



## Identifying and Evaluating Businesses with Branding Potential in Rural Areas (Case study: Turkmen Sahara Region – Iran)

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** In recent years, it has become more necessary to seek and apply new strategies to strengthen the foundations and diversification of economic activities in rural areas. Accordingly, in the context of the new theories of sustainable development, one of the approaches that is of great importance for the growth and sustainability of businesses in today's complex environments is branding. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to identify businesses with branding potential in Turkmen Sahara of Golestan province in Iran. The overwhelming limitations of product marketing are supporting the declining revenues of traditional sources in dealing with competitive markets as well as trying to expand, making available and identifying regional products with a branding approach

**Design/methodology/approach:** In this study, we first identified and localized the branding indices and then identified the brand-liable products in the region using the Additive Ratio Assessment (ARAS) method in multi-criteria decision making.

**Findings:** The results showed that among the indicators of brand products in rural areas, satisfaction index with weight of 0.095 was put in the first place followed by adaptability with weight of 0.091, quality-orientation approach with a weight of 0.086 and valuable with a weight of 0.081. Also, among the common businesses and products in the region, cotton cultivation with a coefficient of 0.971 was the first priority followed by carpet weaving with a coefficient of 0.966, traditional foods with a coefficient of 0.952, Turkmen horse breeding with a coefficient of 0.943 and eco-tourism with a coefficient of 0.924 for planning the branding of products and services based on Brand Explanatory Indexes and using ARAS method.

**Practical implications:** The study provides a perspective on the process of branding products and services in rural areas.

**Originality/value:** This paper makes two major contributions: first, the introduction of branding indicators for rural businesses, and second, applying decision making models in the process of branding products and services with brand potential in rural studies.

**Key words:** Branding, Rural business, Additive Ratio Assessment (ARAS), Turkmen Sahara.

**Paper type-** Scientific & Research.

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## 1. Introduction

The current economic situation in rural areas of Iran has been declining, with widespread displacement and migration of villagers to cities, the loss of traditional businesses and institutions due to a lack of proper markets for their products, the spread of poverty and unemployment and food insecurity. The overwhelming marginalization of rural populations, and cases like this, shows that, in practice, the vital development goals of sustained income growth, expansion of productive employment, and more equitable growth benefits in rural areas have failed. The continuation of this process has resulted in the weakening of territorial cohesion. On the other hand, these areas often have widespread untapped economic potentials that could be better exploited and contribute to the well-being of rural residents (Crosta, Davies, & Maguire, 2006; Ghadiri Masoum & Najafi Kani, 2003; Rezvani, Baghbani, & Jafari, 2014). Therefore, seeking and applying new planning solutions by planners has made it more and more necessary to strengthen economic foundations and diversify economic activity in rural areas.

Accordingly, in the context of new sustainable development theories, one of the approaches to business growth and sustainability in today's highly competitive and complex environments is branding that is of paramount importance. That process of designing and building a business centered around the brand and engaging in ongoing interaction with customers to achieve competitive advantage (Urde, 1999; Salehi, Ikhlas & Tahri, 2016)

In fact, this approach involves creating and maintaining a set of valuable features and characteristics for the product to make it consistent, relevant, attractive and distinct from the customer's point of view (Chernev, 2018; Luong, Vo, & Le, 2017). In other words, branding is a new strategy for empowerment, capacity building and institutionalization in rural areas that is of great importance in the process of sustainable economic development of the countryside, thus providing a suitable context and development tool for economic development of countries, especially developing countries (Verheul, Wennekers, Sudretsch, & Thurik, 2001; Eftekhari, Sajasi Gheidari & Mahdavi, 2016).

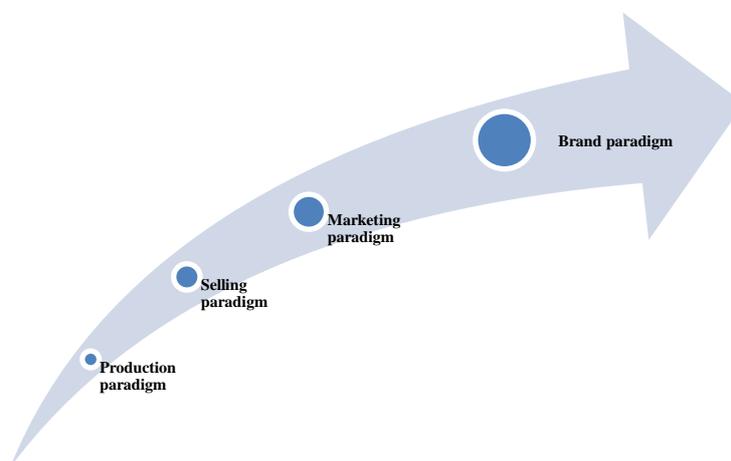
According to studies by the European Market Research Association in the last decade, 45% of the world's assets are allocated to brand (Asadollahi, 2015). It is an inside-out approach that is the core brand of the business and its strategy. In this approach, the brand is a strategic solution to interact with the stakeholders, namely producers, consumers and market forces. The underlying rationale for this view is that having a strong brand can make stronger gains and be more consistent in marketing performance (Urde, 1999; Salehi, Ikhlas & Tahri, 2016). In the past, managers have believed that branding is an enterprise-specific activity (Merrilees, 2007), but today, it has been proven that the development of rural businesses with a branding approach has a significant role to play in the development of the world economy. Accordingly, in the last decade, researchers have paid much attention to these types of businesses and their marketing and this has led to the rapid growth of these businesses (Moriarty, Jones, Rowley, & Kupiec-Teahan, 2008; Khodadad Hosseini, Golabi & yadollahi, 2016). Studies show a positive attitude to branding in this type of activity (Bauer, Heinrich, & Martin, 2007). Because of these strategic reasons, almost all marketing activities range from new product development to retail advertising products focusing on making brands. Therefore, if branding is done correctly and with a certain kind of intelligence, it ensures the success of businesses to become a long-term strategy for poverty alleviation and diversification into the rural economy. However, despite the many benefits of branding, evidence suggests that limited research has been conducted on branding as one of the enablers of rural economics and businesses due to the native conditions in our country. Therefore, in view of the necessity and importance of the subject, this study aimed at identifying brand-capable businesses in rural areas of Turkmen Sahara in Iran and answer to questions like what the indicators of branding of rural businesses are in the study area? And based on the Brand Explanatory Indexes, which businesses in the study area have the most potential for branding?

## 2. Research Theoretical Literature

The intellectual frameworks of business facing the market have undergone numerous changes over the past decades. The starting point of this

evolution can be seen in the production paradigm that emerged in the leading countries after the industrial revolution. In this context, factories were able to produce large-scale standard products and the customer could, without much choice buy these products. Another key paradigm emerged from that was the concept of sales, which, given the increasing level of technology within their organizations, the manufacturers decided to design and manufacture new products, with the main aim of increasing sales. However, the rise of competitive space and the globalization of business space have also shown the inadequacy of the sales framework, so a new paradigm has emerged with the marketing concept according to which companies are researching the production

and supply of their products, whether goods or services in the marketplace and getting feedback from customers. The ultimate goal, meanwhile, was to create more customer satisfaction. But today, a newer framework has emerged in advanced economies, which is interpreted as the brand paradigm (Holt & Holt, 2004; Esteghlal, 2016). Accordingly, the brand has now become one of the main venture capital funds of rural businesses seeking to motivate customers to use specific products or services to help them manage the level of vulnerability and risk of their activities and minimize economic impact in rural areas against economic shocks (Abimbola, Vallaster, & Kocak, 2007; (Eftekhari, Sajasi Gheidari &Mahdavi, 2016).



**Figure 1. The evolution of business paradigms**

Brand is actually an abstraction of identity, authenticity, character, and difference. For this reason, business exchanges are vital and represent the synergistic effect of all marketing efforts and act as a strategic tool to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of rural businesses (Piehler, Schade, & Burmann, 2019). In defining these types of businesses, three criteria can be considered; first, to provide services to villagers, second, to be located in the rural area, and third, to supply and sell rural services and products, including food and other natural products, handicrafts, recreational activities or environmental goods (Bosworth, 2012; Bosworth & Turner, 2018). These types of businesses are carried out according to the size of the villages and using rural facilities and equipment and are particularly effective. In other words, these types of activities can be said to take place on a small and medium scale and in the living space,

and their scope of operation is broadened locally and partly on a regional scale. In most cases, their investment is small and relies on personal and family labor. In such businesses, it is easier to make decisions and deal with sudden changes (Odoom, Narteh, & Boateng, 2017; Onugu, 2005). Given this generalization, there are several reasons in the brand literature for branding rural businesses in today's competitive world. From a customer view, reducing perceived financial and non-financial risks and research costs are key benefits to the brand. For the brand owners, the key issue is the ability to offer better prices than competitors, the ability to gain more market share, the ability to retain customers through brand loyalty and reduce marketing costs, measure brand equity and consider different cognitive aspects for attention to branding (Chen, 2001). In fact, a good brand directs consumer choice in a highly complex market

environment, thus, the same brands create shortcuts in the consumer decision-making process that adds to customer loyalty. Since the majority of customers choose names that they know, customer loyalty to these companies is greater (Herremans, Ryans, & Aggarwal, 2000). According to researchers such as, branding plays a decisive role in enhancing the effectiveness of economic activities and the ability of businesses to communicate internally and externally (Abimbola, 2001). This can be considered from a number of perspectives; firstly, the brand that an entrepreneurial firm chooses is depending on its application level, valuable in encouraging the entrepreneur to focus more on the core value he or she intends to offer to customers (Merrilees, 2007). In addition, branding leads to a better and faster business model formation (Abimbola, Vallaster, & Kocak 2007) and increases the acquisition of customers in the early stages of business startups and, subsequently, with customer loyalty, it ensures business that significantly enhances the likelihood of financial support.

The brand is one of the most important assets of a businesses as well as the entrepreneur, and include the prejudice, perception and embodiment of the personality of the brand, and, on the other hand, include structures and levels of understanding and awareness of brand management, goals and ultimately, through market, the nature of the product affects the nature of competition and business attitudes (Ojasalo, Nätti, Olkkonen, & Management, 2008). Based on the above, the following are some of the foreign studies in this field: According to studies (Mowle & Merrilees, 2005) branding as a central component of marketing impacts rural businesses through inter-organizational factors, marketing mix, market research and consumer behavior. Some also believed that branding is an important factor in the development of businesses and exports of Carpet products in Iran (Melewar, Small, Pecotich, & Ward, 2007). According to research (Kanama & Nakazawa, 2017), branding ensures the safety and quality of the product in the minds of consumers and provides more revenue for a business (Krake, 2005). Prior studies showed that brands have become an important process of employment creation and business development through the growth and creation of organizations. Also, (Low & Lamb, 2000) considered the most important goals of branding rural businesses as recognizing

and understanding customer needs and changes in production technology and service delivery to meet customer needs for competitiveness, prevent elimination in the economic cycle along with diversification to rural economy patterns and change.

Branding has also been the subject of various studies in the country, some of which are mentioned here. In an article, Golabi and Mehrabi (2010) identify and conceptualize the process of entrepreneurial branding in small and medium enterprises of active entrepreneurs in the food industry. The process of implementing the article is based on the process of conducting a case study in accordance with the theory of Gauri. The research findings indicate that the entrepreneurial brand in entrepreneurial enterprises, as an applied tool, is for the integration of all business processes.

Esfahanian (2011) in reviewing and developing a suitable model for the development of Iranian saffron, conclude that branding is an important factor in business development and export of products such as saffron. It can introduce product easier, faster and more practical than the past in market. Aghasafari and Karbasi (2016), in their article entitled "The impact of attitudes on branded products (case study, rice)" examined the tendency of consumers to rice products (using fuzzy technique method). The results showed that consumers have positive attitude towards branded rice, and the reasonable price of this type of rice is the most important factor influencing the tendency to buy this kind of rice.

Sarshoumi (2016), in a study entitled "Branding and Strategic issues for Isfahan Handicrafts with PCDL Method", which was based on quantitative and qualitative data on structured interviews and questionnaires, This results were obtained: 1. Quality and price of products are the determining characteristics for customers in branding. 2. The shape of the logo, audio and video media are also the most important advertising options.

Fazli (2014) in a qualitative study in multi cases has examined branding in home-based businesses. The focus of study is on nutrition. The results of analyzing the components of brand value, marketing, brand positioning, etc. shows that the quality of the product, creativity and innovation in the production of products and some unique features of the product have played the most

important role in the process of branding and development of these businesses.

The most important goals of branding rural businesses obtained by Eftekhari et al. (2016) was recognition and understanding customer needs and change in production technology and service delivery to meet customer needs in order to be competitive prevent elimination in the economic cycle along with diversification of rural economic patterns and change in the field of geography, and market activities. (Abbasi, Sharifzadeh, Abdullah Zadeh & Mahboubi, 2017) did a study aimed at introducing entrepreneurial marketing in agricultural cooperatives. The study has a special approach to branding, which was done in a review and analytical way. They concluded that branding is a central component in entrepreneurial marketing. So it can be the key to success for marketing of agricultural products by agricultural production cooperatives.

The results of Mousavi, Sepahvand and Shariatnejad (2017) A study in explaining the components of branding for tourism, indicates that by branding, declining demand for tourists issue, insufficient knowledge of tourists about tourism

and information and low advertising about natural attractions and history will be resolved.

In general, considering the previous materials and the past studies, it can be stated that in the current competitive and complex environment, brands are extremely important in growth, durability and longevity of businesses. In this article, we tried to provide a framework for branding of rural businesses to understand the realities of economic activity in the villages of the study area.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Geographical Scope of the Research

Turkmen Sahara area is 65.4% of Golestan province with a total area of 13373.7 km<sup>2</sup>. The region is bounded on the west by the Caspian Sea and from the north to Turkmenistan as shown in Figure (2) and from the east to the North Khorasan Province. According to the latest census in 2016, the province consists of six districts (Maravehtapeh, Kalaleh, Gonbad, AgGla, Bandar Turkmen and Gomishan) with 11 urban points and 493 residential villages that make up the majority of Turkmen population.

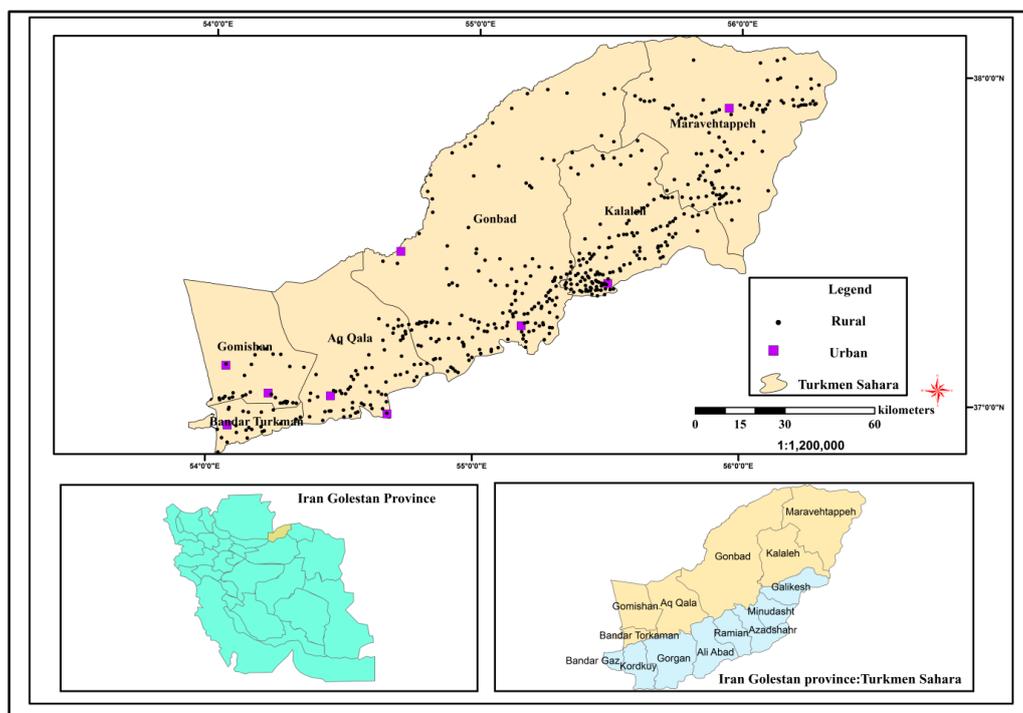


Figure 2. Geographical location of the study area

The economy in the region relies primarily on agricultural activities, with crops such as wheat, barley, cotton and canola being the major contributors. In addition to farming, livestock (horse, camel, cattle, etc.), eco-tourism activities,

traditional crafts and service jobs are complemented by rural men and women. Figure (3) shows the spatial distribution of some of the common economic activities of the villages in the region.

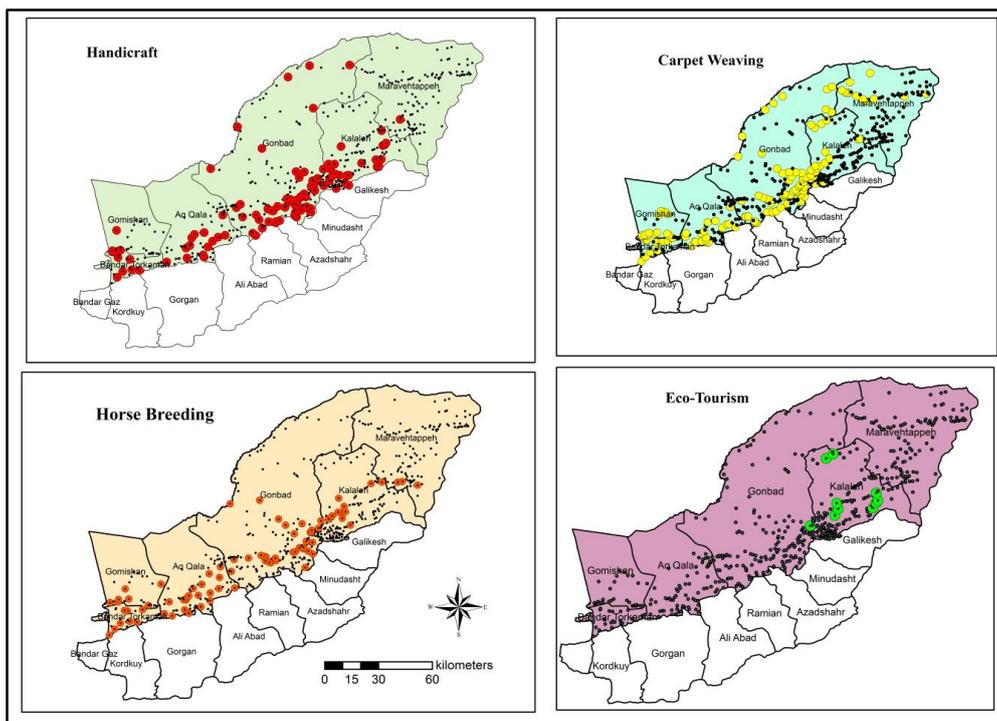


Figure 3. Spatial Distribution of Common Businesses in Turkmen Sahara

### 3.2. Methodology

This study was an applied exploratory, descriptive and analytical using library and field methods. In the process of research, using weight techniques, after reviewing the theoretical basics, the weights of rural brand products and services were identified and determined, and, then, ARAS method was used to identify the brand-capable businesses in the region. For this purpose, to obtain brand explanatory indexes, firstly, by analyzing the literature of branding and internal and external experiences, a correlated set of 20 indicators was extracted, and then, to achieve indigenous indicators appropriate to the situation and conditions of the region, the opinions of 20 university professors in Golestan province, 20 administrative experts and 30 local administrators (head to the district, district council representatives and village councilors) were used to evaluate the importance of the selection criteria. Then, based on the sum of mean scores and standard deviation,

using cumulative weighting technique, the top 10 indicators that had the highest allocation weights were selected and the status of 17 products (business) and the routine services in rural areas were evaluated based on the selected indices in a 5-point scale using the ARAS method.

So far, several techniques have been used to rank options. However, this important point has always been of interest to decision-making scientists to use models that can consider the internal relationships between the factors used in evaluation techniques. A review of the literature shows that the use of such models has been very limited. Therefore, in order to be functional, a comprehensive and general model is needed. Models that can take into account the internal relationships of decision criteria and take advantage of the expert opinions of experts, also consider the uncertainty in the judgment of experts. The Aras technique is based on this theory. Logically, he believes that complex phenomena can be understood using simple

relative comparisons. This technique is a powerful way to provide performance rates and the degree of desirability of the various options relative to the optimal situation, which also facilitates relative application.

Also, the effectiveness of this method in solving complex decision-making problems along with fuzzy and gray models is another prominent feature. The capability of this technique has been confirmed in many studies for ranking, and therefore it is one of the most reliable multi-criteria decision-making techniques (Dehghani & Ali Akbari Nouri, 2016; Arab, Hosseini Dehshiri, & Nasiri, 2017). In this method, the sum of the weighted and normalized values of the criteria for each option that represents the condition of an option is divided by the sum of the weighted and

normalized values of the best option. This ratio is called the degree of optimality. On the basis of this degree, the options are ranked (Zavadskas & Turskis, 2010).

### 3.3. Research variables and indicators

Due to the literature and definitions of brand theory and branding, and operational models, it seems that the most acceptable approach to planning the branding of rural businesses is to use references and indicators. Based on internal and external studies, as shown in Table (1), it led to the identification of twenty indicators which explain the business and products and services of the brand

**Table 1. Explanatory Indicators of Brand Businesses**

Sources: Farshchi, (2013); Pirhadi (2016); Shahsavari and Alam Tabriz (2014); Amani (2016); Khodadad Hosseini et al. (2014); Saffariyeh (2016); Rahmani (2010); Ahmadi and Khodami (2012); Mousavi et al. (1396); Piehler&etal(2018), Keller (2006), Rothe & lamont, (1973); Kwong & Candinegara (2014), Arbore, Busacca, & Services (2009); Kim & Hyun (2011)

Indicator	Definition
Valuable	There is more value than material value for the product or activity that has a material and spiritual value that will increase the incentive to purchase among customers.
Credibility	Improving consumer perception and greater customer loyalty that will lead to product development and product sales.(Garrido-Morgado, González-Benito, & Martos-Partal, 2016)
Believability	Having credible and feasible reasons for customers to improve and respond to customers' needs and interests for product development and operation
Adaptability	Less vulnerability to market activities and environmental conditions, affecting different groups (customer persuasion) and more flexible responses to market fluctuations, leading to continued production and product development or activity
Interest	There are emotional benefits for consumers that drive increased purchasing and development activities
Satisfaction	Customer satisfaction with the product or activity that leads to the continuation of the long-term consumer relationship with the product or activity((Arbore, Busacca, & Services, 2009)
Lovely	In the sense of forming and encouraging innovation, recruiting and retaining talented and trained forces for productive development and productivity.
Charm	The product or activity is visually and entertainingly popular (having popularity) in a way that leads to increased consumer buying of the product.
Supportive	The product or activity can be legally, competitively and privately protected, invested and maintained (receiving support and cooperation) and the product has a large share of value added in rural, regional and national areas
Feasibility	Supporting customer-friendly mental interactions and convincing them of product or activity realities
Qualitative	Quality assurance to the customer or the degree to which the product is faultless so it is valuable to the customer while satisfying their needs, so they recommend it to others.
Competitiveness	Creating a distinction between businesses and competitors (being unique) that enables the product or activity to stay in the customers' minds with the benefits and promises and influence their experiences (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016)
Durability	Strengthen the customer's mental and productive interactions with the product, leading to increased commitment and the use of resources and forces in the market, leading to product development and long-term activity
Competitiveness	Having the advantage of delivering superior value to customers and creating a powerful, desirable and

Indicator	Definition
	unique mindset that enhances and thrives on core business activities such as production and sales.
Permeability	In the sense of having a favorable market position and covering different consumers (the ubiquity and stability of access to the product), the consequence of which is to stimulate demand for product development and activity (Keller & Lehmann, 2006)
Diversity	Having the ability to produce and sell in different market shapes and conditions and take advantage of different capacities to offer and sell in the market that lead to diversification of sources of income
Efficiency	The speed and responsiveness of a product or activity in delivering customer service that, while providing satisfaction, will increase productivity and prosperity and business development.
Sustainable market	Having a good market over the long term with easy access to technology and broadening the scope of product penetration will lead to product development and transfer to foreign markets
Self-sufficiency	The dependence of manufactured goods in terms of materials and technology abroad and high domestic consumption, which comprises a large volume of product, plays an important role in the development of production, employment and living standards (Poveda, 2011)
Existence	In the sense of sufficient resources and physical access to produce and supply the product

#### 4. Research Findings

Using the opinions of experts and local managers, as seen in Table (2), the final weighted satisfaction indices (0.095) ranked first followed by adaptability (0.091), and qualitative with a

weight of (0.086). It is worth mentioning that in this paper, after screening the indices using the deviation method, a mean of 10 indices was extracted to identify businesses and products with brand capability at the Turkmen Sahara region.

**Table 2. Ranking Results of Business Branding Indicators**

indicator	Final weight	indicator	Final weight	indicator	Final weight	indicator	Final weight
Interest	0.004	Efficiency	0.028	Supportive	0.052	Sustainable market	0.076
Feasibility	0.009	Differentiability	0.034	Durability	0.058	Valuable	0.081
Diversity	0.014	Believability	0.038	Credibility	0.062	Qualitative	0.086
Lovely	0.019	Existence	0.043	Permeability	0.067	Adaptability	0.091
Self-sufficiency	0.024	Competitiveness	0.048	Charm	0.071	Satisfaction	0.095

Finally, in order to identify businesses with brand capability, out of the total of 17 common businesses in the region, consideration was given to evaluating each business according to ten brand

indices in Table 3 using the opinions of experts and Local managers shown in the form of the initial matrix.

**Table 3. Brand Evaluation Matrix of Products and Services**

Product/Business	X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	X <sub>4</sub>	X <sub>5</sub>	X <sub>6</sub>	X <sub>7</sub>	X <sub>8</sub>	X <sub>9</sub>	X <sub>10</sub>
Optimum	4.49	4.37	4.31	4.09	3.98	4.22	4.35	3.89	3.80	4.37
Wheat	3.85	3.71	3.28	3.34	3.20	3.49	3.35	2.74	2.82	3.28
Cotton	4.42	4.32	3.95	4.05	3.94	4.02	3.91	3.89	3.80	4.37
Rapeseed	3.97	3.83	3.57	3.52	3.52	3.60	3.37	3.69	3.29	3.95
Soybean	3.20	3.26	2.94	3.02	2.95	2.86	2.82	2.88	2.69	3.23
Horse breeding	4.28	4.17	3.97	3.88	3.82	4.02	4.35	3.55	3.62	3.85
Carpet weaving	4.49	4.37	4.03	4.09	3.95	4.22	4.29	3.42	3.77	3.88
Palas Bafi	3.32	3.37	3.17	3.32	3.20	3.37	3.51	2.85	2.72	3.00
Turkmen baking	4.03	4.09	3.80	3.89	3.65	3.89	3.92	3.32	3.38	3.49
Needlework	3.92	3.17	3.26	3.15	3.08	3.32	3.35	2.86	2.88	2.82
Wool weaving	3.15	3.25	3.42	3.22	3.03	3.29	3.20	2.69	2.72	2.65
Silk weaving	3.11	3.35	3.29	2.85	3.14	3.31	3.32	2.88	2.80	2.92
Local clothing	3.88	3.88	3.80	3.65	3.54	3.62	3.98	3.11	3.40	3.45
Furniture	3.57	3.62	3.58	3.25	3.37	3.31	3.43	3.37	3.14	3.45
Traditional foods	4.12	4.29	4.31	4.09	3.98	3.82	4.15	3.60	3.80	3.71

Product/Business	X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	X <sub>4</sub>	X <sub>5</sub>	X <sub>6</sub>	X <sub>7</sub>	X <sub>8</sub>	X <sub>9</sub>	X <sub>10</sub>
Traditional ritual	3.98	3.98	3.86	3.75	3.62	3.58	3.88	3.35	3.26	3.20
Traditional games	3.91	3.83	3.85	3.49	3.58	3.52	3.78	3.40	3.34	3.31
Eco-tourism	4.20	3.92	3.92	3.74	3.77	3.78	4.26	3.68	3.68	3.78
total	69.86	68.78	66.31	64.39	63.32	65.24	67.22	59.17	62.57	62.71

X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	X <sub>4</sub>	X <sub>5</sub>
Valuable	Qualitative	Satisfaction	Adaptability	Credibility
X <sub>6</sub>	X <sub>7</sub>	X <sub>8</sub>	X <sub>9</sub>	X <sub>10</sub>
Durability	Charm	Supportive	Permeability	Sustainable market

The results of the analysis of the findings, as shown in Table 4, indicate that the following products and services are ranked among the

branding businesses in the rural areas of Turkmen Sahara region, respectively.

**Table 4. The degree of utility and ranking of rural businesses with branding capability**

Rural products and services	$S_i$	$K_i = S_i/S_0$	Rank
Optimum	0.064	1	
Cotton	0.062	0.971	1
Carpet weaving	0.062	0.966	2
Traditional foods	0.061	0.952	3
Horse breeding	0.060	0.942	4
Eco-tourism	0.059	0.924	5
Turkmen baking	0.057	0.894	6
Local clothing	0.057	0.889	7
Traditional ritual	0.056	0.870	8
Rapeseed	0.055	0.867	9
Traditional games	0.055	0.860	10
Furniture making	0.052	0.814	11
Wheat	0.050	0.788	12
Palas Bafi	0.048	0.759	13
Needlework	0.048	0.758	14
Silk weaving	0.047	0.739	15
Wool weaving	0.047	0.731	16
Soybean	0.046	0.713	17

A) Cotton: This product is at the top of the desirability of branding businesses in rural Turkmen Sahara region with a coefficient of 0.971. As Figure (4) shows, the yield of cotton in this region is between 4500 and 5700 kg and is

based on Thermophile and salinity-tolerant plant physical characteristics and local cotton such as Sahel, Golestan, Latif, Sajedi and Armaghan, which are cultivated there.



**Figure 4. Cultivation of cotton plant in Turkmen Sahara**

B) Carpet weaving: This product is ranked second in favor of branding businesses in Turkmen Sahara region with a coefficient of 0.966. Carpets and rugs are one of the most prominent masterpieces of Turkmen folk art, usually woven on horizontal

devices. As shown in [Figure 5](#), carpet weavers display their lifestyles, social behavior, and ethnic desires by creating beautiful flowers in geometric shapes derived from the material and spiritual features of Turkmen nomads.



**Figure 5. Carpet weaving in Turkmen Sahara**

C) Traditional foods: This product ranks third in favor of branding businesses in rural Turkmen Sahara region with a coefficient of 0.952. Turkmens often sit on the ground and around a table to eat for food called Sachagh, a table that has unique Turkmen cuisine such as Chekdirmeh, Qatlama, Ekmak, Bastarma and Bolama, which

resonates with the traditional customs and culture of the Turkmen Sahara region. As [Figure \(6\)](#) shows, the most famous food in this region is Chekdirmeh, traditionally cooked in a pot called "Kazan". The main ingredients are meat, rice, onions and tomato paste.



**Figure 6. Local food in the Turkmen Sahara region**

D) Turkmen Horse: Turkmen horse breeding with a coefficient of 0.942 ranks fourth in favor of branding businesses in rural areas of Turkmen Sahara region. Turkmen horse is one of the best breeds of the world. The horse was discovered in the Altai cemetery in the BC and lived in the Turkmen Sahara region. As shown in [Figure 7](#), it has a slender body and, unlike many other breeds

of horse, is flat and has a height of between 148 and 155 cm, with long and movable ears, wide breasts, sloping shoulders, wide widths, strong joints, tight angles, and with the ability to withstand heavy sports movements. Among the well-known breeds of Turkmen horse are Yamut, Akhal Teke, Chenaran (a mix of Turkmen horse and Arabian horse).



**Figure 7. A species of Turkmen horse**

E) Eco-tourism: Eco-tourism with a coefficient of 0.924 was ranked fifth in favor of branding businesses in rural areas of Turkmen Sahara region. As shown in [Figure 8](#), the tourism resorts are examples of locally owned small-scale businesses

that, while introducing the culture of the Turkmen Saharan people, provided a good opportunity to empower the local community by attracting domestic and foreign tourists.



Figure 8. An example of native resorts in the Turkmen Sahara region

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

Today, to revitalize the national economy, countries are using the rural economy as an untapped economic opportunity, a new aspect of which is business branding, which is widely emphasized by marketing researchers and experts. In fact, branding is a redefinition of the way rural businesses bring innovation, risk-taking and multi-functionality. Therefore, organizations and individuals can rely on branding, and provide growth and development for their businesses. Moreover, if we imagine the past decades of prosperity and entrepreneurship in businesses and co-operatives, given the prevailing conditions of the current economy, branding is the driving force of businesses in the present era as the brand determines growth and falling of a business. In fact, branding is one of the key principles and techniques of marketing that, like other marketing practices, will ensure business success if done correctly and with a certain kind of intelligence. Therefore, in the present study, branding is considered as a relative solution to important issues of rural areas of Turkmen Sahara region through regular linking of rural settlements with urban centers, encouraging product marketing, reforming urban-rural links and creating appropriate business spaces in various sectors of agriculture, industry and services to help develop the villages of the region. The results of this study showed that the most accepted approach in achieving this, in the first step, is applying a set of indicators, because, it is now widely accepted that indicators are very

useful tools for linking economic, social and environmental issues, both quantitatively and qualitatively for analyzing business performance and predicting future performance and plans, and they are also used to help them make decisions.

But, what is noteworthy here is the problem of localizing these indices with regard to local and regional conditions and characteristics. Based on this, the researchers first extracted 20 major indicators by examining the branding literature, then, utilized experts' opinions to localize branding indicators and finally 10 indicators of adaptability, quality of products and services, satisfaction, credibility, durability, attractiveness, product support, permeability and having a sustainable market for business branding were identified in the Turkmen Sahara region. In addition, the results of this study confirmed the ability of the ARAS decision-making model to solve complex decision-making problems and its effectiveness and ease of use in identifying traditional businesses and prioritizing them for branding. Accordingly, among the common businesses and products in the Turkmen Sahara region, cotton farming, carpet weaving, traditional foods, horse breeding and eco-tourism development were offered to planners in rural areas, respectively. A comparative study of the present study with other studies which conducted in this field, (Abbasi, Sharifzadeh, Abdullah Zadeh & Mahboubi, 2017; Shahsavari & Alamtabriez, 2014; Isfahanian, 2011; Amani, 2016; Kanama & Nakazava, 2017; Melewar, Small, Pecotich & Ward, (2007)) indicated that branding is a strategic tool for sustaining and promoting

indigenous and traditional products due to market instability and increasing competition in national and global levels. It requires proper and principled planning but, in this study, instead of dealing with a specific product, contrary to the studies, rural businesses (products and services) and their ranking are one from the perspective of branding, which is also methodologically using the decision

technique. Multi-character sampling is distinguished from other studies.

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## شناسایی و ارزیابی محصولات با قابلیت برندسازی در مناطق روستایی (مطالعه موردی: منطقه ترکمن صحرای استان گلستان)

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### چکیده مبسوط

#### ۱. مقدمه

رویکرد برندسازی پایه و اساس یک مدل حمایتی از مشاغل کوچک را تشکیل می‌دهد که به منظور کاستن از نابرابری‌های بین شهر و روستا، ایجاد اشتغال، افزایش مشارکت مردمی، افزایش تولید، بهبود کیفیت محصولات و ایجاد ارزش افزوده برای محصولات فراگیر شده است. بر این اساس در چارچوب و نظریه‌های جدید توسعه پایدار جهت رشد، دوام و ماندگاری کسب و کارها در محیط‌های رقابتی و پیچیده امروزی مطرح و از اهمیت فوق‌العاده‌ای برخوردار است که در آن فرآیند طراحی و ایجاد یک کسب و کار حول محور برند و در تعامل مداوم با مشتریان با هدف دستیابی به مزیت‌های رقابتی انجام می‌پذیرد. در گذشته مدیران بر این باور بودند که برندسازی فعالیتی مختص به شرکت‌های بزرگ است اما امروزه ثابت شده است که توسعه کسب و کارهای روستایی با رویکرد برندسازی سهم قابل توجهی در پیشرفت اقتصاد جهان برعهده دارند. بر این اساس در دهه اخیر محققان توجه بسیاری به این نوع کسب و کارها و بازاریابی آنها مبذول نموده‌اند و این موضوع سبب رشد سریع این کسب و کارها شده است. به عبارتی می‌توان آن را الگویی نوین برای توانمندسازی، ظرفیت‌سازی و نهادسازی در مناطق روستایی به شمار آورد که اهمیت بالایی در فرآیند توسعه پایدار اقتصادی دارد. به واسطه این دلایل استراتژیک تقریباً همه فعالیت‌های بازاریابی در گستره توسعه محصولات جدید تا تبلیغات بکار رفته برای خرده‌فروشی محصولات بر روی ساخت برندها متمرکز هستند.

این موضوع ما را بر آن داشت تا ضمن بررسی کسب و کارهای روستایی در منطقه ترکمن صحرا چارچوبی برای برندسازی این کسب و کارها فراهم شود. بنابراین پژوهش حاضر به بررسی و شناسایی کسب و کارهای با پتانسیل برند در سکونتگاههای روستایی منطقه ترکمن صحرا پرداخته است در این مسیر شناسایی و بومی-سازی شاخص‌های برندسازی کسب و کارها و رتبه‌بندی کسب و کارها از منظر برندسازی مدنظر قرار گرفته است.

#### ۲. مبانی نظری تحقیق

چارچوب‌های فکری کسب و کار در مواجهه با بازار در طول دهه‌های گذشته با تحولات متعددی روبروی گردیده است. نقطه شروع این سیر تحول را می‌توان از پارادایم تولید در نظر گرفت که پس از انقلاب صنعتی بوجود آمد و مهمترین موضوع تولید کالاهای بیشتر بود پس از آن مفهوم فروش بود که هدف اصلی آن افزایش فروش بود. با رقابتی و جهانی شدن فضای کسب و کار پارادایم جدید با مفهوم بازاریابی بوجود آمد که بر طبق آن، شرکت‌ها تولید و عرضه محصولات خود، اعم از کالا و خدمات، را با تحقیق در بازار و دریافت نظر مشتریان انجام می‌دادند ولی امروزه چارچوب جدیدتری در اقتصادهای پیشرفته مطرح شده است که به پارادایم برند تعبیر می‌کنند و بعنوان یکی از اصلی‌ترین سرمایه‌های کسب و کارهای روستایی تبدیل شده که به دنبال برانگیختن مشتریان به استفاده از محصولات یا خدمات خاص می‌باشد تا از این طریق بتواند سطح آسیب‌پذیری و ریسک فعالیت‌های اقتصادی در مناطق روستایی را در برابر شوک‌های اقتصادی به حداقل برساند و به مانند ابزار راهبردی برای افزایش کارایی و اثربخشی کسب و کارهای روستایی عمل می‌نماید.

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از آنجائیکه کسب و کارهای روستایی در مقایسه با شرکت‌های بزرگ بطور معمول با محدودیت‌هایی از جمله عدم دسترسی به منابع، نبود بازار مناسب برای تولیدات آنها، کاهش درآمد و مواردی از این دست مواجه می‌باشند بنابراین با یک برنامه‌ریزی دقیق و درگیر نمودن تمامی بخش‌های این نوع کسب و کارها اثر محدودیت‌ها را می‌توان به حداقل رساند. بر این اساس در چارچوب و نظریه‌های جدید توسعه پایدار یکی از رویکردهایی که جهت رشد، دوام و ماندگاری این نوع از کسب و کارها در محیط‌های رقابتی و پیچیده امروزی مطرح و از اهمیت فوق‌العاده‌ای برخوردار است برندسازی می‌باشد که در آن فرآیند طراحی و ایجاد یک کسب و کار حول محور برند در تعامل مداوم با مشتریان صورت می‌گیرد و اهمیت بالایی در فرآیند توسعه پایدار اقتصادی روستا دارد.

بنابراین در مطالعه حاضر، برندسازی به عنوان یک راه حل نسبی برای مسائل مهم نواحی روستایی منطقه ترکمن صحرا مورد توجه قرار گرفته تا با کارکردهای خود از طریق اتصال منظم سکونتگاههای روستایی با مراکز شهری، ترغیب بازاریابی محصولات، اصلاح پیوندهای شهری-روستایی و با ایجاد فضاهای مناسب کسب و کار در بخش‌های مختلف کشاورزی، صنعت و خدمات به توسعه روستاهای منطقه یاری رساند. نتایج این مطالعه منجر به شناسایی ۱۰ شاخص انطباق‌پذیری، میزان کیفیت محصولات و خدمات، رضایتمندی، اعتبارمندی، دوام‌پذیری، جذابیت، حمایت-پذیر بودن محصول، نفوذپذیری و داشتن بازار پایدار جهت برندسازی کسب و کارها در منطقه ترکمن صحرا گردید و از میان کسب و کارها و محصولات رایج منطقه ترکمن صحرا به ترتیب زراعت پنبه، قالی بافی، غذاهای سنتی، پرورش اسب و توسعه اقامتگاههای بوم‌گردی جهت برندسازی به برنامه ریزان در مناطق روستایی پیشنهاد می‌شود.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** برندسازی، کسب و کارهای روستایی، تکنیک تصمیم‌گیری چندشاخصه (ARAS)، ترکمن صحرا.

### تشکر و قدرانی

پژوهش حاضر برگرفته از رساله دکتری نویسنده اول (حسین سادین)، گروه جغرافیا، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس تهران، ایران است.

با واکاوی مطالعات صورت گرفته مشخص می‌شود که بیشتر مطالعات عمدتاً برند را ابزاری جهت دستیابی به اهداف بازاریابی قلمداد می‌کنند و کمتر به عنوان استراتژی یک کسب و کار بویژه در مناطق روستایی مطرح است.

### ۳. روش تحقیق

این پژوهش به لحاظ هدف از نوع کاربردی و روش انجام آن، اکتشافی، توصیفی و تحلیلی با استفاده از شیوه‌های کتابخانه‌ای و میدانی است. جامعه آماری تحقیق را سه گروه، شامل ۲۰ نفر از اساتید توسعه روستایی دانشگاه‌های استان گلستان، ۲۰ نفر از کارشناسان ادارات دولتی مرتبط با توسعه روستاها و ۳۰ نفر از مدیران روستایی شامل؛ بخشداران، نمایندگان شوراهای بخش و نمایندگان دهیاران تشکیل داده‌اند. که با روش نمونه‌گیری هدفمند انتخاب شده‌اند. جهت تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها نیز از مجموع نمرات میانگین، انحراف معیار، تکنیک‌های وزن‌دهی جمع رتبه‌ای و آنتروپی شانون و تصمیم‌گیری چند شاخصه ارس (ARAS) استفاده شده است.

### ۴. یافته‌های تحقیق

نتایج حاصل از بررسی‌های انجام شده در سطح مطالعات داخلی و خارجی منجر به شناسایی ۲۰ شاخص تبیین‌کننده کسب و کارها، محصولات و خدمات برند گردیده است که در میان شاخص‌ها، رضایتمندی با وزن نهایی (۰/۰۹۵) در رتبه اول، انطباق‌پذیری با (۰/۰۹۱) در رتبه دوم و کیفیت‌گرایی با وزن نهایی (۰/۰۸۶) در رتبه سوم قرار دارند. با توجه به نتایج حاصل از تحلیل یافته‌ها با استفاده از تکنیک ارس (ARAS)، از میان کسب و کارها (محصولات و خدمات) رایج در منطقه جهت برندسازی، زراعت پنبه با ضریب کاربرد ۰/۹۷۱ در اولویت اول، قالی‌بافی با ضریب ۰/۹۶۶ در اولویت دوم، غذاهای سنتی با ضریب ۰/۹۵۲ در اولویت سوم، پرورش اسب ترکمن با ضریب ۰/۹۴۳ در رتبه چهارم و اقامتگاه‌های بوم‌گردی با ضریب ۰/۹۲۴ در رتبه پنجم اولویت برای برندسازی محصولات و خدمات قرار دارند.

### ۵. بحث و نتیجه‌گیری



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