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## Community Perceptions Of Rural Tourism Development Based on The Gender Analysis Approach

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# **Community Perceptions Of Rural Tourism Development Based On the Gender Analysis Approach**

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## **Abstract**

This quantitative and descriptive research was conducted using the gender analysis approach to examine community perception regarding tourism development. It seeks to investigate the differences between the perceptions of women and men regarding tourism effects, and to describe what generates this difference? The research took place in seven villages in the northwest region of Tehran—Capital city of Iran—and from a total of 560 households, 158 households were selected as a sample. The questionnaires were completed by 50 women and 108 men who were active in tourism. The results show although women's involvement in tourism development increased their social connections and knowledge about their society, men are more positive about the economic effects of tourism.

My research findings illustrate that men and women do not have the same perception of the impact of tourism, mainly because they have different expectations and not benefited equally. Although tourism has created new job opportunities for women, because of their concentration in the secondary labour market and due to gender differences in access to tourism advantages, tourism development did not affect reducing gender inequality in the area. A comprehensive approach and gender-sensitive rural tourism planning are needed to prevent a gender gap in rural society.

**Keywords:** gender analysis, gender perceptions, Iran, rural tourism, tourism effects, women's participation

## **Perceptions communautaires du développement du tourisme rural sur la base de l'approche de l'analyse de genre**

## **Résumé**

Cette recherche quantitative et descriptive a été menée en utilisant l'approche de l'analyse de genre pour examiner la perception de la communauté concernant le développement du tourisme. Il cherche à étudier les différences entre les perceptions des femmes et des hommes concernant les effets du tourisme et à décrire ce qui

génère cette différence. La recherche a eu lieu dans sept villages de la région nord-ouest de Téhéran, capitale de l'Iran, et sur un total de 560 ménages, 158 ménages ont été sélectionnés comme échantillon. Les questionnaires ont été remplis par 50 femmes et 108 hommes actifs dans le tourisme. Les résultats montrent que bien que la participation des femmes au développement du tourisme ait accru leurs liens sociaux et leurs connaissances sur leur société, les hommes sont plus positifs quant aux effets économiques du tourisme.

Les résultats de mes recherches montrent que les hommes et les femmes n'ont pas la même perception de l'impact du tourisme, principalement parce qu'ils ont des attentes différentes et n'en ont pas bénéficié de la même manière. Bien que le tourisme ait créé de nouvelles opportunités d'emploi pour les femmes, en raison de leur concentration sur le marché du travail secondaire et en raison des différences entre les sexes dans l'accès aux avantages touristiques, le développement du tourisme n'a pas affecté la réduction des inégalités entre les sexes dans la région. Une approche globale et une planification du tourisme rural sensible au genre sont nécessaires pour éviter un écart entre les sexes dans la société rurale.

**Mots-clés:** analyse de genre, perceptions de genre, Iran, tourisme rural, effets du tourisme, participation des femmes

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## 1.0 Introduction

Rural problems are manifested in different economic, social, and cultural aspects. New forces bring new opportunities to the rural world, for example, improvements in transportation and communication technologies led to increasing communication within civil society and facilitated access to knowledge resources. The structure of rural life is, therefore, changing irrevocably. Changes to the socio-economic structure directly affect the lives of women and men, and their relationships, in rural areas. They have to cope with increasing global competition as a result of liberalized markets and often see their income threatened by falling prices and rising production costs. This encourages them to search for new sources of revenue to replace their old ones.

Tourism in rural areas can create employment and opportunities for business growth for both women and men who are engaged in microbusinesses, particularly where other opportunities may be limited, and it can benefit small businesses and the self-employed in rural areas. The tourism sector can improve the economic situation of rural areas, and at the same time, its environmental and social impact is understood and has been well documented (Dougherty et al., 2013; Haley et al., 2005; Ryan et al., 1999; Saveriades, 2000). The tourism industry can generate income from diverse sources and in different business sizes. It provides an additional source of income; for example, it brings new job opportunities for women and can reduce the rate of rural depopulation (Jafari, 2000, p. 514).

Since we are living in a gendered society in which women and men have different attitudes and expectations—whether they be positive or negative—all tourism-related processes are made in gendered societies (Kinnaird & Hal, 2000a); for example, research shows that women and men have distinct roles in tourism. Since women are more active in retail trade and men have more managerial work, it means tourism development is more likely to be gender-biased (Dadvar-Khani, 2012; Zhang et al., 2006; Jackson & Inbakaran, 2006) and gendered identities are

important components of the type of tourism that takes place. So, a gendered perspective provides a powerful tool for understanding the nature and consequences of the relationship between tourism development and social processes. This kind of research about gender perceptions of tourism's contribution to social and daily life, in particular, is relatively recent and limited. However, the intersection of gender and tourism more generally has long been the focus of academic scrutiny; according to Kinnaird and Hall (2000a, 2000b), it has become one of the most systematic and well-studied areas of tourism.

There is no widely accepted consensus on what tourism brings because the consequences are contingent, varying from place to place (Dadvar-Khani, 2012). Evidence from the Mediterranean region shows that tourism may erode the physical and social environment of a destination (Inskeep, 1991, p.15; Saveriades, 2000, p. 147). It can happen when tourism causes pollution and more pressure on the natural environment, also it may change the lifestyle of rural communities. Like other forms of development, tourism can also cause its share of problems such as (a) social dislocation, (b) loss of cultural heritage, (c) economic dependence, and (d) ecological degradation (Graci & Dodds, 2010). Studies show that unplanned tourism development can transform or destroy the uniformity of a rural community. It may happen by social contacts and economic interdependencies amongst social groups that have been affected by tourists negatively. Despite the importance of gender analysis in rural tourism, limited attention has been paid to the gender dimension of tourism development. Meanwhile, tourism may cause serious economic, social, and cultural challenges, and may lead to gender inequality in rural societies. Compared to other sectors, the tourism sector has less categorized data and fewer information sources, particularly relating to gender. It makes tourism complicated to study.

The most significant principles for ensuring sustainable tourism development are the protection of social capital and the environment, the welfare of host communities in rural areas, and an understanding of residents' attitudes toward tourism development. In fact, planning and policy making for local communities to gain more from tourism is a key goal in many tourist destinations around the world (Dougherty et al., 2013; Ryan et al., 1999; Ryan & Huimin, 2013; Smith, 1989). Our pioneering study investigates the effects of gender characteristics on different tourism impacts, thus offering profiles of both sexes according to their perceptions of tourist's effects on the local environment, economy, and socio-cultural life. In the process of this research the following questions have been answered: "What are the differences between the perception of women and men regarding tourism development in rural areas?" and "Where did these differences originate from?" Nowadays, researchers and planners focus on the promotion of rural tourism with gender-blind planning, but there is still doubt about what tourism brings for the two sexes. However, this article will try to discover the similarities and differences of women's and men's perceptions about what tourism brings for the community and their village. It is believed that gender perception can be the reflection of gender role and status in rural areas: this understanding can guide planners to discover a mutually beneficial policy for rural tourism and gender-sensitive planning.

## **2.0 Literature**

Tourism can influence host communities economically, socially, and environmentally (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Haley et al., 2005; Schofield, 2011;

Sharpley, 2014). In recent years, many studies have examined attitudes of residents towards and perceptions of the impact of tourism development in their communities (Andereck et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2013; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Sharpley, 2014; Vareiro et al., 2013). Besides, residents' perceptions of the positive and negative impact of tourism development influence their participation in tourism activities and the sustainability of any tourism development (Nicholas et al., 2009). The perceptions of positive impacts on the community encourage residents to support tourism development, while the harmful effects of tourism will discourage them from supporting tourism development (Sharpley, 2014). Studies on resident perceptions mainly focused on nature, influencing factors, and theoretical explanations of tourism-induced impacts, particularly on the local community-oriented ones (Andereck et al., 2005).

Today, the presentation of a gender perspective in tourism studies has indicated considerable differences in all aspects such as the labour market, social and cultural participation, and even the issue of how they support or resist accepting it. In the other words, there is a difference between men and women, because of social roles and the social construction of gender, and consequently it effects on their participation in tourism activities. The discussion of gender and work, which is the particular focus of much tourism research, has been a crucial issue for a long time. As Figueroa-Domecq and Segovia-Perez (2020) address in their article, the gender aspect in tourism research indicates considering gender as a key analytical and explanatory variable in the process of social construction of any tourist activity.

On the basis of Kinnaird and Hall's (2006b) opinion the gender perspective should be integrated into tourism planning and development as the tourism labour market provides various opportunities for women at different levels, and helps them to generate independent income; however, it may change the women's lives in the destination communities either from a positive or negative perspective (Kinnaird & Hall, 2000b).

Several studies have been conducted that examine the relationship between tourism and gender participation and perceptions toward tourism. McGehee et al. (2007), for example, explore the potentially gendered nature of the motivation for agritourist entrepreneurship among Virginian farm families. The results of this study indicate that women have a higher motivation for agritourist entrepreneurship in all categories, but this was not consistently significant. Regarding resident attitudes toward tourism, several studies have investigated the relationship between an individual's characteristics, such as (a) demographics, (b) personal benefits from tourism, (c) community attachment, and (d) attitudes toward tourism development. For example, research in Spain by Almeida-García et al. (2016) showed that socio-demographic variables such as field of education, place of birth, and residential history of research participants had a significant impact on understanding tourism impacts.

Nowhere is gender inequity more apparent than in the tourism industry, and gendered power relations permeate all tourism worlds. None of us lives in a gender equal society and it is a worrying reality that not one country has yet eliminated the gender gap (World Economic Forum, n.d.).

In Cole's (2018) book "Gender Equality and Tourism: Beyond Empowerment" she discussed some different experiences that showed tourism had various effects on women in different geographical regions. For example, Boley et al. (2017), who used data from two previous studies to explore gender differences. They found that in Virginia, USA, women felt more empowered by tourism, whereas in Japan no

gender differences were reported. Cole also indicated that Ramons and Prideaux (2014) explored empowerment among a Mayan community in Mexico, while the overall the research suggested tourism was not empowering the community. Likewise, Romos and Prideaux (2014, as cited in Cole, 2018) found tourism did not bring economic empowerment.

Indeed, Rasoolimanesh et al. (2017) disclosed significant differences in the Perception of residents and community participation in supporting the development of tourism in both rural and urban destinations. Okech et al. (2012, p. 44) examined the differences of attitude in their research: they found that these attitudes vary according to (a) the degree of development of tourism, (b) the maturity of the destination, (c) the level of individual participation, and (d) the type of development of tourism. Many types of research have shown that the local residents who are dependent on tourism financially or those who understand the economic achievements of tourism are more likely to have a greater tendency to support tourism as compared to other residents (Decio & Baloglu, 2002; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Jurowski et al., 1997; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Liu et al., 1987; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Sirakaya et al., 2002).

There is, therefore, a need to consider the perception of gender when developing new tourism products due to the mutual influence of mind-set on behaviour, which consequently affects the outcome of an articular activity. In other words, it is crucial to focus on the gender perspective while we are researching tourism as a phenomenon that helps to recognise, understand, and analyse differences and—where appropriate—reduce inequality. However, in this paper, tourism and gender are examined from a new perspective that focuses on gender as a part of the body that has a mutual influence on tourism development in rural areas.

### ***2.1 Gender and Tourism Activities in Rural Areas***

Rural areas, like other geographical areas, are highly gendered spaces, and all behaviors and actions reflect attitudes, beliefs, and opinions concerning the status, roles, and responsibilities of the two sexes. Besides, tourism is one of the most effective activities which changes the face of the rural landscape and social structure as well (Dadvar-Khani & Saiedi, 2010; Bravo-Baumann, 2000).

In the last few decades, tourism has been identified as a means of income generation in less industrialized economies, especially in rural areas. Somehow the tourism industry has undergone a period of explosive growth by penetrating isolated areas and local communities, and—as it is a labour-intensive industry—there has consequently been a rapid rate of job creation and development. To explore the gender dimensions of tourism policy it is first useful to set the context by considering what is meant by gender. As mentioned in “Encyclopaedia of Tourism”, ‘gender’ is a social construction that draws on certain aspects of biological sex (Jafari, 2000, p. 246), and is defined as the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material (Food and Agriculture Organization, 1997). For feminists, one of the most important points about social fabrication of what is meant by being a man or a woman in a particular society is that most of the male and female characteristics of the society are defined concerning each other (Jafari, 2000, p. 247). However, this paper is focused on Swain's definition of gender as a cultural identity system that is expressed in masculine and feminine ideologies and structured in dealing with social relationships. This definition in the division of work and leisure, gender relation and power between men and women will be expanded (Swain, 1995, p. 258). Power is a

key concept in discovering gender relation in any context. Tourism is an activity that can highly effect or be affected by power relation in the society. Regarding gendered power, tourism as an economic and social system is based on the relationships between people—businesspersons, clients, residents, and managers—which in turn, are affected by gender. Gender is the origin of social relations in the distribution of power in the home, the community, and social classes; it is expressed in motivations, desires, traditions and perceptions (Swain, 1995). It also shows the domination of cultural norms that creates the patriarchal sphere, which was obvious in the studied rural area. Bringing gender aspects of tourism, especially issues of women's participation in tourism planning and management, to the attention of policymakers can create a gender-aware framework for the analysis of tourism development processes. Figueroa-Domecq et.al (2015) in the institutional level explained how the social, cultural, and organizational structures reproduce gender differences—division of labour, hierarchies, and power)—dividing institutions and society according to it. Mainly men relate the components of the institutional level to the maintenance of power and resources.

From a global perspective, it appears that there has been a broad increase in the participation of women in the tourism industry. The general picture suggests that the tourism industry seems to be a particularly important sector for women—46% of the workforce are women—as the percentage of women employed in tourism is higher in most countries than the percentage in the workforce in general—where 34–40 % are women. Still, their situation is far from the ideal, because they usually earn less than men, and fewer occupy managerial positions in comparison with men (International Labour Organization, 2013) In rural areas of Iran, women have benefited from different economic and social advantages of tourism development; for example, tourism provides better opportunities for women's participation in the workforce, my research shows that 18.8 % of women in the sample population are involved in tourism and make up between 10–15% of the labour force in the retail sector.

From the social side, engagement of women in the tourism economy can break the social taboo that has always prevented women from being active outdoors, and raises their self-esteem whilst providing an opportunity for the entire society to acknowledge women's abilities. Despite these advantages, women are more likely to be deprived of leadership positions in tourism businesses, associations, and tourism governance than men. So, women are more likely to be concentrated in the marginal sectors of tourism.

A considerable number of women are employed in both formal and informal sectors of tourism. So, tourism offers women opportunities for income generation and entrepreneurship. Neate's research (1987) in communities on the coast of England shows that women are becoming more active in the development of rural tourism. Kinnaird and Hall (2000a) suggest that the tourism industry is often seen as a gender-biased business with many early-stage occupations such as housekeeping positions and front-table work at hotels, restaurants, and attractions seen as female work in rural areas: whereas public spaces, as well as entry into the labour market, are more accessible for men. The process of change inherent in tourism-related activities implies the formation of new power relations (Kinnaird & Hall, 2000a, p. 76). It means that, the perception of traditional gender relations is being changed dramatically by tourism. Power relations are reproduced by the superiority of men over women and by the characteristic of a male-dominated culture over

women. While tourism can be a factor in bringing the changes that affect ideas, relationships, and sources of income in rural communities.

Therefore, this new power relates to the new role of women as the one who earns income and thus can have an effect on the reduction of patriarchal relations. The three conceptual issues of gender societies, gender relations, and power provide a framework through which it is possible to analyse the processes of development and transformation of tourism activities. In the development of tourism, power plays an important role (Swain, 1995). A system of cultural identity is formed within the structure and ideology of male and female and interacts with social relations and the division of labour, leisure, gender roles, and power between men and women (Dadvar-Khani, 2008, p. 22). Like gender identities, power distribution is a fluid and dynamic term, and power distribution changes according to the degree of employment in tourism and its history.

## ***2.2 Gender Participation in the Tourism Labour Market***

As a service sector, tourism is regarded as labour-intensive (Whatmore, 1991, p. 23). The diversification of the rural economy and the development of tourism can provide new and more job opportunities for women in the labour market. In addition to the prestige of the women's group, the main contribution to gender equality is that women, like men, are now making money. Employment not only gives women social prestige but also reduces gender gaps because they can earn money like men (Lepp, 2004, p. 142). Also, Lundberg (2011, p. 158) in his research found that due to tourism development in a mining society, many women have been employed. Smith and Eadington state that although tourism is one of the few opportunities that women can achieve, it continues the marginal situation of women in the rural labour force market (1992). Also, tourism activities have a high capacity to create small and medium-sized businesses such as (a) handicrafts, (b) gastronomy, (c) various events, (d) lodging, and (e) retail sales. It provides an opportunity to women, youth, and elderly people to participate in economic development of their community and family (Obonyo & Fwaya, 2012). It may allow women a degree of opportunity and autonomy that would otherwise not be available.

Okech (2012) discussed that while tourism may create employment for young people and women, men may consider tourism as an opportunity to provide reasonable, economically viable, yet acceptable resources for their livelihood. At the same time, the geographic environment and lifestyle of women effect their participation in tourism to a great extent. Research shows that tourism enterprises have increased the power of women in the family and community, which has led to a reduction of patriarchal space in society. It can increase social interaction and reduce the isolation of women (Whatmore, 1991). The experiences of developed countries such as Spain, Greece, France, England, and Ireland have shown that a flexible and coherent women's approach to new ideas and collaborative work has contributed to the establishment and development of successful rural tourism projects (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1994, p. 26). Brunt and Courtney (1999) theorized that the key impacts of social tourism development—(a) the concentration of power among the elites, (b) the loss of local decision-making power, and (c) the erosion of gender segregation and increased opportunities for women—were among the most important effects of tourism in local communities. Similarly, Harvey et al. (1995) highlighted the role of gender as a factor in the perception of residents regarding tourism development. They discuss



that men and women did not benefit equally from the development of tourism in their societies, so that men usually get more advantages than women. This reflects the traditional sociological patriarchy in communities around the world. This also shows that tourism is involved in the stereotypes of the patriarchal capitalist system. In contrast, the tourism sector has created some jobs that are attractive to women. This has coincided with the formation of the tourism economy throughout history—low-wage jobs to women, managerial posts to men—(Sinclair, 1997). So, research indicates that tourism can reinforce gender inequalities; for example, in Turkish Cyprus migrant Romanian women were employed as casino croupiers because those jobs were not seen as appropriate for local women (Scott, 1997).

Indeed, the research of Wilkinson and Pratiwi (1995) showed the important role of women in the informal tourism sector. They showed that the role of women in informal tourism settings—such as (a) running home-stay facilities, restaurants, and shacks; (b) crafts, handicrafts, and handloom, (c) small shops and street vending—is significant. The research also indicates that tourism has a dual effect on the women's labour market. On the one hand, the additional revenues provide more power for women in the family, and on the other hand, tourism can add to the workload of women, without a commensurate increase in their power (Dadvar-Khani, 2012).

Despite the active role of women in the labour market, their status is heavily influenced by the gender stereotypes of their roles in society. Women often suffer from constraints and barriers in rural areas; this limitation has been mostly made based on patriarchal ideologies and gender stereotypes about the status and role of women in rural communities. For example, their work in tourism is mainly the continuation of their domestic roles. However small and slow changes have been occurring in rural communities, the glass ceiling is still an important barrier (Phillimore et al., 2002) to achieving women's equal conditions and the realization of gender justice in the tourism labour market.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This research was undertaken in the north-west of Tehran, Iran's capital, which is one of the tourist regions around the capital. This area is predominantly rural, with some 57% of the population living in big villages along the valley corridors of the Kan River. This natural landscape was originally developed to serve the area's traditional horticultural practices and for travel to holy places to which people traditionally went on pilgrimage. The natural environment and topography of the region, with its mountains, rivers, waterfalls, forests, and holy tombs mean that the area has been attractive for local and national tourism for a long time.

The studied rural areas are changing rapidly with development of the city of Tehran towards rural areas, and with this 'urban sprawl' agriculture and horticulture are being replaced by the tourism industry. Although tourism can have many direct and indirect opportunities for opening doors for women and reducing the gender inequality gap, in the Kan district villages men are increasingly engaged in non-agricultural and tourism activities while women are getting few job opportunities in this sector (Dadvar-Khani, 2019). Traditionally, in Iranian culture, a man is considered to be the breadwinner of the family and women are not forced to work outside the home to earn money. But in recent years the economic crisis that has led to a decline in people's purchasing power, from one side and the growing needs of people due to changing lifestyle, from another side, have led women to search for salary-based job in order to help their family's economy. In the study area, women

primarily have household roles such as day-to-day housekeeping and meeting the daily needs of the family. Meanwhile the tourism sector provides various entry points for women's employment and opportunities for creating self-employment in small and medium sized income generating activities.

This research had a comparative dimension in terms of gender analysis, and it had been engaged with both locals and authority representatives, using a variety of methods including a questionnaire along with formal and informal interviews and participant observation. The attitude scale was created using a series of factors that refer to economic and socio-cultural impacts, as well as overall attitudes, reflecting positive and negative perceptions of tourism's effects in Kan district by gender.

The study population was targeted to the people who live within the tourist destination which were directly or indirectly affected by the tourism industry. The sample population has been chosen from the households that are involved in the tourism sector by providing services, or at least one of their members is employed in the tourism market. These households are mainly located in the villages that are known as the tourism site. So, the villages which have benefited from various kinds of tourism attractions were selected. These seven villages were (1) Imamzade Davood, (2) Soleghan, (3) Upper Keshar, (4) Lower Keshar, (5) Rendan, (6) Kiga, and (7) Sangan. There are 560 households living in these villages, and based on information that has been collected from rural mayor and rural council's member by interview, there are 250 families engaged in tourism activities directly and indirectly. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan<sup>1</sup> table, 158 families were chosen randomly and 50 females and 108 males participated in the research as the head of the family.

The method used in the research was mainly quantitative. The data were collected by questionnaires and analysed by SPSS software. Moreover 16 interviews were organized with a convenience sample of residents. These 16 residents aged between 15 and 65, including rural mayors, members of rural councils, and elite men and women, were chosen with the help of the rural mayors in each village based on their availability. Also, many informal interviews and discussions were held with residents concerning their feelings about tourism advantages for rural households and their communities. However, on-site observations were conducted of people's daily activities. The questionnaire was used to elicit descriptive information from men and women who work, directly or indirectly, in rural tourism. Different kinds of questions such as open ended and closed questions were designed. For the attitude scale, the items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, where one indicates 'strong agreement', two indicates 'slight agreement', three indicates 'undecided', four indicates 'slight disagreement', and five indicates 'complete disagreement.' Reliability of the questionnaire was approved by using Cronbach's alpha test which reached the acceptable number of 0.794%. Also, its validity was confirmed by an expert team of professors and local managers. Then the collected information was analysed by SPSS software and the observation method was used for deep analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most used methods is the Krejcie and Morgan Sampling Method. To simplify the process of determining the sample size for a finite population, Krejcie & Morgan (1970), came up with a table using sample size formula for finite population.

## 4.0 Research and Discussion

### 4.1 Characteristics of Research Participants

During the four-week period assigned for the survey, 158 fully completed questionnaires were gathered from the seven sample villages, representing a response rate of almost 98%. Out of this population sample, 50 of the questionnaires (31.6%) were completed by women and 108 by men, as more men than women were involved in tourism. The data shows that 38% (n = 19) of the women were single and 62% were married; the rate is 33.3% single (n = 36) and 66.7% married for men. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in the Table 1.

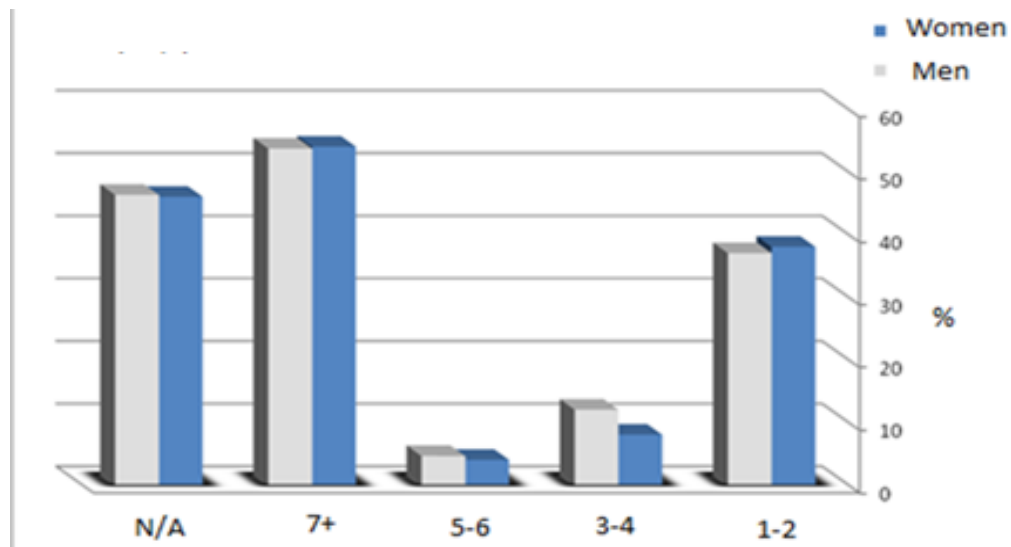
Table 1. *Age Group of Respondents by Sex*

Age Groups	Men		Women	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
14–23	19	17.8	22	44.9
24–33	42	39.3	19	38.8
34–43	25	23.4	5	10.2
44–53	16	15.0	4	6.1
+54	5	4.7	0	0
Total	108	100	50	100

The table shows that young women were more involved in tourism. Their education and life cycle are the most important indicators of their participation. Men were active in this industry in all age groups, but especially between the ages of 24 and 44 years old, because they considered this activity as a job; women mostly looked at it as the second priority after their housework.

As is shown in Figure 1, the families in which the women were most active in tourism were those with the greater numbers of children. More than 50% of the households in the survey had more than seven children and some of these were large families. This indicates that in big families, women were more involved in tourism because it was often considered to be the family’s activity. Family plays an important role in the tourism industry, despite the demise of traditional family models. There is a myth that the family is in decline, when in fact families today are just connected in a different way (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015). Education can improve the ability of individuals and empower them to participate in the affairs of their society; the education levels of the sample population are shown in Table 2.

Figure 1. The number of children in sample families.



As Table 2 shows, men who were involved in tourism enjoyed higher levels of education. Although rural women have less access to education, tourism could provide new opportunities for them to be involved in the rural economy. However, women with more education have also become involved in tourism activities.

As shown in Table 3, a large number of the men were self-employed or had jobs in the private sector. Working in areas such as construction, real estate, sales, and transportation has become more common among young men. Although 73% of the women mentioned that housekeeping was their main job, unmarried girls who did not have a particular job may be included here. In the rural community, due to the limitation of employment opportunities for girls, they are not usually looking for jobs, so they are not classed as unemployed. Although the public sector has provided some work opportunities for women, women have failed to find jobs in businesses outside the governmental sector.

Table 2. *Education of Sample Population by Gender*

Education Levels	Men		Women	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	2	1.9	2	4
High school or lower	54	50	27	54
Diploma	39	36.1	17	34
Attended college	3	2.8	2	4
Postgraduate–university	6	5.6	2	4
Masters degree and higher	2	1.9	0	0
Without answer	2	1.9	0	0
Total	108	100	50	100

Table 3: *Sample Population by Gender and Main Occupation Preference*

Occupational Groups	Men		Women	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Nongovernmental business	42	39.3	0	0
Governmental business	14	13.0	6	12.8
Worker	5	4.6	2	4.3
Farmer	36	33.3	0	0
Family worker(without salary)	8	7.4	6	12.8
Housewife	0	0	33	70.3
Unemployed	2	1.9	0	0
N.A	1	0.9	3	6
Total	108	100	50	100

Table 4: *Types of Services Offered to Tourists by Respondents (Percent)*

Kind of involvement in tourism	Men				Women			
	Low	Medium	High	Total	Low	Medium	High	Total
Providing Accommodation services to tourists	47	33	20	100	56.8	40.9	2.3	100
Operating stores and shops in the tourism sites	76.8	14.6	8.5	100	80	17.5	2.5	100
Sale of agricultural products	54.5	34.1	11.4	100	67.4	18.6	14	100
Selling handicrafts and local products to tourists	86.3	12.3	1.4	100	80	15	5	100
Transportation of tourists	83.8	9.5	6.8	100	88	7.5	4.5	100

In the sample population, 18.8% of the women and 35.5% of the men were highly or very highly engaged in tourism activities, and 81.3% of the women and 64.5% of the men only contributed to the tourism sector slightly or indirectly. Among the female respondents 42.9% stated that their main job was dependent on tourism, 44.9% of them stated that they had a very low dependence on tourism, and just 12.3% of them stated that the tourism was the only their income source. However, amongst the men, 34.3% stated that they were highly dependent on the tourism business and 30.6% and 35.2%, respectively, had low or very low dependency on tourism revenue.

The results of my study also indicate that employment and participation in tourism are considered more as a family activity, and the profitability of tourism meant that not only the head of the family, but also other members were involved in tourism as a business. Indeed, this research shows that women operated these businesses mostly with the help of male family members: 18% had help from their spouse, 26% from their parents, 4% from their brothers and 16% from all the men of the family. On the other hand, just 2% of the men had help from their wives for running the business, and 51% of the male respondents ran their businesses with the help of their children—mostly their sons—or their brothers or fathers. Thus, it seems that men

and women have a fairly similar need of help from their family to carry out tourism activities. However, women are more reliant on the male members of their families.

#### ***4.2 Gender Perceptions of Tourism Development***

One of the most significant factors of sustainable tourism is local community support. The community must clearly understand that tourism will create change, and it is the locals' responsibility to manage that change in a way that is acceptable to and appropriate for the community. Therefore, the actual nature of community involvement and collaborative planning is affected by the characteristics and history of the individual community. Similarly, on the issue of gender analysis, the attitudes of both sexes can indicate their actual and potential contribution, and we focused on the sense of the usefulness of tourism development. For this purpose, these factors were measured with seven items, which are presented in the Table 5.

The data show that the men and women had different attitudes towards their villages being considered a tourism site. Women were more concerned about safety and environmental changes in their village. One of the research participants who was a married woman with two children said, "the high presence of tourists, especially on weekends, disturbs the peace and destroys the village natural environment, especially due to the lack of parking space sometimes there are fights between locals and tourist or between tourists themselves." Their opinions on the performance of the local managers in tourism activities were also dissimilar: men had a more positive view about the performance of local managers. This shows that women have not benefited equally from the opportunity to participate in tourism development, whereas men are more heavily involved, and most men are satisfied. A young woman who worked in the field of handicrafts believed that most rural managers were men and that they were well aware of the business rules and administrative procedures for starting a business and were more likely to share this information with men.

There is consensus between the two sexes about the role of government in the development of tourism in the area, because the development of rural tourism usually leads to an increase in the expectations of the local community about the role of government. Only 10% of the female and 13% of the male respondents believed that government had a positive role in promoting the tourism, meanwhile there is a divergence in the attitudes of the two sexes in the fourth item of the table. It seems that because men have more connection to and support from government agencies that deal with tourism development their attitudes to government were positive, while only 14% of women (vs. 25% of men) agreed with this statement. This shows that women have greater expectations from governmental organizations. In general, more than 50% of the participants believed that tourism was not receiving enough attention from government. In other words, more than 50% of the sample population believed that the government had not paid enough attention to tourism and that governmental agencies had not done anything to provide the resources for developing tourism in their villages. Meanwhile, men and women had the same perception about the welcome given to tourists: 70.2% of the women and 74.8% of the men agreed with the fifth statement which states, "the local community has welcomed the tourists in their village." It means, they believed that the local community was satisfied with the tourists in their village. Both groups believed that tourism is not completely beneficial for the local community, but they still had an incentive to protect tourism because they were optimistic about its future. Besides, open questions and interviews with the research participants show that attitudes

towards the benefits of tourism are different between men and women; men consider tourism as a means of communicating with urban areas, attracting the attention of the authorities, exchanging information, and gaining new knowledge. As a 45-year-old man who was a driver and used to transport passengers pointed out, “since more tourists come to our village, more attention has been paid to our village and the roads have been asphalted and more facilities have been provided to our village.”

Meanwhile, women think that its benefits include better job opportunities for themselves and their families, economic independence, more power for them in the family, social participation, and change of gender relations in their communities. Women believe that the development of tourism means that rural women have more chances of being employed as sales assistants in various local shops and enjoy greater freedom to travel to cities. "In the summer, when a lot of tourists come to our village, the workload is so high that I work in a shop to help my husband, and I gradually learn to run the shop alone" said a 35-year-old married woman. This finding endorses the statement made by Whatmore (1991), where he claimed that tourism has increased the power of women within both the family and the community. As in an interview, Maryam, 45, said “since I worked and added to my family income, I have been more respected in the family and my husband consults with me in various matters.”

My research also indicates that communication between rural women and tourists, particularly female tourists, has increased in recent years. For example, female tourists prefer to buy food, handicrafts and souvenirs from the stores of local women. One of the saleswomen said,

In the beginning, my husband did not agree with my work, but little by little, when he saw that a large number of female tourists came to the village and the rest of the villagers earned a good income through sales, he agreed with my work in the store, and now he is very happy.

Based on Table 6, men are more likely than women to believe that tourism has increased family incomes. However, about the other questions the convergence between the views of the two sexes is considerable, mostly because it seems that negative effects are understood in the same way by the two sexes. The data indicate that men are more positive about the economic effect of tourism, because they are benefited more from it financially. In contrast, it seems that tourism has not led to a significant increase in women’s income. These findings are in line with the results of Scott’s (1997) research which indicated that tourism could increase gender inequality. To compare the preference of the two sexes about the type of tourists, the Mann-Whitney test was used, and the results are given in Table 7.

As Table 7 shows, there is a substantial difference between men’s and women’s attitudes; the women’s preference is young tourists, because the radical nature of young people can bring more changes to the traditional space of the village, which can undermine the patriarchal structure. Those changes are particularly related to women’s economic and social participation. For instance, an old farmer who was not happy with the presence of tourists said that “the presence of tourists has made our children and wives no longer obey us and follow a different lifestyle.”



Table 5. Residents' Attitudes to the Impact of Rural Tourism, by Gender

Numbers	Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		sig	Mann-Whitney	
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women		sig	Z
1	Our village is a tourist site	33.3	18	42.6	32	19.4	38	2.8	4	1.9	8	0.017	-2.516	0.012
2	I believe that the local managers have been successful in running the rural tourism activities	23.6	26	18.9	4	30	28.3	19.8	24	9.4	16	0.136	-2.054	0.040
3	The government has been successful in development of tourism in the rural area	4.6	4	8,3	6	11.1	10	42.6	46	33	34	0.982	-2.268	0.023
4	The presence of tourists has attracted governmental attention to our village	17.6	6.1	7.4	8.2	17.6	14.3	46.3	30.6	11.1	40.8	0.000	-3.105	0.002
5	The local community has welcomed the tourists in their village	32.7	10.6	11.2	19.1	30,8	40.4	20.6	17.0	4.7	12.8	0.020	-1.009	0.313

**Table 5 continued**

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<b>6</b>	I am willing to participate in the planning of tourism development in the village	43.5	38.8	26.9	22.4	13.9	16.3	14.8	10.2	9	12.2	0.029	-1.271	0.204
<b>7</b>	In general, I am supporting rural tourism	41.7	41.7	27.8	27.1	23.1	20.8	6.5	2.1	9	8.3	0.134	-0.250	0.803
<b>8</b>	The presence of tourists, has increased the quality of rural life	25.2	22.9	10.3	2.1	24.3	31.3	31.8	21.3	8.4	16.7	0.210	1.379	0.168

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Table 6. Perception of Population About Economic Impact of Rural Tourism by Sex

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		sig	Mann-Whitney
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women		
<b>1</b> Tourism is creating job opportunities in our village	21.3	8	22.2	20	20.4	36	30.6	20	5.6	16	0.014	-1.670
<b>2</b> Tourism is caused increasing in locals' incomes	7.4	4	26.9	14	35.2	42	24.1	18	6.5	22	*0.023	68
<b>3</b> tourism has increased the cost of living in our village	6.5	4	17.8	18	26.2	24	43.9	34	5.6	20	0.085	-1.257
<b>4</b> only a small group has been benefited from tourism in the area	12	12.2	35.2	20.4	23.1	34.7	24.1	16.3	5.6	16.3	0.52	-1.346
<b>5</b> Tourism has increased the price of land in our village	28.7	40.8	38	22.4	20.4	12.2	11.1	16.3	1.9	8.2	0.51	-0.172

Table 7. *Mann-Whitney Test to Compare Preferred Type of Tourists from the Perspective of Gender*

Test	Youth	Seniors	Bachelor	Married	Family
Mann-Whitney U	1975.000	2629.000	2617.500	2554.000	2537.500
Wilcoxon W	3200.000	8515.000	8395.500	8332.000	3812.500
Z	-2.559	-.067	-.017	-.517	-.866
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.947	.986	.605	.386

So, these findings reflect local communities’ awareness of how tourism is developing in their area and their willingness for this to occur; although women are not satisfied about the economic changes that tourism could bring, they are happy with the social changes that lead to greater freedom and social engagement for them. Although this has not been fully achieved in practice, they are optimistic that they will receive more advantages in the future from rural tourism.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Understanding how tourism development is perceived by all rural residents is important for planners and leaders alike as they struggle to balance quality of life issues with building a strong economy.

Indeed, tourism provides a great opportunity for reducing the gender gap and promoting chances for both sexes—particularly for women—and it can involve all age and gender groups of the local community. This study was conducted to explore whether men and women look at tourism through a different lens. Knowing residents’ opinions is a necessary factor in the planning process and management of destinations. My research shows that due to the different roles, status, participation, and opportunities for women in rural society, there have been different perceptions about what tourism may bring for their communities. The result shows that women consider tourism as a means for improving the family well-being and creates some work opportunities for their children. Usually, women look at tourism as a new source of family income. This finding is consistent with the results of Ghanian’s research (2010) in the Uraman rural district in Iran. He showed that men concentrate more on the economic effects of tourism while women are more conscious of the negative environmental effects of tourism in their area. With regards to attitudes towards tourism development, there is a convergence of opinion between the two sexes, but when actual participation in tourism is considered, great divergence appears. It shows that in practice women are less involved in tourism activities. Indeed, neither sex is satisfied with the government’s performance in developing rural tourism, so there is a convergence in their attitudes here. Unlike men, women believe that tourism has had little impact on increasing the income of villagers; this situation arises from the fact that women have been excluded from the financial benefits of the development of tourism in their communities or they receive a low benefit financially. Also, tourism by its nature extends communications between rural and urban populations, and so it increases women’s awareness and knowledge

as well as their socialization, but does not lead to any increase in gender equality. Likely, that gender equality contributes significantly to economic participation.

This research also shows that women have been the pioneer group in cultural involvement in tourism development, and they are well informed about it; however, so far as actual participation in tourism development is concerned, women and men do not share equal status. This finding confirms Scott's (1997) findings that tourism can increase the gender gap.

Consequently, to draw some broader conclusions from this research, I make two final points: one practical and one analytical. In practical terms, the case of Kan district in the rural area of Northern Tehran demonstrates that the integration of women into development through the tourism labour market can only be successful if carried out with the raising gender awareness, integrating women in community decision making and applying gender sensitive planning in tourism development. Analytically, we need to continue to challenge both the 'rural masculinity' and the 'gender inequality' in the tourism labour market. As Cole (2018) mentioned, transformation for women to overcome the gender discrimination practices of patriarchal cultures, will only happen when the structural inequality in society are laid bare and overcome. So, in this context, my study showed that men and women do not have the same perception of the impact of tourism, mainly because they have not benefited equally from tourism in their communities.

Indeed, the results show that the tourism sector provides various entry points for women's employment and opportunities for creating self-employment in small and medium sized income generating activities, but it has failed to decrease gender inequality in rural areas. So, we can consider tourism as a tool for economic improvement of women's situation. It is similar to Swain's (1995) findings. Also, the test results show that there are significant differences between the two sexes' attitudes regarding economic advantages of tourism. Therefore, it indicates that tourism development in the studied village positively affected female economic empowerment. In other words, the result indicates that tourism leads to providing a better space for women's activities and more jobs for women and at some level it leads to economic empowerment of women. But it alone cannot lead to removing the gender gap in rural communities, as more professional, high-paid and stable jobs are occupied by men, while women are more concentrated in the secondary tourism labour market with less salary, more unstable and seasonal jobs. To avoid widening the gender gap, gender-sensitive planning is needed. Creating a platform for job creation for women can improve their status and bring about gender equality. Changing the masculinity sphere needs a cultural effort which is long term and needs the engagement of all tourism stakeholders. In other words, to achieve these goals we must make masculinities visible to the authorities and tourism decision-makers who have the most commonly embodied masculinity—often without recognizing it and the privileges it entails—and to women, who have been most commonly disadvantaged by those privileges. Invisibility is one characteristic of power that makes it natural and unquestioned, so making it visible and challengeable is an important step toward gender equality. To cope with the disempowered position of rural women, however, we must comprehend how men are differentially empowered as much as how women are differentially disempowered: in the rural tourism development process. We need to understand how gender-blind planning leads to disadvantaging women from development benefits. As well as how limited access of women to various resources such as financial, educational, knowledge, and

information—and even personal weakness of women, which is the result of their growth in a close and limited space—surrounded them with a gender biased culture. In this context, awareness is the foundation of any action towards gender equality in society.

Integrating gender issues into tourism planning entails strengthening attention to gender roles and status at the household and community levels. One of the requirements for empowering women is to facilitate their access to the generation of wealth. In conclusion, I suggest choosing three fields of action: (a) the political field—such as, decision making processes and women’s participation in local councils; (b) the economic field—such as enhancing the participation of women in the tourism labour market and challenging with gender inequality in the workplace; and (c) the sphere of well-being—this includes social protection, access to new technology, and education and health. Achieving these goals requires a comprehensive approach and gender sensitive rural tourism planning.

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