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Investigation of the Factors Hindering and Promoting Tourism Evidences from Villages of Abyaneh Village

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Abstract

Rural tourism, a dynamic industry with a promising future, can play a key role in economic improvement of talented countries such as Iran. Abyaneh village is one of the best-known villages in both Iran and the world. The number of annual visitors of this ancient village is approximately 550,000 that is a considerable number. Within a short radius of Abyaneh there are five villages (Barz, Tare, Komjan, Yarand, Hanjan) with a lot of potentials to develop rural tourism. But only 20% of tourists of Abyaneh population consider the surrounding villages as a separate destination. The large number of tourists visiting Abyaneh village provides opportunity for managing rural tourism in this area is to attract tourists to the surrounding villages around Abyaneh. In the present study, the hindering and promoting factors of fostering tourism in these villages have been compared by both the surrounded villagers' and locals' of Abyaneh village. To this end, 222 questionnaires were distributed among the individuals and the means were compared using Mann-Whitney test. The most important unfavorable factor, from the surrounded villagers' point of view, is lack of enough advertising and marketing and from the locals of Abyaneh village points of view, is the shortage of attractions, compared with attractions of Abyaneh.

Keywords:

Tourism development,
Local society, Rural
tourism, Abyaneh village

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INTRODUCTION

Abyaneh is considered one of the historic and cultural attractions of Isfahan province and a major rural tourism destination in Iran. Within a short radius of Abyaneh, there are well-known villages with plenty of potentials to promote tourism such as Barz-Abyaneh route (Barz, Tare, Komjan, Yarand, Hanjan). These villages take advantage of their capacities in terms of accommodating tourists which result in attracting a lot of visitors from all over the world from which the locals will benefit in particular. Obviously, the more tourists visit a place, the more money the locals would make. However, the aforementioned route has not yet been regarded and recognized as an independent destination by the visitors to Abyaneh village. Center of the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO) (2010) declared that approximately 550000 tourists visit Abyaneh village annually but only 20% of that population consider the surrounding villages as a separate destination of tourism. Although those villages are located close to Abyaneh, they are overlooked by tourists. The main goal of this paper, as a result, is to determine the main factors hindering and promoting of tourism in these villages. In addition of the capacity and the good location of these villages there are two more reasons legitimizing to try on the Abyanian tourists to visit the surrounding villages.

Firstly, Abyaneh is a small village with ancient structure which is vulnerable to the number of

visitors larger than its capacity. Nowadays, having too many visitors in Abyaneh has had some negative impacts among which we can name of locals' general discontent (ICHTO, 2010). Other negative outcomes mentioned in the studies are, the accumulation of garbage, pollution of land and water supplies and waste disposal (Stevens, 1993; Ghaderi and Henderson, 2012; Yong, 2012), rise in land and food prices (Stevens 1993; Shackley 1994; Mulligan 1999), some disruptions that local villagers suffered from (lack of respect for their culture and privacy) (Long and Wall 1996; Belsky 1999; Campbell 1999; Saul 1999), obtaining the majority of economic benefits by local elites (Long and Wall 1996; Belsky 1999; Campbell 1999; Saul 1999), congestion in their village as well as on roads and loss of privacy and quietness (Monteiro, 2011). These unfavorable factors caused a strong eagerness to adjustment the population of tourists.

Secondly, based on observations and surveys, the tourists have also proved not to be satisfied with facilities like restaurants, cabins for short lodging, recreational centers and parking lots. Therefore, providing the facilities demanded to promote tourists' satisfaction appears to be logical and essential. Regarding Abyaneh's vulnerability, it would be a good idea to compensate for these inadequacies in Abyaneh by its villages. This has an additional advantage for Abyaneh's tourists because it gives them a chance to experience the beauties of these new destinations.

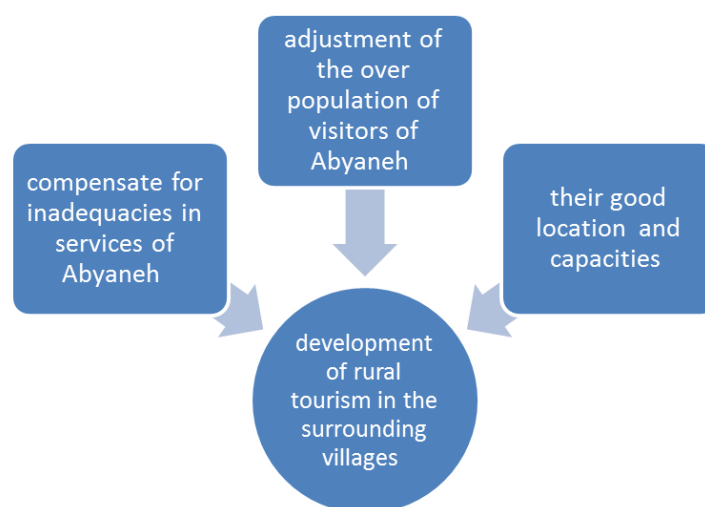


Figure 1: Positive effects of flourishing tourism in surrounding villages on Abyaneh's states.

Figure 1 shows the positive effects of flourishing tourism in surrounding villages on Abyaneh's states.

Generally, any destination can be managed efficiently by improving visitors' satisfaction or introducing a new destination to them (Kozak, 2002). Also it is feasible to extend the market to new tourism destinations by creating variety in current services in different destinations (Jeffrey and Xie, 1995). Because of the vulnerability of Abyaneh village and the necessity of creating new services in this village, introducing a new destination can be the best way to solve the present problems of this historic village. It is possible, as a result, to create a new tourism market (in the five villages) close to the main destination (Abyaneh) by evenly motivating the current visitors of Abyaneh and providing services with higher standards in those nearby places. This is the fundamental ideology of this study. Therefore, it requires investigating the factors that hinder or promote tourism in these villages. In fact it is vital to target prospective customers by being aware of the efficient factors which form bonds between tourism

product and tourists (Jeffrey and Xie, 1995). This study tries to investigate these bonds based on the ideas of surrounded villagers' and locals' of Abyaneh. In addition, assessing individuals' perception will help detect areas of strengths or weaknesses within the destination (Kazemi, 2009; Bashar and Puad, 2010; Naidoo *et al.*, 2010). Such knowledge should help governments, tourism agencies, and operators to improve marketing planning and investment decisions in the rural tourism context.

Study area

Barz-Abyaneh route, with its six historic villages at the foot of Karkass Mountain, which overlooks a rocky landscape, is located in the Isfahan province of Iran (Figure 2).

Its attractions are natural scenery and landscape, some historic and cultural monuments, a famous ritual, holy shrine, convince to reach, accommodation facilities (hotel), local products (dried fruits, local sweets) and finally flora and fauna. As it is located near the mountains and desert, the village has a favorable climatic conditions and delicious summer fruits. Abyaneh village is



Figure 2: Abyaneh In Iran.

Table 1: Some tourist attractions in Barz-Abyaneh route.

Village	Natural scenery	Convince to reach	Holly shrine	Local products	Wild life	Famous rituals	Historical and cultural monuments	Hotel	Distance from Abyaneh (Km)
Abyaneh	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	0
Tareh	+	+		+	+		+		4
Barz	+	+		+	+		+		8
Komjan	+	+	+	+	+		+		10
Yarand	+	+		+	+		+		15
Hanjan	+	+	+	+	+		+		19

Source: ICHTO (2012)

characterized by peculiar red clay in buildings, traditional costumes, local dialect and a plethora of various handicrafts. From an archeological perspective, this is a village of traditions, architectural styles (all in red clay). Though the attractions of those five villages are not as unique as Abyaneh village, they can be regarded as different destination for tourists. In table (1) their names, distances from Abyaneh and their attractions are mentioned (UNESCO, 2012; ICHTO, 2012).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is descriptive- analytical. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire which was partly constructed by the researcher and devised in 5-grade Likert scale. The questionnaire focused on promoting and inhibiting factors of tourism development in the villages around Abyaneh. The secondary data were gathered from the internet and the previously published journals. The selection of these independent variables was based on suggestions and empirical testing by a number of researchers

(Roknoddin Eftekhari and Mahdavi, 2006; Aref, 2010; Yong, 2012; Ghaderi and Henderson, 2012; Armstrong *et al.*, 1997; Danaher and Arweiler 1996; Richardson and Crompton, 1988; Birdir *et al.*, 2013; Ince and Bowen, 2011; Latkova and Vogt, 2012). Afterwards, through interviews and direct observation, first-hand data were accumulated and finally using Mann-Whitney test, the average opinions of these two groups were compared. Mann-Whitney was chosen as it is used when the data are on ordinal scale. This test measures the differences between the two groups by rating the measures related to the two groups simultaneously regardless of their belonging to a specific group. Use the Mann-Whitney test when the data do not meet the requirements for a parametric test (i.e. if the data are not normally distributed; if the variances for the two conditions are markedly different; or if the data are measurements on an ordinal scale. (The Mann-Whitney test is used to compare two independent samples when data are either interval scale but assump-

Table 2: Some characteristics of respondents.

Characteristic	Groups	Levels of variables	Number	Percent%
Gender	Abyaneh residents	Female	69	61.6
	Other		43	39
	Abyaneh residents	Male	43	38.4
	Other		67	61
Age (year)	Abyaneh residents	18- 40	27	24.1
		41-60	60	53.6
	Other	61-80	25	22.3
		18- 40	36	32.7
		41-60	65	59.1
		61-80	9	8.2

Table 3: Prioritizing promoting factors of tourism in the villages surrounding Abyaneh from the surrounded villagers' and Abyaneh locals' point of view.

Unfavorable Factors	Groups	Priority	CV	S.D.	Mean
Ecological and visual attractions (natural scenery, gardens, farms, moderate climate, Karkas wild life preserve area, snow- covered altitudes)	Abyaneh residents	1	0.33	1.41	4.24
	Other	1	0.14	0.68	4.77
High potential of social participation (locals' inclination to cooperate)	Abyaneh residents	9	0.56	1.19	0.12
	Other	2	0.15	0.76	4.85
architectural, religious, cultural and historical attractions	Abyaneh residents	10	0.57	0.80	1.39
	Other	3	0.16	0.80	4.97
Transport infrastructure (smooth roads, taxi system)	Abyaneh residents	3	0.35	1.35	3.79
	Other	4	0.174	0.80	4.59
The positive effect of population explosion in cities and citizens rush to villages	Abyaneh residents	4	0.38	1.19	3.15
	Other	5	0.176	0.85	4.83
Increasing attention to tourism and its position as a psychological need	Abyaneh residents	6	0.48	1.55	3.25
	Other	6	0.185	0.85	4.58
Rich social capital in these villages (high education of the youth and literacy of the locals)	Abyaneh residents	5	0.36	0.77	2.1
	Other	7	0.186	0.83	4.47
Being close to Abyaneh, Isfahan and Tehran which are likely to send many tourists to these villages	Abyaneh residents	2	0.44	1.35	3.07
	Other	8	0.19	0.80	4.19
Additional attractions (Being close to Kashan, where tourists can enjoy Golab festival*)	Abyaneh residents	7	0.50	1.30	2.59
	Other	9	0.20	0.85	4.35
A chance for these villages to compensate the shortcoming the services in Abyaneh to attract more its tourists	Abyaneh residents	8	0.51	1.43	2.78
	Other	10	0.22	0.95	4.33

*Golab festival: A festival in which locals produce red Rose essence in Kashan city of Isfahan province, near Barz- Abyaneh route (ICHTO, 2012).

tions for t-test (normality) are not satisfied, or ordinal (ranked) scale (Forrest and Andersen, 1986; Bergmanna *et al.*, 2000; Lind *et al.*, 2004; McCrum-Gardner, 2008). Because scale of measurement was ordinal, therefore The Mann-Whitney test was used for comparison. The study was carried out in summer 2010 and the number of subjects was determined by 110 surrounded villagers and 112 locals of Abyaneh.

Preliminary results and discussion

Some characteristics of the subjects in the study are shown in table 2.

Prioritizing promoting factors of tourism in the villages surrounding Abyaneh from the sur-

rounded villagers' and locals' points of view

To develop tourism industry in villages around Abyaneh, promoting factors should be identified. The list of promoting factors from the Abyaneh residents' and surrounded villages' points of view are provided in table 3. Their prioritizing is based on their coefficient variance (CV). The factors in this table were partly constructed by the researcher such as "additional attractions", "compensate the shortcoming the services in Abyaneh" and "High potential of social participation". The other factors are extracted from references.

The factor with top priority, from Abyaneh residents' and other points of view is Ecological

Table 4: Prioritizing unfavorable factors of tourism in the villages surrounding Abyaneh from the surrounded villagers' and locals' point of view.

Unfavorable Factors	Groups	Priority	CV	S.D.	Mean
Lack of enough advertisement and marketing (tourists' un awareness of these attractions)	Abyaneh residents	3	0.35	1	2.86
	Other	1	0.36	1.39	3.86
Shortage of architectural, religious, cultural and historical attractions (compared with Abyaneh village)	Abyaneh residents	1	0.31	0.91	2.88
	Other	2	0.37	1.34	3.55
Lack of required facilities and services for tourists	Abyaneh residents	4	0.41	0.99	2.41
	Other	3	0.38	1.29	3.39
Locals' reluctance to attract and accept tourists because of the harms done by them	Abyaneh residents	2	0.33	0.97	2.95
	Other	4	0.40	1.32	3.27

and visual attractions with CV of 0.33 and 0.14 respectively. The least important factors are architectural, religious, cultural and historical attractions with the variance coefficient of 57%. The calculated mean is based on the respondents' answers to the questionnaire on the Likert scale.

Prioritizing unfavorable factors of tourism in the villages surrounding Abyaneh from the surrounded villagers' and locals' point of view

To develop tourism in the villages around Abyaneh, unfavorable factors, as shown in table 4, should be investigated as well.

The most important unfavorable factor, from the surrounded villagers' point of view, is lack of enough advertising and marketing (tourists are not aware of these attractions). This factor has the coefficient variance of 0.36. From the Abyaneh locals' points of view, the most important unfavorable factor is the shortage of architectural, religious, cultural and historical attractions (compared with Abyaneh village). The least important factor, according to surrounded villagers, is the Locals' reluctance to attract and accept tourists because of the harms of tourism industry that are explained before, in introduction part, which has the coefficient variance of 0.40. Locals believe that the least important factor is the lack of facilities and services with the coefficient variance of 0.41. We can conclude that Abyaneh inhabitants think that the villages around Abyaneh are not capable of attracting tourists even if more facilities can be provided due to the fact that Abyaneh locals believe that the nearby villages basically shortage

of architectural, religious, cultural and historic attractions (compared with Abyaneh village).

A comparison among favorable factors in creating rural tourism in the villages around Abyaneh from the Abyaneh locals' and surrounded villagers' points of view

As shown in table 5, there is a significant difference between the two groups in all items estimating favorable factors.

The rate averages given to item 9 and 10 by the Abyaneh locals are significantly higher than the rate averages given to them by surrounded villagers. But for other items it is vice versa. Actually, the rate averages given to items 1-8 by surrounded villagers are significantly higher than the rate averages given by Abyaneh locals.

A comparison between unfavorable factors in rural tourism in the villages around Abyaneh village from the Abyaneh locals' and surrounded villagers' points of view

It can be inferred from table 6 that the last 2 items are not significantly different from the notions of the Abyaneh locals and surrounded villagers; so they are not discussed here.

In fact, items 3 and 4 are not significantly different and in this respect, the two groups have similar ideas. But, regarding other items, there are significant differences at the level of 90% and 95%. According to the surrounded villagers, the most important factor is the lack of enough advertising and marketing. While, according to the locals of Abyaneh, the villages around Abyaneh, not having enough tourist attractions, could be considered as the most im-

Table 5: A comparison between favorable factors in creating rural tourism in the villages around Abyaneh village from the Abyaneh locals' and surrounded villagers' points of view.

Unfavorable Factors	Rate Average		U- Mann Withney	p-value
	Other n=110	Abyaneh residents n=112		
Ecological and visual attractions (natural scenery, gardens, farms, moderate climate, Karkas wild life preserve area, snow- covered altitudes)	139.04	110.59	6020**	0.001
High potential of social participation (locals' inclination to cooperate)	115.99	135.97	6549*	0.013
Architectural, religious, cultural and historical attractions	140.29	109.22	5857**	0.001
Transport infrastructure (smooth roads, taxi system)	152.29	96.01	4285**	0.000
The positive effect of population explosion in cities and citizens rush to villages				
Increasing attention to tourism and its position as a psychological need	138.37	111.33	6108.5**	0.003
Rich social capital in these villages (high education of the youth and literacy of the locals, locals' inclination to cooperate)	135.81	114.15	6443.5*	0.014
Being close to Abyaneh, Isfahan and Tehran which are likely to send many tourists to these villages	144.44	106.66	5314**	0.000
Additional attractions (Being close to Kashan, where tourists can enjoy Golab festival***)	115.15	136.89	6538.5**	0.003
A chance for these villages to compensate the shortcoming the services in Abyaneh to attract more its tourists	139.37 146.06	110.23 102.87	5977** 5101.5**	0.001 0.000

*P < 0.01 ** P < 0.05

*** Golab festival: A festival in which locals produce red Rose essence in Kashan city of Isfahan province, near Barz- Abyaneh route (ICHTO, 2012)

portant factor. Besides, regarding average rate, surrounded villagers' did not consider being close to Abyaneh as an effective factor as locals

in Abyaneh.

All in all by comparing the opinions of the 2 groups of subjects, it can be concluded that

Table 6: A comparison between unfavorable factors in creating rural tourism in the villages around Abyaneh village from the Abyaneh locals' and surrounded villagers' view point.

Unfavorable factors	Rate Average		U- Mann Withney	p-value
	Abyaneh residents n=112	Other n=110		
Lack of enough advertisement and marketing (tourists' un awareness of these attractions)	143.64	78.78	2.560**	0.000
Shortage of architectural/ religious/ cultural and historical attractions (compared with Abyaneh village)	97.14	126.12	4.552**	0.001
Lack of required facilities and services for tourists	107.33	115.74	5.694	0.317
Locals' reluctance to attract and accept tourists because of the harms done by them	106.07	117.03	5.552	0.181

** P < 0.05

surrounded villagers were very much optimistic to the development of rural tourism in the areas concerned in the study. As mentioned before, the most effective factor is the role of tourists sending cities like Tehran, Isfahan, and Abyaneh. Of course, in the interview locals rated their village higher than Tehran and Isfahan. Generally it seems that locals of Abyaneh believe that the villages around Abyaneh owe their development to Abyaneh and its remarkable attractions and they don't have any potential on their own. According to surrounded villagers, facilities and transportation infrastructures are more important than other factors.

In fact, it shows that surrounded villagers believe to be in Abyaneh does not necessarily tempt the tourists to visit surrounding villages. Ways of motivating them to be willing to visit these places, such as advertising and marketing, should be explored.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, surrounded villagers believed that the most notable as well as the second most important favorable factors are visual and ecological attractions respectively. It is vital to plan and budget properly to further identify, develop and preserve natural and ecological attractions. For example, it can be recommended that a ski slope be constructed and winter sports and mountaineering be encouraged. In addition, there is a good opportunity for professional visits of wild life (to create a situation to visit animals in close range) and flora and fauna of the region and these villages have been identified as suitable sites for bird watching to create variety (especially in comparison to the services offered in Abyaneh) and finally raise money. Of course, it shouldn't be forgotten that all these activities are supposed to be carried out considering environmental principals and the capacity of the region.

Owing to the fact that surrounded villagers estimated the variable of lack of marketing and informing people as the most notable factor, proper measures should be taken to inform public about the attractions and potentiality of the villages as soon as possible. Of course, this ne-

cessitates to change potential to practical advantages in the first step and to introduce them to the surrounded villagers.

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