

ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS OF YARDANGS TOURISM IN THE PROSPERITY APPROACH (CASE STUDY: SHAHDAD DISTRICT)

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Abstract

In 2013, the UN-Habitat classified the world's countries in terms of prosperity indicators. This assessment was based on the situation of the countries in terms of the quality of life, infrastructures, productivity, environmental sustainability, equity, and social inclusion. The importance of tourism, as the driver of development, has led to the changes in social, cultural, environmental, and economic aspects of the host community. The current research aims to assess the effects of yardangs tourism and their impact on the rural prosperity of Shahdad district. The research hypothesis was as follows based on the research purpose and subject: it seems that yardangs tourism leads to the prosperity of the Shahdad district of Kerman. The current research was descriptive-analytical and was conducted based on the survey method. The statistical population of the region under study was 11125, and the sample size was calculated at 320 households using Morgan's table. The sampling method was a simple random sampling method. The research tool was a questionnaire consisted of 15 questions. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were calculated using experts and Cronbach's alpha test, which was considered acceptable at 0.827. The analysis level of the study area was Shahdad district (city and its suburb) and the analysis unit of household. The research results indicate that since the t value of the considered indicators was higher than 1.96 thus, they are significant at the significance level of 0.01. In other words, the tourism of yardangs increased the quality of life, productivity, infrastructures, and prosperity of Shahdad District, (except for the equity and social inclusion and environmental sustainability that were not significant).

Keywords: Assessment, Tourism of Yardangs, Prosperity Approach, Shahdad District.

INTRODUCTION

It is necessary to accept requirements and consequences of achieving comprehensive development in obtaining a desirable situation and use resources and potential human and natural resources efficiently and accurately and consider all the recourses valuable considering the various aspects of development in different social, economic, political, cultural, and planning contexts of life in achieving the desirable situation and putting effort into its

realization (Mirlotfi & Shahraki, 2014, p.2). In this regard, tourism is considered one of the ways to spend leisure time and has a considerable effect on the human environment, economy, and livelihood of the communities and can be influential in rural and urban prosperity (Camacho, R., et. al., 2020; Baghaei, S., et al., 2020). The income of the international tourism in 2013 consisted of 8% out of total export incomes of the world and 37% of the exports in the service sector, and based on the 4 to 5% growth in this

industry in the 1990s, the experts predict that if the tourism growth continues, the resulted income will exceed one trillion dollars and can make changes in the social, cultural, environmental, and economic aspects of the host community and can be considered a tool for the economic development, especially in the local communities. Hence, tourism development could increase local and national development (Ziaei et al., 2013, p. 60). The villages of Iran, especially in desert regions, could be raised as unique attractions due to their specific climate and enjoying particular natural and human capabilities. Having physical spaces, specific architectures, geographical conditions, traditions and customs, economic activities, handicrafts, lifestyle, peace and silence, and the pristine and various landscape are among the valuable features that could considerably contribute in the rural tourism development in Iran (Ghadiri Ma'soum, Este'laji, & Pazaki, 2010, p. 113). The current research used the prosperity approach, which was first mentioned in the UN-Habitat's Program in 2013. This report is a response to the multifaceted crisis in recent decades in the world. In the presented report, the human habitat addressed the definition of prosperity and presented multifaceted indicators of prosperity. Indeed, instead of using economic factors as one-dimensionally, including the amount of income and production, the new approach addresses the infrastructures, productivity, equity and social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and quality of life. Each of these aspects has a significant share in increasing the understanding of prosperity (UN HABITAT, 2013). Given the importance of the research subject, many studies have been done on the tourism of yardangs in Iran and foreign countries, some of which were mentioned in the current research. Shari'at Panahi, Ranjbar, Este'laji (2008), in a paper entitled "Investigating the tourism attractions in the Dasht-e Kavir, concluded that the required investments not only can increase the domestic tourism but also can contribute to the economic and social development of Iran by attracting foreign tourists. Mirhosseini and Nojavan (2012), in a paper entitled "Development of a strategic model and sustainable tourism development approach in desert regions using

Space matrix, QSPM, and SWOT, case study: the desert regions of Yazd province, concluded that first, the strategies of the tourism development in the desert regions of Yazd province are included in the defensive strategies, i.e., the strategies that were codified to reduce the weaknesses and eliminate the threats. Secondly, the managerial strategies were ranked in higher priority than other strategies. In a paper entitled "A framework for urban prosperity indicators; the relationship between the indicators, analyzes, and policies", Wang (2014) concluded that the emphasis on the urban prosperity indicators highlights the concepts, methodology, and political challenges. Jones et al. (2014), in a paper entitled "the steps towards urban prosperity in the developing countries", concluded that urban prosperity is one of the key principles in global development. In this research, the fundamental issues of prosperity were addressed, including infrastructures, productivity, equity and social inclusion, quality of life, and environmental sustainability. Mahmoud Badari Othman (2015), in a paper entitled "The role of women in achieving prosperity; women's effect in the macroeconomy of Malaysia", concluded that women consist more than half of the population of Malaysia who plays a key role in the prosperity of Malaysia. According to the research subject and purpose, the current study aims to professionally answer the following question: Have the tourism of yardangs led to the prosperity of the Shahdad district of Kerman?

RESEARCH METHOD

The current research was a descriptive-analytical study conducted based on the survey method. The statistical population of the study area was 11125, and the sample size was calculated 320 households using Morgan's table. The sampling method was the simple random sampling method. The research tool was a questionnaire consisting of 15 questions. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were calculated by the experts and using Cronbach's alpha test, which was considered actable at 0.827. The analysis level of the study region was Shahdad district (the city and its suburbs) and the analysis unit of household. Finally, the significant relationship between the variables was analyzed using the one-sample t-test

and based on the rural prosperity approach¹ of the tourism of yardangs.

Study area

Shahdad is one of the greatest parts of Iran located in Kerman. Its area is 29452 square kilometers and located on the northeast of Kerman province and is limited by Khorasan province from the north, Golbaf district from the south, Sistan and Baluchestan province from the east, and the central district of Kerman from the west, and Ravar city from the northwest. This

district is like a triangle in the margin of Lut dessert 95 km away from Kerman city. The vertex of this triangle is toward the northwest, and its base is toward the southwest. This region is located at the intersection of the central highlands and low desert areas, and this exceptional intersection between the mountainous and desert areas has created unique environmental features that can be seen in fewer parts of the Iran Plateau (Jozi et al., 2010, p. 331).

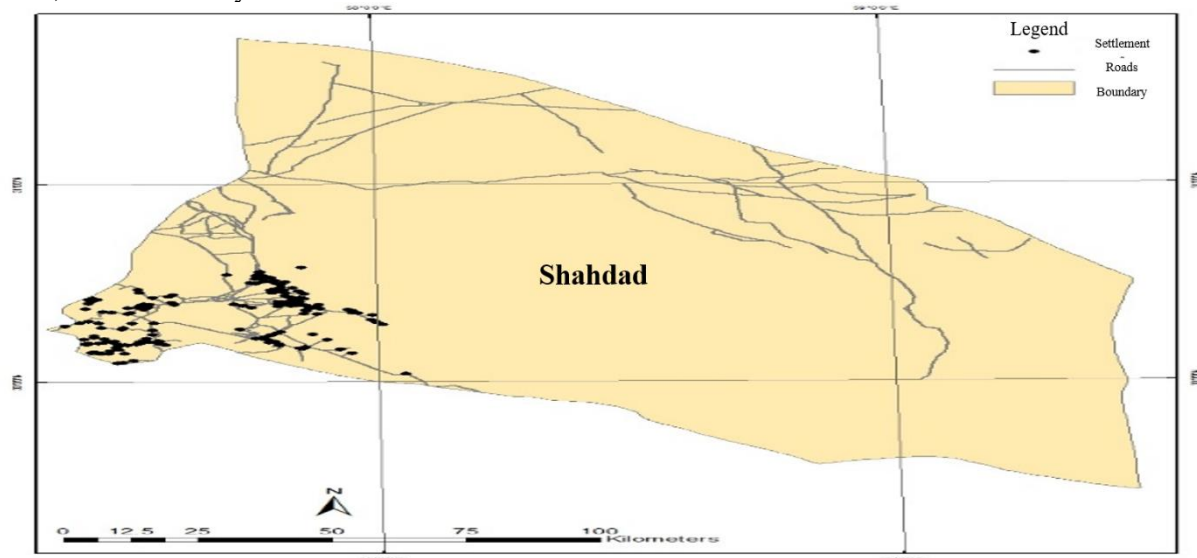


Figure 1. Map of the study area

Theoretical Foundations

Travel and tourism are the most significant part of the economic service. According to the World Tourism Organization, in 2013, tourism had a share of more than 9.5% of the gross domestic product among all participants in the economic sector of the world. Tourism is tied to a great part of the economy of the world and has a rapid growth than the financial-business services, transportation, and automotive industry. Approximately 266 million people of the world's employment have a direct and indirect relationship with the tourism services (Cibinskience&Snieskiene, 2015, 105).

Nowadays, marketing touristic places in a competitive world increase the number of tourists in the tourism destinations (Donald,

Stephen, 2016, p. 593). The purpose of the tourism plans is to coordinate the policies and credits for the development of the marketing infrastructure, investment in all public sectors, and its effects on the development of all sectors (Mitchelle & Ashley, 20). Tourism is one the cheapest and safest resources to gain foreign exchange earnings (Rezvani, 2006, p. 22). On the one hand, tourism can increase the entrance of the tourists, employment, and government's incomes, and on the other hand, it can be associated with social, cultural, and environmental advantages and help the maintenance of the cultures. Therefore, the most important task of tourism is to promote and improve peace and mutual understanding among the people. Thus, it can be said that tourism is more than an industry (Bayat et al., 2013, p. 123).

¹ The original approach is the urban prosperity approach. The researcher simulated it in the rural regions and raised it as rural prosperity.

In the current era, tourism is considered one of the influential factors in the relationship between the nations and is raised as the creator of the job opportunities in the economic sector and socio-cultural interactions (Sariisik et al., 2011, 1011). The development of this culture in any part of the world requires specific conditions and facilities, such as weather, historical and cultural works, natural attractions, customs, infrastructures, facilities, and equipment (Sobhani, 2010, p. 11). The development of the tourism industry is an industry that interacts with various areas, including economy, agriculture, culture, environment, and services. Ecotourism, a short term of Ecological Tourism, is a driver for economic development, which was introduced as nature tourism, and is a new approach in the tourism industry (Yaghmaian, 2003). Nature tourism is of considerable significance, and the experiences of the other parts of the world showed that its development in each area leads to the socio-economic growth and development of that area (Madhoushi, Naserpour, 2003, p. 28). Natural attractions have a significant share in tourism development. According to Gunn's opinion, there might be many attractive resources. However, they might not be able to attract the tourist. Therefore, they are not attractive practically. Gunn believes that the attractions indicate the most significant reasons to travel to tourism destinations. Natural attractions are the founders of a specific type of nature-based tourism, which is called ecotourism (Gunn, 1992, 72).

Desert includes a great part of our land largest of which is the Dasht-e Kavir in the south part of Alborz, and the direst and lowest of which is the Lut Desert in the southeast of Iran. Shahdad district of Kerman plays a significant role in the development and advancement of this type of tourism industry, considering its natural foundations for desert tourism (Azani et al., 2011, p. 1604). The urban prosperity includes five aspects due to being based on the welfare concepts of the UN-Habitat, which were presented in Figure 2.

1. Equity and Social Inclusion:

Social inclusion in the city means continuing to protect the interests of different social groups based on the optimal distribution of urban

resources, revenues, and expenditures (Gray, 2002, p. 27). Therefore, nowadays, social inclusion is considered a context for environmental studies. An important issue in the fair distribution of facilities as a social inclusion strategy is how services and facilities are distributed among urban neighborhoods (Harvey, 1969, 97).

2. Infrastructures:

Infrastructures are the fundamental and main part of the urban facilities and equipment. The urban facilities and equipment are the factors, elements, and processes of the urban space and physique that facilities the citizens' lives. The facilities and equipment are also considered the physical manifestation of the public institutes and units in the cities and settlements, and in the urban planning thought, every set or each one of the public service institutes and units have a specific form of the activities in the consistent with the users' needs based on which, the spatial-physical, cultural, political, social, and economic identity of a settlement could be recognized (Behzadfar, 2009, 10).

3. Environmental sustainability:

From the 1990s onwards, human misbehavior and improper functions in the large cities led to the environmental disorder and sustainability of life in the urban areas (Masnavi, 2002, p. 80). Therefore, the lack of a logical relationship between the distribution and allocation of the resources, activities, and facilities equally caused the spatial duality at the level of regions (Gharakhlou, Amini, Rajaei, 2008, 148).

4. Productivity

Productivity means power, production, being productive and generated in term (Belgheysi, 1994, p. 5-11). In the current system of the world, productivity and its improvement are one of the main purposes of active and alive organizations. In the evolving and pioneer system, the first attempt to recognize the productivity and its consequences is to determine the influential factors on its increase, which is considered the required and necessary conditions of the realization of the growth and development (Kargar et al., 2004, p. 128). Also, the economic development and growth in the city and village or any geographical unit depend on providing contexts and required facilities. One of the factors

providing the ground for the rural-urban development and growth is productivity and observing the optimal consumption of the resources (Azimi et al., 2013, 25).

5. Quality of life

The concept of quality of life has numerous applications. However, presenting a clear and comprehensive definition for quality of life is difficult because it has been applied in different areas and with various applications. People usually have a clear image of the quality of life in their minds. They often know what needs to be done to feel happy in life, for instance, more income, having a house (or a larger house), a good car, many vocations, etc. Moreover, people say explicitly that what needs to happen so that everyone would feel happy (quality of collective life); for instance, the existence of a quiet and beautiful neighborhood or village and city, lack of traffic, lack of unemployment and poverty, the health care facilities for everyone, etc. (Noghani et al., 2008, p. 113). The quality of life has not specific origin. Although the quality of life has a generic concept and attraction, it does not have a generally accepted definition. In other words, whatever term is used to define the quality of life, a person's quality of life depends on the objective and external facts of his life and his inner and mental perceptions of these factors, as well as on himself. Any definition of quality of life should include two basic elements (characteristics): 1) a psychological-physiological (internal) mental structure that provides a sense of satisfaction; 2)

External phenomena that guarantee that structure (Pacione, 2003, p. 21). The World Health Organization defines the quality of life as welfare in social, psychological, and physical areas, and defines it as the quality of life of the people's perception of the situation of their lives in the cultural and value systems where they live and are related to their purposes, criteria, and concerns. It is a broad subject and is influenced in a very complicated way by physical health, mental state, and independence, and the person's relationships with the important aspects of the environment (WHO-QoL Group, 1993, p. 5). Prosperity is a relatively new concept raised in the economic and management planning conversational vocabularies. Economic prosperity is a generic term used commonly in some of the disciplines as well. Thus, this term was first used in the early 1990s in Canada and approximately equaled the government's focus on the advancement of the economic structure. Although this process was a Canadian plan, it is an emerging phenomenon of concern for the future economy of the world as well. The social prosperity of the population not only is the main task of the nations but also it is on the top of all changes in on the large economic and political scales (Gasnov & Serge, 2015, p. 97). In 2013, prosperity was again offered by the UN-Habitat, which first included two aspects of productivity and quality of life, based on the Human Development Indices (HDI). Then, three more aspects were added (infrastructures, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion) (Bonaiuto et al., 2014, p. 2). Table 1 presents the negative and positive effects of tourism.

Table 1. The negative and positive effects of tourism (Crouch & Ritchie, 1995, p.45)

Effects	Positive	Negative
Economic	Increase in consumption, job creation	Raise at prices in a specific interval Increase in properties and real estate.
Physical	Construction of the new facilities. Improvement of the local infrastructures.	Destroying the environment. Congestion and crowd.
Social	Improving the solidarity of the communities	Increasing the cause of avarice and greed.
Psychological	Increasing the local and society's pride. Enhancing awareness on understanding the non-local.	Accelerating undesirable social trends such as over-urbanization.

Cultural	New ideas and exposure to other cultures and their lifestyles Strengthening traditional and regional values	Commercializing activities that may be a personal, private, or natural lifestyle. Changing the nature of values instead of tourism.
Political	Recognizing the regional values at the international level. Political dissemination of values and the help of government and nations.	Economic exploitation of the local population and imposing the ambitions of political elites. Deviation from the real events of society due to the values of political systems

RESEARCH FINDINGS

According to Table 2, out of the total of respondents, 166 were male (51.7%) and 120 were female (37.4%).

Table 2. The gender of the respondents
(Resource: research findings)

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	166	51.7%
Female	120	37.4%
No response	35	10.9%
Total	321	100.0

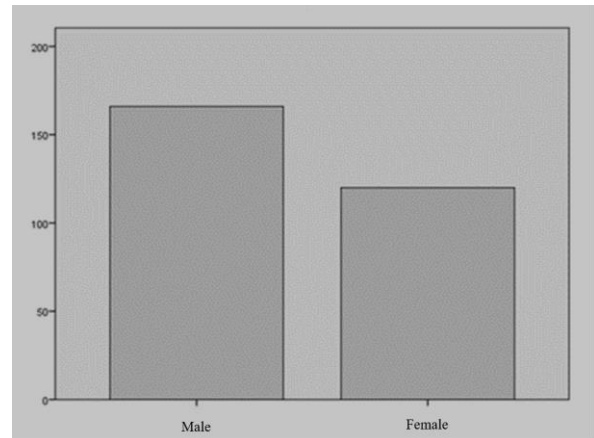


Figure 3. The graph of the respondents' gender

According to Table 3, out of respondents, 60 had elementary education (18.7%), 102 had middle school (31.8%), 105 had diplomas (32.7%), and 53 (16.5%) had bachelor's degrees and higher education.

Table 3. Respondents' education (Resource: research findings)

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary	60	18.7%
Middle school	102	31.8%
Diploma	105	32.7%
Bachelor's degree and higher education	53	16.5%
Total	320	99.7
No response	1	0.3
Total	321	100.0

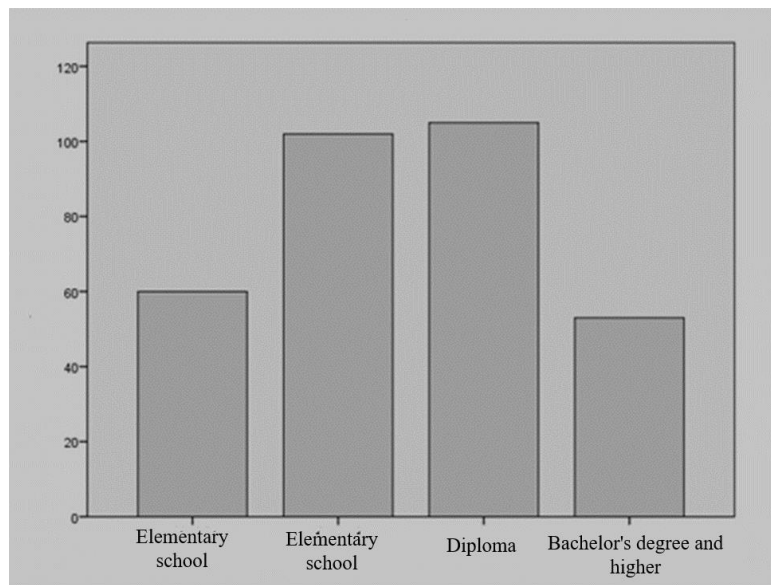


Figure 4. The graph of the respondents' education level

According to Table 4, out of respondents, 138 chose the city (43 %), and 164 chose the village (51.1%) as their birthplace.

Table 4. The place where respondents filled the questionnaire (Resource: research findings)

	Frequency	Percentage
City	138	43%
Village	164	51.1%
No response	19	5.9%
Total	321	100.0

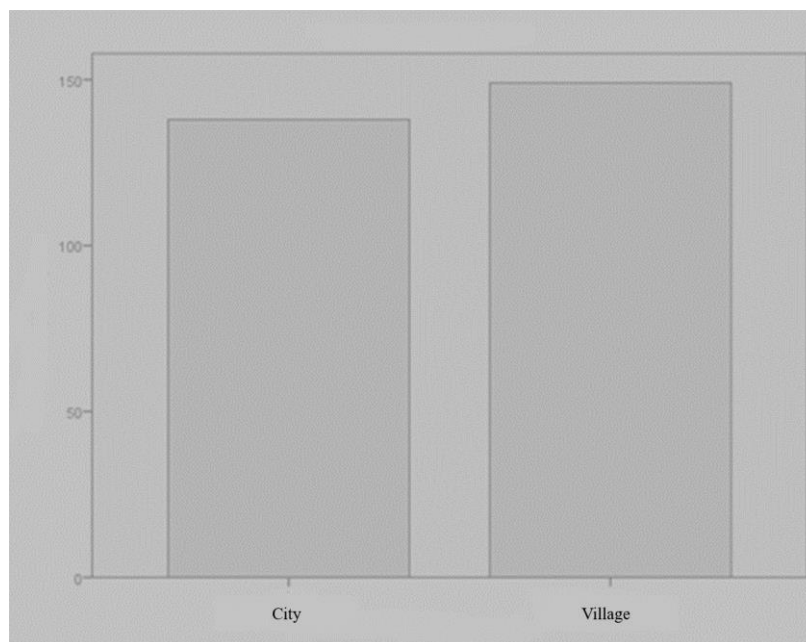


Figure 5. The graph of the place where the respondents filled the questionnaire

Table 5. The selected aspects and indicators of the tourism of yardangs on the rural-urban prosperity (Resource: research findings)

Aspects	Indicators
Quality of life	Service, healthy leisure, living costs
Equity and social inclusion	The fair distribution of the tourists, social happiness, sense of security
Environmental sustainability	Increase in the garbage, destroying the pristine landscapes, protecting the environment.
Productivity	The significant economic advantages, income, revival of the handicrafts products

Infrastructures	The implementation of the infrastructures, increasing the development credits, improving the infrastructures
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According to Table 4, the aspects of the effects of the yardangs tourism on the prosperity of the cities and villages of Shahdad district of Kerman were assessed in 5 aspects and 15 indicators, which were evaluated using a questionnaire. In the current research, various items were used in the indicators.

The rural prosperity approach in a cycle has aspects of quality of life, environmental sustainability, infrastructures, productivity, equity, and social inclusion. Being in the direct interaction of this cycle and the positive effects of yardangs tourism leads to the prosperity of the city and the surrounding area of Shahdad. Figure 6 shows this cycle.

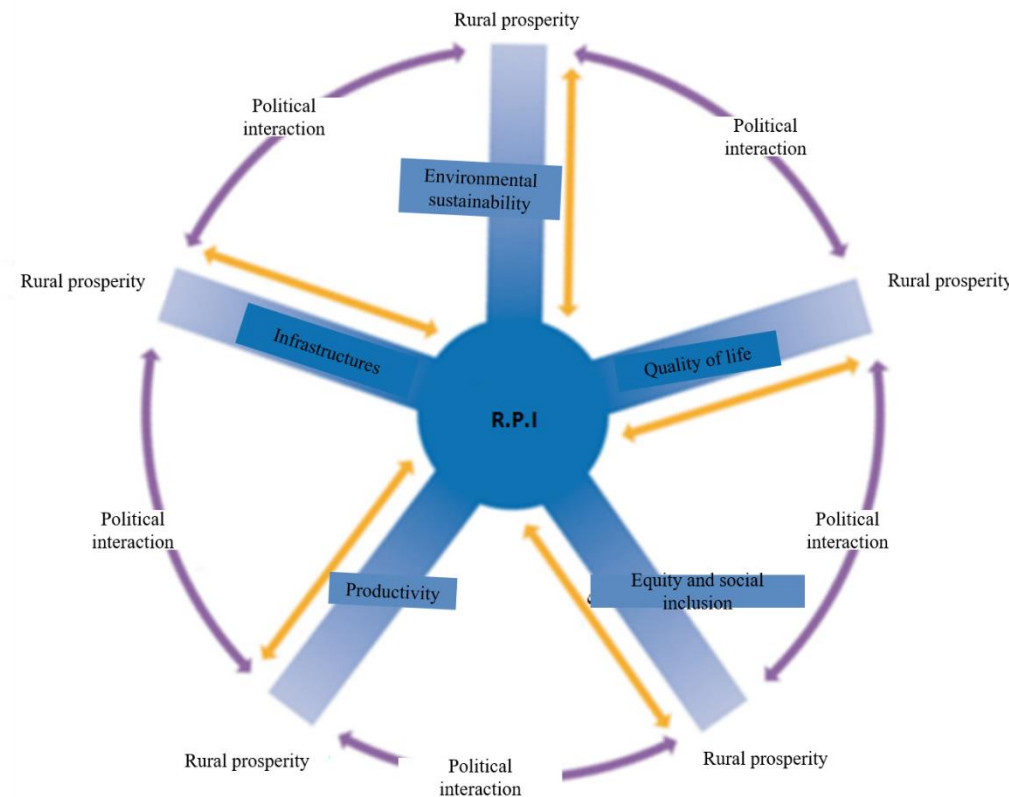


Figure 6. The cycle of rural prosperity (Un-Habitat, 2012).

Table 6. Comparison of the averages of the rural prosperity indices

Aspects	Number	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
Quality of life	321	3.2	0.8359	0.0476
Equity and social inclusion	321	3.08	0.9496	0.0530
Environmental sustainability	321	3.08	1.067	0.0595
Productivity	321	3.45	1.08	0.0606
Infrastructures	321	3.45	1.38	0.0528

Different aspects of the prosperity cycle were used to compare the averages. According to the results of the yardangs tourism, the maximum effect was on increasing the urban-rural productivity and improvement of the tourism

infrastructure. In other words, the entrance of the tourists to the touristic area of yardangs led to increasing the quality of life, equity and social inclusion, environmental sustainability, productivity, and infrastructure of the region.

Table 7. One-sample t-test, the significant relationship between the rural prosperity indicators

Aspects	t	df	Sig	Average difference	Lower limit	Upper limit
Quality of life	5.05	320	0.000	0.240	0.1471	0.334
Equity and social inclusion	1.61	320	0.107	0.0856	-0.0186	0.1899
Environmental sustainability	1.39	320	0.164	0.0830	-0.0341	0.2002
Productivity	7.49	320	0.000	0.454	0.335	0.574
Infrastructures	7.74	320	0.000	0.449	0.335	

CONCLUSION

The development of the tourism industry and its significant economic interests has created a broad competitive market between the various countries, and each country tries to advance the others in this competitive market and by introducing its touristic attractions to the world, attract international tourists and own the resulted interests, and provide the possibility of transferring the wealth from a region to another by transferring the domestic tourist to balance the different areas of the country. Unfortunately, despite the existence of potential tourism capabilities in Iran both in natural landscapes and human attractions, the tourism activities were not prosperous, and do not play a significant role in the country's economy so that not only the international tourism is unaware of Iran's attractions, but also the domestic tourists know about a small part of these attractions, and a limited number of them visit them annually.

Among the various regions of Iran, desert and semi-desert areas were neglected more than others, and they were only mentioned as useless areas. However, these so-called unimportant areas have such human and natural attractions that in case of introducing them to the domestic and abroad communities, the investment in the desert tourism and providing the welfare facilities and security and the required facilities of the tourism, these so-called worthless areas could become a valuable resource in terms of economy. The current research aimed to introduce the touristic attractions of the desert and semi-desert areas of Iran, including the Shahdad region, to attract domestic and foreign tourists, and free these areas from isolation. Therefore, their resulted economic and social interests will provide the context for the development and growth at local and national levels. Considering the importance of the research subject and purpose, Table 7 presents the t values and all aspects of urban-rural prosperity. Since the t value of the considered indicators was higher than 1.96, therefore, they are significant at the significance level of 0.01. In other words, the tourism of yardangs increases the indicators of service, healthy leisure, living costs, important economic

advantages, income, revitalization of the handicrafts products, implementation of the infrastructures, increasing the development credits, improvement of the infrastructure in three aspects of the quality of life, productivity, and infrastructures, and eventually, the prosperity of Shahdad region. Also, it was not successful in other indicators, including the fair distribution of the tourists, social happiness, sense of security, increasing the garbage, destroying the pristine landscapes, protecting the environment in two aspects of the equity and social inclusion and the environmental sustainability that were not significant.

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