



Rural Tourism Development in Guilan: A Grounded Theory Study (Case Study: Rahmatabad and Blukat District in Rudbar County)

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Received: 18 September 2020

Accepted: 16 January 2021

Abstract

Purpose- Rural tourism, in the perspective of developed economies, is considered as a context-based experience that has a broad range of attractions. Also, it can increase the opportunities to provide services to local communities. Thus, their maintenance has become an integral part of the rural economy. In this regard, the study explored the understanding of rural tourism development in Rudbar County, Guilan province.

Design/methodology/approach- This study, in terms of goal is applied-developmental, in terms of paradigm is qualitative, and in terms of method is a grounded theory which is based on an inductive approach. The statistical population consisted of two groups of key rural informants and tourists of Rudbar County. Using a purposive sampling, 18 people were selected by snowball method and data were collected applying in-depth and semi-structured interviews, reaching saturation. To analyze the narratives, three stages of open, axial and selective coding method were used.

Findings- Findings showed that the vital commodities of rural tourism in Rudbar are the supply of a mixture of tourism approaches such as ecotourism, agrotourism and participatory approaches such as the view of scenic byways. In the elevated villages near Darfak peak, the commodities are long hiking or cycling alongside Sefidrood River as well as heritage areas. Also, in the development of rural tourism in the study area, the categories of products of the destination, space opportunities of the destination, infrastructure of the destination, cultural support and beliefs of the destination, responsible participation of the destination, cultural acceptance of the destination, marketing for the destination, human capital of the destination, employment in the destination were important. The most important category (core category) was known as "tourism product development policy".

Research limitations/implications- Lack of proper access to infrastructures such as mobile coverage accessibility, Internet and accommodation opportunities, frequent cut-offs of tap water in some villages for long hours, and access to tourists and key local informants were among the problems in the way of this study.

Practical implications- In order to achieve the development of rural tourism, it is suggested that special attention be paid to the development policy of Guilan tourism product supply in different dimensions. Since most of the incoming tourists to Guilan are nature tourists, increasing the village's service such as improving mobile and Internet access, improving the village's water and electricity quality, travel agency offices and active tour operators in the villages, automobile repair shops, local food restaurants and eco-resorts are vital.

Originality / Value- A grounded theory systematically examines phenomena in their natural state in the form of regular steps. In this method, generalization is not the purpose. Instead, the goal is to understand the phenomenon and its various dimensions.

Keywords- Grounded theory, Rural tourism, Guilan, Rudbar County.

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How to cite this article:

Jamshidzahi Shahbakhsh, O. & Moradi, H. (2021). Rural tourism development in Guilan: A grounded theory study (Case study: Rahmatabad and Blukat District in Rudbar County). *Journal of Research & Rural Planning*, 10(1), 81-99.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.22067/jrpp.v10i1.88723>

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1. Introduction

Tourism is an action that has existed for a long time in human societies and has gradually evolved along with the historical stages to this day and is now known as one of the foundations of globalization and a distinct symbol of space-time compaction. This phenomenon is generally based on the factor of travel and transportation, which comes from various psychological, cultural, social and economic human needs (Moghaddasi Jahromi, 2016). Influenced by post-modern transformation, one of the things that makes peoples decide when choosing a destination is the business environment in local communities, and in return, this is one of the crucial determining factors of development and growth of tourism demand (Moradi et al., 2019). Research shows that unique rural environments underscore traits such as originality, personal communication, individualism and cultural heritage, and a rapidly growing urban population (Gartner, 2004; Long et al., 2000). Urban residents are tired of their daily problems and respectfully seek out the identity of rural areas to spend their leisure time there. They also look for small pleasures (e.g., visiting natural environments, enjoying food and cultural experiences). Chambers (2009) proposes the identity or correctness of assumptions as the core to increase the supply of goods to the tourist destination. 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. In the same time, they can change the nature of geographical landscapes. These geographical spaces or landscapes are vital commodities in rural tourism and must be protected. The importance of conserving habitats or nature has become an integral part of the rural economy. Rural tourism brings visitors who tend to find goods and services that improve their expected lifestyle (Oriade & Rabinson, 2017). The importance of rural tourism in today's world of economics is so evident that the World Tourism Organization has introduced the slogan of World Tourism Day (September 27) in 2020 "Tourism and Rural Development" (World Tourism Organization, 2019). This slogan indicates the unique ability of the rural area to create economic development and provide opportunities outside the big cities to achieve a new definition of prosperity in the twenty-first century. Iran as one of the countries

that has experienced various civilizations and has a great variety of tourist attractions, is a unique place for rural tourism.

According to the Iranian 20-year vision plan for tourism, Iran should have 20 million foreign tourists by 1404 AH (2025 AD). Also, Iran's share of global tourism revenue will increase from 0.7% in 2004 to 2% in 1404. So that in 1404, Iran earns about 25 billion dollarts annually from tourism (Karmidekordi et al., 2015). Guilan province is one of the populated areas located in the north of Iran, which in terms of economic geography, production and economic advantages, infrastructure, trade-services, natural capacities and potentials (water and soil), strategic and commercial position in the northern region of the country, has a high potential and capability in creating suitable spaces for tourism, especially in rural areas. Numerous factors such as favorable climate, moist and fertile soil, expansion of communication roads and having more than 70 typical tourist areas, deltas, plains and mountains and pristine natural landscapes have turned Guilan as a center of ecotourism in Iran (Sadri, 2016).

In this province, Rudbar County, with its Mediterranean and mountainous climate, has many basic and special rural tourism goods. There are more than 20 villages with tourist attractions in different areas (agrotourism (agricultural tourism), holidays with special interest, ecotourism (nature tourism), hiking, cycling, horseback riding, mountaineering and adventure tourism, fishing, food tourism, religious tourism (shrines) and almost all other possible forms of tourism with events, festivals and even visiting friends and relatives), all of which indicate the significance of this county. The number of Rudbar tourist attractions in Rahmatabad and Blukat District, which are located on the Qazvin-Rasht freeway, is significant. It implies that the rural areas of this district have been effective in economic developments, regional innovation flows and rural production system. In creating a wide range of such activities, considering the nature and supply conditions in rural areas is of particular importance. In rural areas of Rudbar, the supply of these activities is offered with a larger number of small and medium capitals. 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 tourism activities in the region. In the present qualitative research, using grounded theory, supply

and demand opportunities for rural tourism development in Rahmatabad and Blukat District of Rudbar County in Guilan Province are extracted in a deep and comprehensive way and presented in the form of a conceptual model, thus the main question that is to be answered is: what is the understanding of the key informants of the villages and incoming tourists from the development of rural tourism in Guilan?

2. Research Theoretical Literature

In the new trends of development, thinking at both national and international levels, a village is introduced as a place with its own economic characteristics of entrepreneurship and tourism. It also has a special place in economic and social knowledge (Rouzbahani et al., 2020; Roknadin Eftekhari & Badri, 2013). Tourist attractions are the main reason for tourists to visit rural destinations and is considered as the key element in locating tourist sites. In other words, the development of tourism is based on the existence and arrangement of tourist 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 (1979), 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 how to identify and introduce the region (Leiper, 2004; Leiper, 1990). The first theory in this direction was proposed by Christaller in 1963, the step-by-step development of tourism destinations. Influenced by his ideas, Plog (1972), Cohen (1978), and Doxey (1975) presented a model in which the stages of development of a tourist destination are explained. The first stage is discovery, interaction, development, and stagnation. The most important step is to discover the area which is based on the initial action of adventurous groups and is continued by others and becomes a normal area for tourism. 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 (Mousavi, 2019).

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 follows (Killon, 2001): A multifaceted activity that takes place in an environment outside of urban areas. 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 using the products and activities in rural areas. Rural tourism includes various items such as farm holidays, agritourism (agricultural tourism), special interest holidays, ecotourism (nature tourism), hiking, cycling, horseback riding, mountaineering and adventure tourism, sports tourism, health, medical and welfare 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 (Oriade & Rabinson, 2017). Attractions are of the most important reasons people travel to a specific destination. Tourism attractions as an important factor, due to their special features and desirability, can attract tourists from different places and distant lands. The more diverse, unique and attractive the tourist attraction, the higher power of traction and as a result the wider the sphere of influence. The importance of attractions is of a great importance that the availability of accommodation and catering facilities, souvenir shops, and handicrafts depends on the existence of at least a few primary attractions, which may be individual or combined with larger or smaller attractions (Farjirad & Aghajani, 2009).

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 are mainly 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 are mainly gas stations, automobile repair shops, airports, railways, passenger terminals, banks, travel agencies, security centers and many other required side services

(Aghajani, 2004). The tourism product differs not only from physical, goods and products, but also from other services. In other words, in the first stage, 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 require the identification of these types of motivations and demands. Recognizing motivations and demands of tourists is one of the tourism marketers' tasks. At the end, the tourism product has a duality in capability. It means that these

products are not only used by non-native tourists (Zhang, 2009).

Related literatures show that the study of the grounded theory and semantic understanding of the development of rural tourism in Guilan is a new topic that is under-researched. Grounded theory in rural tourism development is an inductive and exploratory method that allows the researcher to formulate theory and proposition instead of relying on existing and pre-formulated theories. Each theory and proposition for the development of rural tourism based on this method comes from real data. Table 1 summarizes the most important research conducted in this field. According to the studies, the most important factors affecting the development of tourism in rural destinations are often in the terms of environmental, economic, social and cultural approaches, which can be mentioned in table 1 below.

Table 1. Preliminary study of the extracted variables and components affecting the development of rural tourism

Row	Researcher (year)	Research title	Obtained components
9	Karami Dehkordi et al. (2015)	Qualitative assessment of rural tourism problems in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province using grounded theory (case: Dimeh Village in Koohrang County)	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.
10	Karroubi & Bazrafshan (2015)	Development of tourism and changing cultural patterns in rural areas (Case: Asiarsar village, Behshahr County, Mazandaran Province)	Changing the components of clothing style, food consumption, the spread of consumerism, indigenous language and dialect, and marriage style
11	Pazoki & Yourdkhani (2015)	Survey and scrutiny of green tourism development at TOCHAL village (Pakdasht Township),	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.
12	Rezvani et al. (2012)	Analysis of tourism effects on rural areas around the metropolis of Tehran	Despite the fact that tourism has a direct relationship with the level of development of the local community due to its positive economic effects, many negative environmental and cultural effects have also been observed.
13	Papzan et al. (2010)	Problems and Limitations of Rural Tourism, Using Grounded Theory (Case Harir Village, Kermanshah Province)	Problems are included: Lack of infrastructure and welfare facilities, lack of proper understanding of villagers and officials about rural tourism, diminishing of the village cultural attractions, lack of proper and timely information network, lack of adequate government support and attention. Limitations are included: Lack of accurate statistics, and climate change.

Row	Researcher (year)	Research title	Obtained components
14	Rouzbahani, et al (2020)	Analyzing the local-spatial consequences of the development of tourism economy with an entrepreneurial approach in rural areas(Case study: Samen district in Malayer County)	Six factors of Development of physical and environmental capital, development of rural tourism service platforms, social and improving capital of local communities, development of economic capital and employment of local communities, expansion of tourism economy development infrastructure and the entrepreneurial capital factor and the development of local communities.
15	Hrubcova, et al (2016)	The economic effects of tourism in the least developed countries	Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world. However, the negative impacts of tourism shouldn't be ignored as the redistribution of tourism income, meaningful participation of the local communities and reduction of leakages.
16	Saroyo & Tatik (2015)	Analysis of prospect of agro-tourism attractiveness based on location characteristics	They analyzed the relevance of spatial features such as natural attractions, nature, hospitality, providers, tourism services, support facilities, and safety factor against the attractiveness of the beach using nonlinear regression. Based on this, the relative attractiveness of Goa beach was investigated by Markov chain method and showed that 69.9% of the tourist attraction in coastal areas is influenced by spatial features. 68.9% of it is dedicated to natural attractions
17	Mikulić & Kožić (2011)	Exploratory assessment of tourism sustainability in Croatian destinations	This article assesses the sustainability of tourism in Croatian tourist destinations using economic, social and environmental indicators based on the indicators of the World Tourism Organization. Data analysis indicates different levels of stability in different regions. Finally, planning in different time periods, according to the type of instability in each region was recommended.
18	Nepal (2007)	Tourism and rural settlements Nepal's Annapurna region	Tourism had historical, social, and economic influences on the transformation of rural settlements.
19	Marcouiller et al (2004)	Analytical effects of tourism in coastal areas of the United States	They showed that most of the effects of tourism is on the amount of employment and income. And the key components of the rural development structure have been neglected

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Geographical Scope of the Research

Rahmatabad and Bluckat District is one of the four sections of Rudbar County, which is located between 36 degrees and 43 minutes to 37 degree and 5 minute north latitude and 49 degree and 27 minutes to 49 degrees and 42 minute east longitude of the meridian. The settlements height in this area oscillates between 145 meters above sea level in Tutkabon (center of the district) and 740 meters in Hajideh village of Dasht-e Veyl District. These altitudes in Bluckat Rural District varies virtually the same. The height of Bijar city, the center of Bluckat Rural District, is 140 meters above sea level. Study area is limited from northwest to Saravan Rural District of Rasht County,

from north and northeast to Khararoud Rural District of Lahijan County, from west and southwest to Rostamabad Rural District, from south to Central District of Rudbar County, (Kolshtar Rural District), from the southeast, it is limited to Amarloo District (Khorgam Rural District) of Rudbar County and from the east to Deilman Rural District of Lahijan County. According to the 1991 division, the study area is 562 square kilometers, which covers 21.8% of the county. Rahmatabad and Bluckat is one of the three districts of Rudbar County which has three rural districts of Rahmatabad, Dashtvil and Bluckat and 68 villages (figure 1) (Salimi Sabhan & Hojjat Shamami, 2019, as cited in Governorate of Rudbar County, 2016).

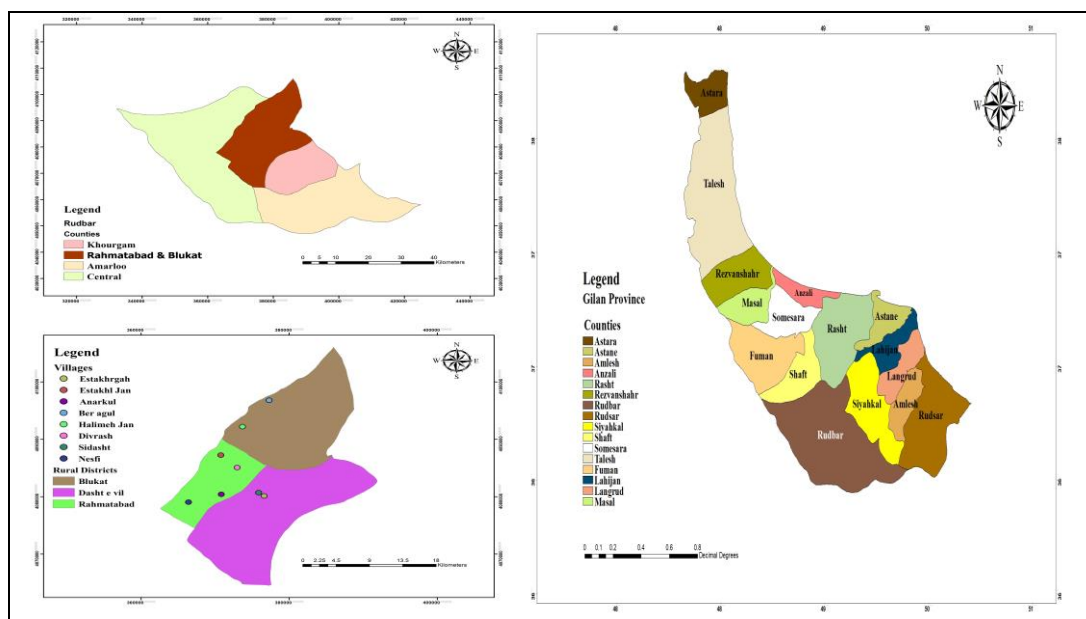


Figure 1. Political divisions of Guilan province and Rudbar County in Districts and studied villages.

3.2. Methodology

In this study, in order to provide a deep and clear image of rural tourism development in Rahmatabad and Blukat District in the form of a model, grounded theory method was used. Thus, this study, in terms of goal is applied-developmental, in terms of paradigm is qualitative, and in terms of method is the grounded theory which is based on an inductive approach. This qualitative method, in a systematic way and in the form of regular steps, examines the phenomena in their natural situation (Moradi & Agahi, 2015, as cited in Haj Bagheri et al., 2010). In this method, generalization is not the purpose. Instead, the goal is to understand the phenomenon and its various dimensions (Giddens, 1997). The statistical population included two groups of key informants of

the tourist destination villages of Rahmatabad and Blukat of Rudbar County (Estakhrghah, Sidasht, Halimehjan, Estalakh Jan, Anarkul, Nesfi, Divrash, Halimehjan and Ber Agur) and tourists of this region from Rudbar County (table 2). The statistical population and the method of sample selection were purposive sampling using in-depth and semi-structured interviews in sessions lasting at least one and half hour. The sample was determined by the snowball method and their selection was continued until the stage of theoretical saturation (reaching a stage where no new opinion or case is mentioned in the questions asked by individuals). In total, theoretical saturation was obtained from interviews with 18 key informants in the tourist villages and tourists of the region.

Table 2. The statistical population studied in the research

County	District	Center	Rural district	Tourist destination villages	Attractions and tourism capabilities	Deployment status
Rudbar	Rahmatabad and Blukat	Dasht-e Veyl village	Dasht-e Veyl	Estakhrghah	Adventure tourism, ecotourism and mountaineering, having a beautiful waterfall, scenic byways	Through the forest and at the Darfak mountain
				Sidasht	Agrotourism (strawberry), adventure tourism, nature tourism and mountaineering,	On the way to Darfak mountain,
		Tutkabon	Rahmatabad	Estalakh Jan	Adventure tourism, nature tourism and mountaineering, having pools and ponds	Mountains and ridges, the western side of Darfak
				Anarkul	Adventure tourism, nature	On the way of

County	District	Center	Rural district	Tourist destination villages	Attractions and tourism capabilities	Deployment status
					tourism and the beautiful river of Siahroud	Darfak and along side the Siahroud River
				Nesfi	Historical tourism and the ancient hills of Marlik and Peel Ghaleh, dating back to three thousand years	Mountainous, Zarbin and Zeytoon forests
				Divrash	Adventure tourism, nature tourism, Sefidab spring, Noor Cheshmeh cave and Lameh summer highland pasture.	Foothills, on the way of Darfak
		Bijar village	Blukat	Halimeh Jan	Adventure tourism, nature tourism, Aroos Lake	Along the freeway of Qazvin-Rasht, Aroos Lake
				Ber Agur	Adventure tourism, pilgrimage, nature tourism, Gosal Gashar Waterfall, in the center of Hyrcanian forest, Bijar City Lake, Kord-e-Mir plain, with two holy shrines of Imamzadeh Saleh and Ebrahim, a perspective on Darfak Mountain	In front of Hashem Imamzadeh village, along Qazvin-Rasht road

Regarding methodology, grounded theory is referred to the practical stages of constructing a theory or model in five stages (Papzan et al., 2010):

First stage is designing the research that consists of two steps of reviewing previous studies and selecting cases (research question and problem).

Second stage is data collection, which is in consistent with visiting the field study. In this study, in addition to using in-depth and semi-structured interviews, direct and non-participatory observation, field notes and group discussion, methods such as take photographs and videos, examining library and Internet documents were also used as complementary methods.

Third stage is organizing data and writing items and concepts. At this stage, audio and video information, notes obtained from field studies were arranged, and while listening and looking at the images, considering items such as tone of voice and respondent gesture according to their location and position. Re-interpretations and re-perceptions were made in order to record the main points.

Fourth stage is data analysis, which is the main process in grounded theory and is the core of qualitative analyses. In this stage, three forms of

coding were performed: Open, axial and selective coding. In this three-step and nonlinear process, titles are given to the initial themes of the data, and then concepts and categories are extracted from them, and through this, conceptual clusters are formed, each belongs to a category.

Fifth stage is the design and validation of the model. At this stage, the data becomes a theory or model. The first step is to design a central classification model that demonstrates the research themes. Each class connects different data, but is not among the data itself. Given that at this stage, the findings from analysis are around the aim of research and by linking the codes (open coding), concepts (axial coding), categories (selective coding), a paradigmatic and conceptual model of research to explain a phenomenon (development Guilan Rural Tourism) was drawn, and then approved by the respondents.

During the study, it was tried to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research. The researchers' long-term contact and communication with the research sites, relevant officials and participants, helped to gain the participants' trust and also improved the researchers' understanding of the research environment. Participants' review was used to verify the data and codes. After coding, the transcript of the

interview was returned to the participants to ensure the accuracy of the codes and interpretations. Codes that did not reflect the views of the participants were modified. This is one of the aspects of triangulation that leads to the internal validity of the research.

4. Research Findings

In grounded theory method, about understanding of rural tourism development in Guilan, interviews were conducted with 18 key informants in tourist destination villages in Rahmatabad and Blukat District of Rudbar County (Estakhrghah, Sidasht, Halimehjan, Estalakh Jan, Anarkul, Nesfi, Divrash, Halimehjan and Ber Agur) and the tourists inside and outside of Guilan Province and a total of theoretical saturation was obtained. Table 3 is the summary of demographic information (gender, age, level of education, purpose of visit, type of vehicle, travel history, residence status, revisiting intention). The distribution of individuals of villages was as follows: 3 individuals from Estakhrghah, 3 from Sidasht, 2

from Estalakh Jan, 2 from Anarkul, 2 from Nasfi, 2 from Divrash, 2 from Halimehjan and 2 from Ber Agur village. 7 of them were female and 11 were male. The age range was from 23 to 55 years old and their average age was 37. Regarding to Education level one of them is a doctorate; There were 2 postgraduates, 4 undergraduates, 3 with diploma and 5 had some level of education. Sixteen participants stated that the purpose of visiting Rudbar tourist villages was the existence of natural attractions in the region, such as waterfalls, lakes and rivers, going to Darfak mountain, visiting beautiful forests and mild climate. Two individuals also mentioned build-up attractions (local and traditional food and eco-resorts). The type of vehicle they all used was a private vehicle. Eighty-nine percent of respondents stated that tourists have visited these villages more than 3 times. About 40% of them asserted that travelers use eco-resorts. And 84% expressed their interest in revisiting these rural tourism destinations.

Table 3. Summary of descriptive research statistics

Row	Variable	Level	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
1	Gender	Male	11	61	.	.	.
		Female	7	39			
2	Age	Young (less than 30)	6	33	37	23	55
		Middle-aged (30-50)	10	56			
		Elderly (more than 50)	2	11			
3	Level of education	Below diploma	5	28	.	.	.
		Diploma	4	23			
		Bachelor degree	5	28			
		Master degree	3	16			
		Doctoral	1	5			
4	Purpose of the visit	Natural attractions of the area	16	89	.	.	.
		Built-up attractions of the area	2	11			
5	Type of vehicle	Private vehicle	18	100	.	.	.
		Public transportation	0	0			
6	Travel history	Once	2	11	.	.	.
		More than three times	16	89			
7	Residency status	Daily tourist with no overnight stay	0	0	.	.	.
		Second home	1	5			
		Relatives or friends' house	4	23			
		Eco-resorts	7	39			
		Rental Garden House (Villa)	6	33			
		Guest house	0	0			
8	Revisiting intention	Positive	15	84	.	.	.
		Negative	3	16			

4.1. Process of doing grounded theory (Understanding the meaning of rural tourism development in Guilan)

Grounded theory is derived from data that have been systematically collected and analyzed during the research process. In this method, generalization is not

the purpose. Instead, the goal is to understand the phenomenon. The main difference between grounded theory and other methods of qualitative approaches is the emphasis of this strategy on the development of theory (Papzan et al., 2010, cited in Giddens, 1997).

In this method, after collecting interview and contextual data through interviews with informants and incoming tourists, in an open coding, the data was reviewed line by line, and after identifying its processes, sentences related to the research topic were extracted and a code for each sentence was given. The result of this stage was 45 key concepts in the field of rural tourism development and tourism product

supply of the studied community. Then, according to the key given concepts and the relationships between them, a primary classification was made and a code was given to each of the concepts proposed by key informants and tourists. The related items were placed in a cluster. Then, a code from A to I was assigned to each one of them (table 4). At the end of this stage, it seemed that these concepts have covered all the factors and components of rural tourism development in different dimensions and there is no need to refer to the studied samples. Therefore, the internal validity of the data was confirmed.

Table 4. Conceptualization of research data (open coding)

Row	concepts	Code
1	Village population	F1
2	Village literacy rate	F2
3	The youth rate of the village population	F3
4	Participation of residents in decisions	B1
5	Investment of local residents in the tourism sector	B2
6	Awareness of tourism industry	B3
7	Involvement of residents in tourism entrepreneurship	B4
8	Acceptance of tourist's presence	C1
9	Interest in interacting with tourists	C2
10	Believe in the importance and role of tourism in the economy and development of the village	A1
11	Expressing satisfaction with the arrival of tourists	A2
12	Support the creation of new tourism facilities	A3
13	Programs to monitor the quality of the visitor experience	G1
14	Training programs support	G2
15	Establishment and application of quality standards of tourism infrastructure	G3
16	Amenities and services (water, electricity and gas)	G4
17	Financial and banking services	G5
18	Security and law enforcement services	G6
19	Health Services	G7
20	Retail services	G8
21	Communication services (telecommunications, post, Internet)	G9
22	Gas station and CNG	G10
23	Marketing communications of the destination	E1
24	Management of the destination product development	E2
25	Branding and brand management (destination positioning)	E3
26	Develop a strong environmental image of the destination	E4
27	Installation of boards in a suitable place (roads toward the village)	E5
28	Holding tours to visit the natural and pristine attractions of the region	E6
29	Advertisements to introduce the region (media, distribution of brochures and tourist attraction map guide, etc.)	E7
30	Climate of destination villages	H1
31	Accommodation opportunities	H2
32	Catering opportunities	H3
33	The cultural, historical and ancient significance of the destination	H4
34	Mixed activities	H5
35	Destination relations	H6

Row	concepts	Code
36	Special events (such as various festivals, the strawberry fair, etc.)	H7
37	Job creation for the available labor of the region (15-64 years)	D1
38	The effect of tourism on job security in the region	D2
39	Effect on creating side jobs in the village (residences, restaurants, etc.)	D3
40	Distance and proximity to other tourist areas (average distance to other destinations)	I1
41	Distance and proximity to centers of population such as Rasht and Rudbar	I2
42	Distance to formal accommodation facilities	I3
43	Being next to the attraction	I4
44	Being on the way to the attraction	I5
45	Being along the main road	I6

In axial coding, the formed categories are developed and each category will include subcategories and the relationship of each of them will be determined. The requirement of the axial coding stage is constant comparison of data (Papzan et al., 2010). By constantly comparing the coded data with each other, the subcategories were organized into clusters appropriate to the categories (table 5). Finally, nine comprehensive categories and constraints to the concepts of rural tourism development of the targeted community (Rahmatabad and Blukat of Rudbar County of Guilan Province) were formed and each was named according to the conceptual vigor, which

are in order of importance as follows: 1. Products of the destination (H), 2. Space opportunities of the destination (I), 3. Infrastructure of the destination (G), 4. Cultural support and beliefs of the destination(A), 5. Responsible participation of the destination (B), 6. Cultural acceptance of the destination (C), 7. Marketing for the destination (E), 8. Human capital of the destination (F), 9. Employment in destination (D). In Table 5, the primary codes and segments that were created in the open coding step were merged with their similar ones to determine the relationship between the subcategories and a category was formed with new concepts.

Table 5. Extensive categories and subcategories derived from concepts (axial coding)
(Source: Research finding, 2020)

Row	Extensive category	Subcategory
1	Products of the destination	Climate of destination villages
		Accommodation diversity
		Catering diversity
		The cultural, historical and ancient significance of the destination
		Variety of tourism activities in the region
		Relationships of rural tourism destinations in the region
		Special events (such as various festivals, the strawberry fair, etc.)
2	Space opportunities of the destination	Distance and proximity to other tourist areas (average distance to other destinations)
		Distance and proximity to centers of population such as Rasht and Rudbar
		Distance to formal accommodation facilities
		Being next to the attraction
		Being on the way to the attraction
		Being along the main road
3	Infrastructure of the destination	Programs to monitor the quality of the visitor experience
		Training programs support
		Establishment and application of quality standards of tourism infrastructure
		Amenities and services (water, electricity and gas)
		Financial and banking services
		Security and law enforcement services

Row	Extensive category	Subcategory
		Health Services
		Retail services
		Communication services (telecommunications, post, Internet)
		Gas station and CNG
4	Cultural support and beliefs of the destination	Believe in the importance and role of tourism in the economy and development of the village
		Expressing satisfaction with the arrival of tourists
		Support the creation of new tourism facilities
5	Responsible participation of the destination	Participation of residents in decisions
		Investment of local residents in the tourism sector
		Awareness of tourism industry
		Involvement of residents in tourism entrepreneurship
6	Cultural acceptance of the destination	Acceptance of tourist's presence
		Interest in interacting with tourists
7	Marketing for the destination	Marketing communications of the destination
		Management of the destination product development
		Branding and brand management
		Develop a strong environmental image of the destination
		Installation of boards in a suitable place (roads toward the village)
		Holding tours to visit the natural and pristine attractions of the region
		Advertisements to introduce the region (media, distribution of brochures and tourist attraction map guide, etc.)
8	Human capital of the destination	Village population
		Village literacy rate
		The youth rate of the village population
9	Employment in destination	Job creation for the available labor of the region (15-64 years)
		The effect of tourism on job security in the region
		Effect on creating side jobs in the village (residences, restaurants, etc.)

In the final stage, or selective coding, the initial framework of the study was formed by reviewing the narrative, combining the categories and understanding the relationship between them around an axial concept, in a back and forth with the study population (figure 2). In other words, at this stage, the researcher turns his attention to determining the core category (the variable that is most often repeated in the data and is able to relate other variables to each other) while focusing on the process that lay in the

data. Among these, "rural tourism product supply" was a core category (main variable) that directly and indirectly affected other variables and was distinctly stated in all data. After determining the pivotal or core category, other categories around the core category were designed in a paradigmatic model. This model, which is in fact the data-based ground theory, has three dimensions of conditions, interactions and consequences (figure 3).



Figure 2. The initial framework for the development of tourist destination villages in Rahmatabad and Blukat, Rudbar, Guilan

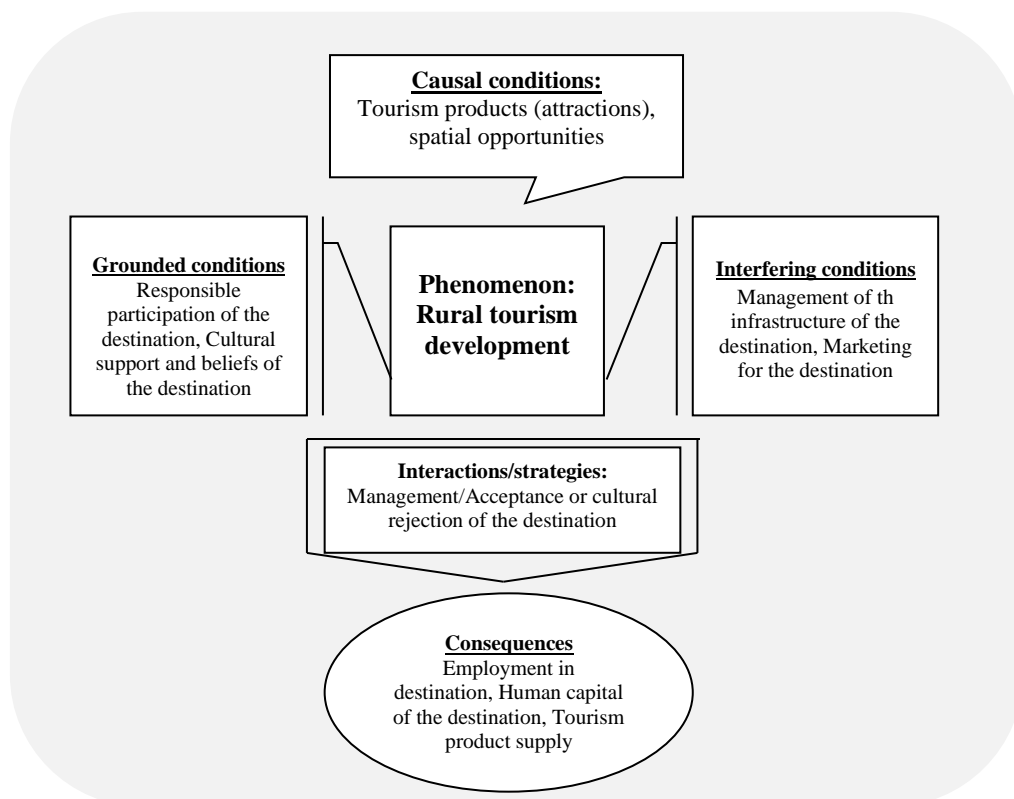


Figure 3 - Paradigmatic model/rural tourism development model of Rahmatabad and Blukat district, Rudbar, Guilan

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the semantic understanding of rural tourism development clearly show that the development of tourism in a geographical context (village) as an important asset can lead to growth and economic-spatial reconstruction in rural, regional and national areas. The presented arguments have been reconstructed based on the intended semantic process of key rural informants and tourists in the studied rural areas. This process showed the conditions/contexts, interactions/strategies of social acceptance of rural tourism, and also the role of the arrival of spatial elements of rural tourism from the tourists and key informants viewpoint in that area.

The consequences of tourism development in these areas are multiple. In other words, semantic understanding regarding to the grounded theory of tourism development in rural areas of Rahmatabad and Blukat of Rudbar County mainly included: Products (attractions) of the destination, space opportunities of the destination, infrastructure of the destination, cultural support and beliefs of the destination, responsible participation of the destination, cultural acceptance of the destination, marketing for the destination, human capital of the destination, employment in destination.

According to the core category, which is provided from other major categories, key informants and rural tourists in Rahmatabad and Blukat District of Rudbar County realize the development of rural tourism as a social acceptance of tourism. In other words, they believe that spatial changes, which have occurred in the village space system have taken place, are in line with developing and increasing their socio-economic standard of living (e.g. the villages of Estakhrghah and Halimeh Jan have become entrepreneurship villages and almost without unemployment, in the villages of Sidasht and Estalakh Jan the phenomenon of youth reverse migration (from city to village)). The above central item clearly indicates that the villagers of Rahmatabad and Blukat District of Rudbar County of Guilan reckon the created spatial changes as a positive and functional transformation. Recognizing the consequences of spatial change as the acceptance and social participation of village residents, is affected by a number of conditions and contexts. Therefore, special interactions and processes have been achieved. In addition, the mentioned recognition itself has special results that will be considered in the following.

As shown in the paradigmatic model ([figure 3](#)), there are a number of tourism conditions and contexts in the rural areas of Rahmatabad and Blukat in Rudbar County which have led to the creation of various tourism spaces specific to that region. According to key informants of the village and tourists in the area, these conditions are in three main groups, which are: Causal conditions, grounded conditions, interfering conditions

In this investigation causal conditions are "tourism product supply policies". They are significant for the competitiveness of tourist attractions (products), due to either the nature of tourism products and services or the delivery and presentation process. The climate of the region, superstructures, accommodation and catering opportunities for tourists, existing cultural and historical attractions, a combination of cultural and indigenous activities, relations of the destination, etc. can have a significant impact on policies to develop rural tourist attractions in Rahmatabad and Blukat District in Rudbar County. That is to say, the development of tourism products creates cultural dialogs and promotes strategic ties, as well as regional security, sustainable development and the introduction of regional identity. On the other hand, having special local and spatial opportunities in these villages, such as being next to or on the way of attraction (Darfak Mountain, Sefidrood River, being in the forests, waterfalls, historical and archaeological sites and shrines), their short distance to the center of the province (Rasht) and the county (Rudbar) are also the reasons of the phenomenon of rural tourism development in this region. These results are consistent with the findings of [Salehi & Shariat Panahi \(2019\)](#).

The intervening conditions are in the category of "tourism product supply policies" as well, which can play a significant role in the competitiveness of rural tourism destinations in Rahmatabad and Blukat District in Rudbar County through branding and achieving the marketing goals. Destinations as a tourism product are the result of marketing relations and branding and positioning. The development of the destinations can frame a strong symbolic-social image of that place in the tourists' minds (Estakhrghah with famous pools, scenic byways and a beautiful waterfall), Sidasht (Strawberry and summer highland pasture festival brand), Astalakh Jan (pools and ponds), Anarkul (one of the longest villages in Iran, next to Siahrood River), Nesfi (ancient Marlik hill and Peel Ghaleh), Divrash (Springs, caves and summer houses), Halimeh Jan (Aroos Lake), and Ber

Agur (religious tourism brand of Imamzadeh Hashem, Saleh and Ibrahim and Shahr-e Bijar Lake). The development of tourism product management, that is, local businesses in consistence with the geography of tourism is of particular importance in the competitiveness of tourist destinations. The marketing activities have become competitive in the world today and to stay competitive they must be innovative and creative. Innovative activities will differentiate product of the destination from others and will attract well-informed customers to the place. Moreover, the major category of "tourism policies for capital access" can be researched through programs to monitor the quality of the experience, support educational schemes, and establish and apply quality standards for tourism infrastructure (accommodation, public, security, transportation, communication, etc.), which promote competitiveness and development of the places in Rahmatabad and Blukat District in Rudbar County.

In addition, the category of "the policy of support and cultural and social participation in tourism" is a component that is classified in terms of context, which is implemented through the support and cultural beliefs of residents, that is, believe in the importance and role of tourism in the economy and development of the destination, the satisfaction of local people with the arrival of tourists, and the cultural and social support of the residents for the creation of new tourism facilities are the factors that have a significant impact on the process of competitiveness and development of tourist destinations. To achieve this, it is suggested that special attention be paid to the development and expansion of local community civil associations. The category of responsible participation of destination residents in the major category of "social participation policy" is a component that emphasizes the participation of local people. That is, the residents' participation in decision-making and selection of priorities, their investment in tourism, awareness of local people from the economic benefits and capabilities of the tourism industry, having an entrepreneurial spirit, and creating a sense of competition among indigenous peoples in creating jobs, and thus socio-economic development. They can have a profound impact on the development and competitiveness of the destinations in Rahmatabad and Blukat District in Rudbar County. Tourism destinations in today's world must be innovative and creative and provide compatible products through the participation of the local community. These results

are in line with the findings of [Rostami Ghobadi and Ehsanifar \(2018\)](#), [Bayat & Badri \(2017\)](#) and [Papzan et al. \(2009\)](#).

The mentioned conditions in general and along with each other have caused the initiation of the phenomenon of rural tourism development, and consequently, its spatial elements to the rural areas of Rahmatabad and Blukat District in Rudbar County. With the arrival of spatial elements of tourism in Rudbar, the villagers of the tourist destination interacted with it in two different ways, or say, they used two kinds of strategies against it. These two modes of interaction or strategy range from positive and practical acceptance to negative evaluation and resistance. This means that the major category of "tourism social acceptance policy" is a component that occurs through the acceptance of local people at the tourist arrival at the destination. The hospitality and acceptance of the tourist's presence and being interested in the interaction with tourists can have results such as more employment, diversification in production, improvement of the quality of life and public culture, foreign exchange earnings and it can be a tool for advertising the destination which benefits competitiveness of tourist destinations in this district. These results are in line with some of the findings of [Rostami Ghobadi and Ehsanifar \(2015\)](#) and [Einali et al. \(2015\)](#).

The phenomenon of rural tourism development in Rahmatabad and Blukat District in Rudbar County has had spatial results and consequences, which can be categorized (as shown in the model ([Figure 2](#))) into several categories, which are employment in destination, human capital of the destination and tourism product supply. This means that with the development of tourism, job opportunities have been created for the active labour of the region (15-64 years) (villages without unemployment of Estakhrghah and Halimeh Jan). In other words, tourism has affected the job security of the region, side jobs for the village (such as residences, traditional restaurants), decrease in youth migration from the village, and accordingly the increase of population, literacy rate. Reverse migration can also be seen in Sidasht village. These results are in line with the findings of [Gholizadeh et al. \(2019\)](#) and a part of the findings of [Salimi Sobhan and Hojat Shamami \(2019\)](#), [Eynali et al. \(2018\)](#), [Rezvani et al. \(2012\)](#) and [Oroji et al. \(2016\)](#).

Findings showed that the vital commodities of rural tourism in Rudbar are the supply of a mixture of tourism approaches such as ecotourism, agrotourism

and participatory approaches such as the view of scenic byways. In the elevated villages near Darfak peak, the commodities are long hiking or cycling alongside Sefidrood River as well as heritage areas. Moreover, in the development of rural tourism in the study area, the categories of destination tourism products, destination space opportunities, destination infrastructure, cultural support and beliefs, responsible participation, destination cultural acceptance, destination marketing, destination human capital, destination employment were important. The most important categories (Core category) was “tourism product development policy”. Lack of proper access to infrastructure such as mobile coverage accessibility, Internet and accommodation opportunities, frequent cut-offs of water in some villages for some hours, have limited the development of tourism in some areas.

In order to achieve the development of rural tourism, it is suggested that special attention be paid to the development policy of Guilan tourism product supply. In order to implement the “the policy of support and cultural and social participation in tourism” and “tourism social acceptance policy”, it is suggested that the development and expansion of local community civil associations be taken into consideration. Tourism destinations in today's world must be innovative and creative and provide compatible products through the participation of the local community.

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In order to implement “tourism product supply policies”, branding and positioning of tourism destinations should be considered to make the destination product distinctive and unique and to attract well-informed and interested customers. In this study, the important brands of the villages were: Sidasht village, brand of agrotroism and strawberry festival; Astalakh Jan, Estakhrghah and Halima Jan brands of tourism entrepreneurship and ecotourism landscapes (lakes, ponds and forest); Ber Agur brand of religious tourism (shrines) and ecotourism of landscapes; Anarkul, Divrash (beautiful natural scenery of rivers, caves, springs and summer houses); Nesfi (historical and ancient tourism and nature-oriented).

In order to achieve the development of rural tourism, it is suggested that special attention be paid to the development policy of Guilan tourism product supply. Special attention should be paid to the development of infrastructure and services and the development of social capital in the region. Since most of the incoming tourists to Guilan are nature-based tourists, increasing the village’s service such as improving mobile and Internet access, improving the village’s water and electricity quality, travel agency offices and active tour operators in the villages, automobile repair shops, local food restaurants and eco-resorts are vital.

Acknowledgments: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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تئوری بنیانی توسعه گردشگری روستایی گیلان (مطالعه موردی: بخش رحمت آباد و بلوکات شهرستان رودبار)

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تاریخ پذیرش: ۲۶ دی ۱۳۹۹

تاریخ دریافت: ۲۷ شهریور ۱۳۹۹

چکیده مبسوط

۱. مقدمه

وسیله مشاغل کشاورزی مورد استفاده قرار می‌گیرند قابل اجرا می‌باشد. این فعالیت باید به عنوان پیشنهادی در غالب طیف مختلفی از تجارب که در آن تأکید بر تجربه استفاده گردشگران از محصولات و فعالیت‌های مناطق روستایی است صورت گیرد. گردشگری روستایی در برگزیده موارد مختلفی از قبیل گذران تعطیلات در مزارع، گردشگری کشاورزی، اکوتوریسم، پیاده‌روی، دوچرخه‌سواری، سوارکاری، کوهنوردی و جهانگردی ماجراجویی، گردشگری ورزشی، پزشکی، شکار، ماهیگیری، گردشگری غذایی، مذهبی و تقریباً همه اشکال ممکن دیگر از گردشگری همراه با رویداد، جشنواره‌ها و حتی بازدید دوستان و بستگان را در بر می‌گیرد. در ایجاد طیف گسترده‌ای از این قبیل فعالیت‌ها، در نظر گرفتن ماهیت و شرایط عرضه در مناطق روستایی از اهمیت ویژه‌ای برخوردار است.

۳. روش تحقیق

این پژوهش به لحاظ هدف توسعه‌ای - کاربردی، از نظر پارادایم کیفی و از حیث روش از نظریه بنیانی مبتنی بر رویکرد استقرایی بهره برده است. جامعه آماری شامل دو دسته مطلعان کلیدی روستایی و گردشگران شهرستان رودبار بودند که به روش نمونه‌گیری هدفمند، ۱۸ نفر با روش گلوله برفی انتخاب شدند و با استفاده از مصاحبه‌های عمیق و نیمه‌ساختارمند و در نهایت رسیدن به اشباع نظری داده‌ها جمع‌آوری گردید. برای تحلیل روایت‌ها از روش کدگذاری سه مرحله‌ای باز، محوری و انتخابی استفاده گردید.

متأثر از دیدگاه‌های غالب پسامدرن و به علت اهمیت بازتاب سنت در مدرنیته، یکی از عرصه‌های مهم پیش‌برنده توسعه و رشد تقاضای گردشگری، توجه به نواحی روستایی است. در چشم‌انداز اقتصادهای توسعه‌یافته، گردشگری روستایی را می‌توان تجربه‌ای مبتنی بر کشور تلقی کرد که طیف گسترده‌ای از جاذبه‌ها و فعالیت‌هایی را شامل می‌شود که می‌تواند فرصت‌های ارائه خدمات به جوامع محلی را افزایش دهد. این اهمیت تا آنجایی است که فضاهای جغرافیایی یا مناظر، کالاهای اساسی در گردشگری هستند و نگهداری از آنها تبدیل به جزئی جدایی‌ناپذیر در اقتصاد روستایی شده است، بدین‌سان، این مقاله به مطالعه زمینه‌ای درک معنایی توسعه گردشگری روستایی شهرستان رودبار استان گیلان پرداخت.

۲. مبانی نظری تحقیق

جاذبه‌های گردشگری عمده‌ترین دلیل مراجعه گردشگران به مقاصد روستایی و به عنوان کلیدی‌ترین عنصر در مکان‌یابی فضاهای گردشگری به حساب می‌آیند. گردشگری توسط لیبر (۱۹۹۰) به عنوان حرکت مردم از یک منطقه مولد توریست به یک منطقه مقصد گردشگری، جایی که در آنجا برای مدت زمانی می‌مانند تعریف شده است. همچنین کیلون (۲۰۰۱) گردشگری روستایی را یک فعالیت چندوجهی که در محیطی خارج از مناطق شهری انجام می‌شود تعریف می‌کند. این فعالیت بخشی از صنعتی است که توسط کسب و کارهای گردشگری در مقیاس کوچک صورت گرفته و در مناطقی که اراضی به

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۴. یافته‌های تحقیق

یافته‌ها نشان داد کالاهای اساسی گردشگری روستایی در شهرستان رودبار مبتنی بر عرضه آمیخته‌ای از محصول گردشگری همچون اکوتوریسم، آگروتوریسم و رویکردهای مبتنی بر مشارکت مانند منظره جاده‌های کم‌تردد و دور افتاده و پر پیچ‌ونگی، و روستاهای با ارتفاع بالا در نزدیکی قله درفک، مسیرهای پیاده‌روی یا دوچرخه‌سواری طولانی در مسیر سفیدرود و مناطق میراثی هستند. همچنین، در توسعه گردشگری روستایی محدوده مورد مطالعه به ترتیب مقوله‌های محصولات گردشگری مقصد، فرصت‌های فضایی مقصد، زیرساخت‌های مقصد، حمایت و باورهای فرهنگی، مشارکت مسئولانه، پذیرش فرهنگی مقصد، بازاریابی مقصد، سرمایه‌های انسانی مقصد، اشتغال مقصد با اهمیت بوده‌اند و مهمترین مقوله (مقوله هسته) "سیاست توسعه عرضه محصول گردشگری" شناخته شد.

۵. بحث و نتیجه‌گیری

یافته‌ها به وضوح نشان می‌دهد، بسط و گسترش گردشگری در یک بستر جغرافیایی (روستا) بسان یک سرمایه مهم می‌تواند منجر به رشد و بازساخت اقتصادی - فضایی در نواحی روستایی، منطقه‌ای و ملی گردد. مباحث ارائه شده، بر اساس فرآیند معنایی مورد نظر مطلعین کلیدی روستایی و گردشگران در نواحی روستایی مورد مطالعه بازسازی شده است. این فرآیند نشان داد که پذیرش اجتماعی گردشگری روستایی تحت چه شرایط/بسترها، تعاملات/استراتژی‌ها عمل کرده و همچنین نقش ورود عناصر فضایی توسعه گردشگری روستایی را از نقطه نظر گردشگران و مطلعین کلیدی پژوهش آن منطقه به تصویر کشیده است.

پدیده توسعه گردشگری روستایی شهرستان بخش رحمت‌آباد و بلوکات شهرستان رودبار نتایج و پیامدهای فضایی را بدنبال داشته است که می‌توان پیامدهای مذکور را در چند مقوله دسته‌بندی کرد؛ ماهیت این

مقوله‌ها بدین معنی است که با توسعه گردشگری و ورود و خروج گردشگران فرصت‌های شغلی برای نیروهای فعال اقتصادی منطقه (۶۴-۱۵ سال) بوجود آمده است (روستاهای بدون بیکار استخرگاه و حلیمه جان)، به عبارتی گردشگری بر امنیت شغلی منطقه اثر گذار بوده است، توسعه مشاغل جانبی روستا (همچون اقامتگاه‌ها، رستوران‌های سنتی، کاهش مهاجرت جوانان از روستا به تبعه آن افزایش جمعیت روستا، نرخ باسوادی و جوانی جمعیت در این اکثر محدوده مورد مطالعه دیده می‌شود (روستای سی‌دشت (مهاجرت معکوس)).

برای رسیدن به توسعه گردشگری روستایی پیشنهاد می‌گردد:

✓ در جهت پیاده‌سازی "سیاست حمایت فرهنگی و اجتماعی گردشگری" و "سیاست پذیرش اجتماعی گردشگری" پیشنهاد می‌گردد توسعه و گسترش انجمن‌های مدنی جامعه محلی مورد توجه ویژه قرار گیرد. از آنجایی که اغلب گردشگران ورودی به گیلان از نوع گردشگران مبتنی بر طبیعت‌گردی هستند، افزایش بسترهای خدماتی روستا همچون بهبود آنتن‌دهی تلفن همراه و اینترنت، بهبود وضعیت آب و برق روستاها، دفاتر آژانس‌های مسافرتی و تورگردانی فعال در روستا، تعمیرگاه خودرو، دفاتر بیمه، رستوران‌های غذاهای محلی و اقامتگاه‌های بوم‌گردی ضروری می‌نماید.

✓ به منظور پیاده‌سازی "سیاست‌های توسعه عرضه محصولات گردشگری" برندگذاری و جایگاه‌یابی مقاصد گردشگری مورد توجه قرار گیرد؛ تا محصول مقصد را متمایز و منحصر به فرد ساخته و مشتریان آگاه و علاقمند را به سوی خود جلب نمایند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: تئوری بنیانی، گردشگری روستایی، گیلان، شهرستان رودبار.

تشکر و قدرانی

پژوهش حاضر حامی مالی نداشته و حاصل فعالیت علمی نویسندگان است.



How to cite this article:

Jamshidzahi Shahbakhsh, O. & Moradi, H. (2021). Rural tourism development in Guilan: A grounded theory study (Case study: Rahmatabad and Blukat District in Rudbar County). *Journal of Research & Rural Planning*, 10(1), 81-99.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.22067/jrpp.v10i1.88723>