های گردشگری روستا، موانع و مشکلات پیش‌روی گردشگری روستا) به ترتیب، ۰/۷۹ و ۰/۸۰ محاسبه شد، که بیانگر مناسب بودن ابزار پژوهش بود. جامعه آماری شامل سه دسته کارشناسان، گردشگران و روستاییان بودند که ۲۷۰ نفر (۱۳ کارشناس، ۱۲۹ نفر

انتخاب یک مقصد روستایی، اهمیت ویژه‌ای در روند تصمیم‌گیری گردشگران روستایی ایفا می‌کند، مقاصد روستایی مکان‌هایی هستند که در آن گردشگران ضمن احترام به هویت مناطق روستایی برای گذراندن اوقات فراغت به دنبال بازدید از محیط‌های طبیعی، و لذت بردن از تجربیات اصیل فرهنگی سنتی هستند. گردشگری روستایی را می‌توان تجربه‌ای مبتنی بر کشور تلقی کرد که طیف گسترده‌ای از جاذبه‌ها و فعالیت‌هایی است که می‌توانند در حیطه کشاورزی باشند و یا نباشند و فرصت‌های ارائه خدمات به جوامع محلی را افزایش دهد، در عین حال ماهیت چشم‌انداز جغرافیایی را که به دنبال بهره‌برداری از آن است را به چالش بکشاند. بدین‌سان، این مقاله با هدف بررسی امکان‌سنجی توسعه گردشگری روستایی با استفاده از مدل معادلات ساختاری به بررسی این مهم در روستای گایکان شهرستان الیگودرز پرداخت.

#### ۲. مبانی نظری تحقیق

گردشگری را می‌توان به مثابه نهادی در نظر گرفت که میلیون‌ها برهم کنش در آن صورت می‌گیرد، نهادی که دارای تاریخچه خاص خود بوده و مجموعه‌ای از دانش و اطلاعات در آن انباشته شده و انبوهی از میلیون‌ها انسان در این فرایند اقتصادی درگیر شده و خود را بخشی از بدنه آن احساس می‌کنند. از دیگر ارکان گردشگری، تسهیلات و خدمات گردشگری است، که به عنوان یکی از بنیادی-ترین اشکال عرضه در صنعت گردشگری بیشترین حجم درآمدزایی را برای جوامع میزبان به ارمغان می‌آورند. محصول گردشگری نه

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طبیعت را دوجندان کرده است. تهدیدهای گردشگری و نبود برنامه‌ریزی موثر و پایدار در گردشگری روستایی، موجب پیدایش پیامدهای نامطلوبی مانند آلودگی منابع آب و محیط طبیعی، تخریب چشم اندازهای طبیعی، افزایش مهاجرت، رکود فعالیت‌های کشاورزی به دلیل کوهستانی بودن منطقه و رشد بیکاری آشکار و پنهان شده است. در حالی که با برنامه ریزی و بهره برداری مناسب از فرصت‌ها و ظرفیت‌های گردشگری این ناحیه، برای دستیابی به گردشگری پایدار روستایی، می‌توان فعالیت‌های موثری برای تحقق توسعه پایدار انجام داد. از این‌رو، لزوم برنامه‌ریزی و مدیریت موثر فعالیت‌های گردشگری برای توسعه گردشگری پایدار روستایی ضروری است. بنابراین، به طور کلی یافته‌های این پژوهش نشان داد که آثار و پیامدهای کالبدی گردشگری بر منطقه، کمتر از بخش‌های اقتصادی و اجتماعی بوده است و تا حدودی به محیط زیست آسیب وارد کرده و منجر به آلودگی شده است. با توجه به اینکه، منطقه گایکان از ظرفیت‌های فراوانی در زمینه گردشگری برخوردار است، گردشگری می‌تواند بر افزایش درآمدهای مردم منطقه و روستا، افزایش فروش محصولات کشاورزی، رونق صنایع دستی نیز بشدت تاثیرگذار باشد.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** امکان‌سنجی، گردشگری روستایی، مدل معادلات ساختاری، روستای گایکان، شهرستان الیگودرز.

#### تشکر و قدردانی

پژوهش حاضر، برگرفته از پایان‌نامه کارشناسی ارشد سارا زلّقی، گروه جغرافیا، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی دانشگاه لرستان، خرم‌آباد، ایران است و فاقد حامی مالی می‌باشد.

گردشگر و ۱۲۸ نفر از روستاییان) به روش نمونه‌گیری تصادفی ساده انتخاب شدند. برای تحلیل داده‌ها از تحلیل عاملی اکتشافی و مدل معادلات ساختاری در محیط نرم‌افزار SPSS20 و AMOS استفاده شد.

#### ۴. یافته‌های تحقیق

یافته‌ها نشان داد مهمترین جاذبه‌ها و قابلیت‌های گردشگری روستای گایکان در قالب ۴ جاذبه اصلی قرار دارد که عبارتند از جاذبه‌های فرهنگی و مذهبی؛ استفاده از محصولات ارگانیک گایکان؛ امکانات و خدمات رفاهی روستا؛ و طبیعی. همچنین مهمترین محدودیت‌ها و موانع توسعه گردشگری این روستا عبارتند از: عدم سرمایه‌گذاری مناسب، عدم استقبال از محصولات کشاورزی و صنایع وابسته، نا آگاهی مردم منطقه از مزایای گردشگری، کمبود امکانات رفاهی و ایجاد آلودگی‌های محیطی که ارتباط مستقیم و معنی‌داری با توسعه گردشگری روستایی روستای گایکان دارند.

#### ۵. بحث و نتیجه‌گیری

براساس بررسی‌های انجام شده در روستای گایکان، مشخص گردید که الگوی فضای منطقه در چارچوب گردشگری روستایی در برگیرنده گونه‌های گردشگری تفریحی و طبیعت‌گردی است و جاذبه‌های طبیعی یکی از عوامل موثر و شاید مهمترین وجه گردشگری در منطقه باشد؛ زیرا تغییر در الگوی فعالیت و معیشت مردم و گذار از جامعه روستایی و مبتنی بر کشاورزی به جامعه‌ای صنعتی و شهری باعث دوری و گسست مردم از طبیعت شده است. همچنین زندگی شهری با مشکلاتی مانند آلودگی، ترافیک، یکنواختی و غیره، نیاز شهروندان و مردم به فضاهای روستایی و



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