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Compiling the Target Village Indicators for Tourism Development in Iran and Their Evaluation (Case study: Semnan Province Villages)

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Abstract

Rural development can be regarded as the process of empowerment and promotion of life in the context of quality of life and the environment, efficiency and economic self-sufficiency and the maintenance and improvement of environmental quality in rural areas (Zmanipoor, 1994). There are some approaches applying tourism as a strategy for rural areas. These approaches, according to the increasing destruction of villages and agriculture, are trying to offer new strategies to revitalize rural areas by creating complementary activities or transform these areas due to their natural and human resources and the only way to rehabilitate the villages is to offer partial programs and strategies to utilize natural and human resources and could make income and increase the level of welfare of the people's lives in rural areas (Holland & Dixey, 2003). From the 70s of the twentieth century, tourism activities in rural areas have been increased dramatically in all parts of the developed countries around the world which played a key role on development of rural areas that were lagging in terms of social and economic aspects (Perales, 2002). Therefore, industry experts acknowledge that developing rural tourism will not be possible without reorganizing and extensive rural areas on the basis of scientific and comprehensive planning. In this study, it was tried to evaluate the indices using Hierarchical analysis model of AHP by reviewing the tourism condition and determining the effective indices on determining the target villages of tourism and determine its role in developing villages. In order to test theses indices the target villages of tourism in Semnan Province was evaluates and prioritized.

Keywords: village, tourism, rural tourism, rural tourism, index, sustainable development.

Introduction

Today, tourism has become one of the main pillars of the business world and many planners call it as the linchpin of development. Rural development is not only in the sense of agricultural development, but it includes a wide range of human activities that involves empowerment of rural people to achieve sustainable livelihoods (Ashley, 2000). In the process of planning for rural development, identifying structural features of levels of development and awareness of the potentials and environmental capacities of each region are important (Musapoor Miandehi & Estelaji, 2010). Rural development was evaluated and analyzed from various perspectives; however, there is no general consensus about its specific meaning and the scope of its own territory. Determining the target tourism villages for associate plans to regulate different aspects of the subject and prepare them to attract local and foreign tourists is one of the most important stages of tourism administrators' programs. Cultural Heritage, handicrafts and tourism Organization of the country has been trying to determine these villages and determined the target villages of the country based on the following definition:

Model tourism villages refer to a geographical area in which there are one or more set of historical, natural and cultural attractions which stimulate tourists to come and visit them. As the

definition implies, the only index distinguishing target villages from other villages is the existence of tourist attractions in different types. Since determining target villages is for the future plans and to spend many costs to organize them to attract tourists, the need for more attention to select them and determine more indices is more effective and remarkable. Therefore, it involved the main issue of this study.

It is very clear and obvious that one or some indices in a village without determining the value of its indices cannot indicate and introduce the village as the target village of tourism and the best and most effective way to solve this problem is to rate and score the associated villages using suitable scientific models. In this regard, this study aims to determine the effective indices in selecting a village as the target village of tourism then using a scientific models of ranking and scoring (AHP) determine a framework in order to the classify and rate the target villages of tourism; therefore the model villages of tourism in Semnan Province were selected to evaluate. According to the previous studies, unfortunately no studies have been done in this regard yet. Therefore, it can be said that this study was the first one in this regard and surely its results can be used to solve the problems in this context. The main requirements of the survey can be defined as follows:

- Lack of scientific framework and clear and effective indices to select and determine the target villages of tourism of the country;
- Especial attention by the world tourism experts to villages tourism and its role to attract national and international tourists to visit the tourism villages of the country which itself leads to especial care to correctly select target villages of tourism based on proper indices;
- The role of development of rural tourism in developing rural areas and promoting the welfare of rural communities that emphasizes the need to develop effective measures in the selection of target villages;
- Lack of scientific researches consistent with the topic of the research in Iran and the world;
- Tourism professionals and planners' need both private and public to the indices in the study in order to utilize in the context of determining the related villages and rating them.

Review of literature

The study in terms of subject, content and specialized administrative structure has been done for the first time. In the research entitled, "Application of AHP techniques in the ranking assessment indices of tourist attractions" carried out by Seyed Ali Delbari and Seyed Alireza Davari in Azad University of Neyshabur, assessment indices of tourist attractions were identified and were evaluated and ranked by AHP model. Another study by Mahdavi et al. (2008) about the effects of tourism on rural development showed that positive effects of tourism in social context were high and due some reasons including increasing the sense of belonging of villagers to their village, the villagers' awareness and increasing their interactions with tourists and transferring their thoughts to rural areas and improving individual and public health reduce emigration in rural areas.

The research goals

Idealistic objectives of this study include studying rural development based on rural tourism development and developing effective indices in the selection of target villages. The general goal of this study is to develop and rate the evaluating the indices affecting the way to select target villages of tourism.

Specific goals: using the developed indices in this study in order to select the target villages of tourism of the country and develop the valuating table appropriate with the developed and effective indices as well as applied goals include: applying the developed indices in the study in order to determine or confirm some model villages using AHP model, developing the table of developed indices and their values in order to use to determine the target villages of tourism in the

country by Cultural Heritage, handicrafts and tourism Organization of the country. The results of this study and methods of its implementation can be used for students and experts and researchers as well as organizations and institutions such as Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, firms of consulting engineers, activists and those involved in tourism (private) and travel and tourism agencies.

Research hypotheses

At first glance, based on the evidence from previous studies, following cases are offered as the research hypotheses and it was tried to examine the truth or falsity of the following hypothesis:

H1: it seems that there are certain indices (13 indices) effective on determining and ranking the target villages of tourism in Iran.

H2: it seems that the indices with more effectiveness on selecting a village as the target village of tourism play more important roles.

H3: it seems that ranking the target villages of tourism in Iran is effective on their development based on evaluating indices.

Methodology

The process of this study is that after studying books and articles related to the topic of the study and experiences of rural tourism planning in other countries, it was tried to develop and prepare a questionnaire consists of questions appropriate to determine the effective indices and the value of their effect on selecting the target villages of tourism and introducing them to the officials and tourism experts and planners and using one of the scientific methods in this regard, the indices were extracted and ranked from the questionnaire and after gathering information associated with the indices specified for some model villages, using a ranking and scoring model (AHP) it was attempted to rank them. The following steps were implemented for doing this research:

a) Library Studies

● Various domestic and foreign articles related to the topic of the study in order to get ideas and right information in order to select and develop effective indices in determining the target villages of tourism;

● Developing the basic indices proposed based on previous studies;

● Preparing questionnaires associated with selecting effective indices and their values;

b) Field Operations

● Providing the prepared questionnaires to the tourism experts of the country and extracting selected indices and their values;

● Gaining field information by being in model villages of Semnan Province;

c) Analyzing and verifying hypotheses

● Determining associated indices and classifying them to utilize in AHP model;

● Studying the required indices prepared in previous section for some model target villages of tourism in the country;

● Preparing the tables required for indices and weighing and ranking them to be used in AHP model;

● Implementing AHP model using the information associated with indices and ranking cases villages;

Variables under study

First the previous studies were studied and based on various attitudes and perspectives regarded in tourism villages according to different countries and Iran, in addition to matching the selected indices with cultural features of the society, the indices tables and the level of their

importance as the primary data were provided. The associated indices were selected in a way to be effective in developing villages. At the stage of case study, as the selected indices were known, the information associated with the indices for the villages under study were gathered and after reviewing them, the associated tables to be used in AHP model were prepared.

Statistical sample and size

According to the Center of rural development and disadvantaged areas of presidency, 464 villages were introduced as target villages of tourism among which 120 villages (table 1) were approved to be the target villages of tourism by operational working group of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization. The 120 villages were the statistical population of the study. As it is clear, the sample size can be achieved using Corcoran's formula but since the case study of the study were the target villages of tourism in Semnan and due to the few number of the villages , 4 villages of Foromad, Ghalehno Kharghan, Ghalehbala, and Chashem, the 4 villages were identified as the sample size of the study.

Geographical features of the area under study

Semnan province is located on the slopes of the Alborz Mountain range and its height is decreased from North to South and leads to Kavir Desert. According to the latest divisions of the country, Semnan province has 8 cities (Arad, Damghan, Sorkheh, Semnan, Shahrood, Garmsar, Mehdishahr and Miami), 15 districts, 20 towns and 31 rural districts. The province has an area of 97,491 square kilometers and is located between 51 degrees and 51 minutes to 57 degrees and 3 minutes East of Greenwich and 34 degrees 13 minutes North latitude and 37 degrees 20 minutes have been the origin of the equator. Semnan province is limited from North to North Khorasan, Golestan and Mazandaran provinces, from South to Khorasan, Isfahan, Khorasan Razavi provinces and from East to west to Tehran and Qom provinces and its capital is the city of Semnan. The estimated population of the Province in 2010 was over 640220 people, of which 500657 people were living in urban areas and 139,563 in rural areas (Semnan Governor, Statistics and Information Office and GIS).

Semnan target villages of tourism

Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization introduced 3 villages of Foromad, Ghalehno Kharghan, Ghalehbala in Miami and the village of Chashem in the region of Shahmirzad as the target villages of tourism in Semnan Province.

Developing indices

Selecting and recognizing indices and criteria to determine the target villages of tourism using methods and scientific studies are the first step in achieving future goals in the field of tourism. Based on Follow-ups were done from Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization and talks to officials and experts as well as the previous studies based on the required questionnaire, the following indices were identified as the indices of the target villages of tourism.

Indices having such requirements are as follows:

1.Having the ownership to establish facilities needed for tourists including parking, bathrooms, camping, etc.;

2. Having the necessary infrastructure (water, electricity, gas, phone);

3. Having active village administrators and council;

4. Having strategic studies on tourism or studies on guide plan;

5. Having the population over 50 families, according to the last census;

6. Having the access network quality;

Indices having such priority are as follows:
1. Now known as a destination for tourists;
2. Having the possibility of establishing cooperative of tourism;
3. Having the closest distance to population poles;
4. Having the possibility of existence of tourists during a year;
5. Local officials should be ready to create tourism activities;
6. Having units of public services such as schools and health centers and clinics;
7. Villages with natural, historical, cultural and religious attractions are more numerous.

These indices were provided by experts collaborating with Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization under the operational working group of target villages of tourism composed of officials of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Road, Center of rural development and disadvantaged areas of presidency and Housing Foundation.

Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP)

Analytical Hierarchy Process is a flexible, powerful and simple technique for decision making and used in conditions when conflicting decision criteria make it difficult to choose between the options (Rural Development Planning Office, 2007). In the early '80s, Researcher Thomas L. invented AHP as one of indices for the multi-indices decision-making. Prioritizing options is done using the following table:

Table 1: Ranking indices table

Score	Definition	Explanation
1	Equally preferred	Two indices are equally important
3	Moderately preferred	The importance of i is little more important than j
5	Strongly preferred	The importance of i is more important than j
7	Very strongly preferred	The importance of i is much more important than j
9	Extremely preferred	The importance of i rather than j was proved
8,6,4,2	Intermediate values	When an intermediate state is available

Paired comparing scores presented in Table 1 used in AHP were entered into Expert choice software and after calculations, its output indices, the importance coefficients of indices were obtained as shown in table 2. As shown in the table of incompatibility index is 0.06 and since it is less than 0.01 it means that there is not too much incompatibility in valuating therefore it is acceptable and it is possible to continue hierarchical process. According to table 2, from the relevant indices attractions, access and infrastructure have the most importance coefficients and indices of the possibility to establish cooperatives, tourism, Dehyari and active Islamic Council and area to be owned also have the least importance coefficient.

Explaining the importance indices of the target villages of tourism in Semnan Province

This part of the Analytical Hierarchy Process has two sections. In the first step, the villages surveyed are separately prioritized based on each of the criteria and then the position of each of the villages appropriate to all criteria (considering the importance coefficients of each criterion) is evaluated and finally, the top villages are selected.

Table 2: Determining priority coefficients effective on determining target villages of tourism

Index \ Index	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
(1) Tourist destination	1	1.7	5	6	6	7	7	7	1.6	5	6	5	1.6
(2) Tourist attraction	7	1	7	8	5	6	7	7	7	8	7	7	4
(3) The level of people's and local official preparation	1.5	1.7	1	5	1.6	1.5	1.6	6	1.7	5	1.5	1.3	1.6
(4) Possibility to establish tourism cooperative	1.6	1.8	1.5	1	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.6
(5) Distance to population poles	1.6	1.5	6	5	1	1.6	5	6	1.5	6	5	5	1.6
(6) Possibility for tourists to come during a year	1.7	1.6	5	6	6	1	7	7	1.6	6	5	5	1.7
(7) Available public services units	1.7	1.7	6	7	1.5	1.7	1	6	1.7	5	5	5	1.7
(8) Areas to be owned	1.7	1.7	1.6	5	1.6	1.7	1.6	1	1.6	4	1.5	1.4	1.7
(9)Infrastructures	6	1.7	7	8	5	6	7	6	1	7	6	7	1.5
(10) Dehyari and active Islamic council	1.5	1.8	1.5	5	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.7	1	1.5	1.5	1.7
(11) Strategic studies and guide plans	1.6	1.7	5	6	1.5	1.5	1.5	5	1.6	5	1	4	1.5
(12) Population over 50 families	1.5	1.8	3	4	1.5	1.5	1.5	4	1.7	5	1.4	1	1.5
(13) Access network	6	1.4	6	6	6	7	7	7	5	7	5	5	1

Source: author

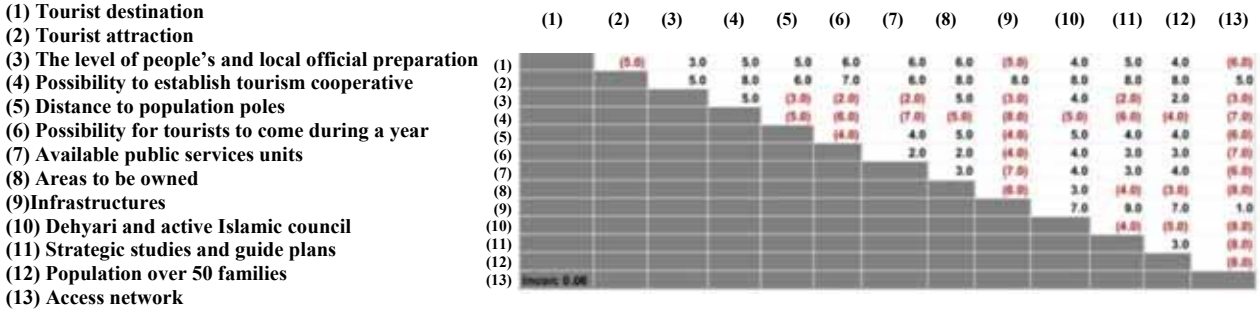

Figure 1: The importance coefficients of indices effective on determining target villages of tourism (output of Expert choice software)

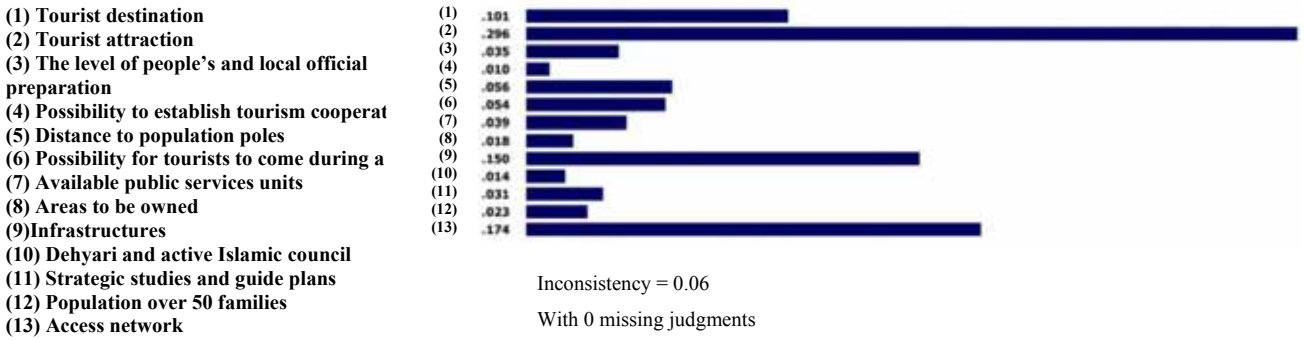

Figure 2: Weighing coefficients of indices effective on determining target villages of tourism (output of Expert choice software)

Figure 3: the weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on the tourists' destination indices (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Figure 3: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on the tourists attractions (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Available public services units

Figure 4: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on Available public services units (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Figure 5: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on the level of people's and local official preparation (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Figure 6: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on the possibility to establish tourism cooperative (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Distance to population poles

Figure 7: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on the distance to population poles (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Figure 8: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on the possibility for tourists to come during a year (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Figure 9: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on the areas to be owned (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Figure 10: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on the Infrastructures (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Figure 11: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on Dehyari and active Islamic council (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Figure 12: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on Strategic studies and guide plans (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Figure 13: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on population over 50 families (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Figure 14: Weighing coefficients of target villages of tourism in Semnan Province based on access network (output of Expert choice software) indices.

Sum of final scores and prioritizing the villages

The process of prioritization of rural areas requires a systematic and comprehensive approach involving all dimensions including standards and their importance coefficient. At this stage, by following this approach, prioritizing villages is done using the total scores of each village, Moreover; the different coefficients of selected indices should also be applied and considered. The final scoring process is like that first the total score for each village is listed to each of the criteria in the form of a matrix; then the score for each village is multiplied in each of the criteria in its importance coefficient scores are then summed.

The higher the rural rating is, the more importance coefficient has and is placed at a higher priority. After calculating the importance coefficient of criteria and sub criteria and options in the previous steps, by integrating the mentioned importance coefficient the final score of each option will be achieved. To do this the principles of combining hierarchy that leads to a preference vector with respect to all judges at all levels of the hierarchy will be used:

Equation 4.1: calculating the option final score (weighing final value)

$$V_H = \sum_{k=1}^{n}\sum_{i=1}^{m} W_k W_i \left(g_{ij}\right)$$

The option final score

In which: Wk: criterion importance coefficient of k

Wi: criterion importance coefficient of i

gij: the score of j option associated with sub-criterion of i

On this basis there will be for the first row of table 3:

VH= (0.101*0.051) + (0.296*0.046) + (0.296*0.046) + (0.035*0.050) + (0.010*0.094) + (0.056*0.052) + (0.054*0.056) + (0.039*0.053) + (0.018*0.055) + (0.150*0.047) + (0.014*0.066) + (0.031*0.250) + (0.023*0.058) + (0.174*0.054) = 0.056904

Similarly, for each row of table 6 the final weight indices will be calculated and recorded in the last column.

(1) Tourist destination
(2) Tourist attraction
(3) The level of people's and local official preparation
(4) Possibility to establish tourism cooperative
(5) Distance to population poles
(6) Possibility for tourists to come during a year
(7) Available public services units
(8) Areas to be owned
(9)Infrastructures
(10) Dehyari and active Islamic council
(11) Strategic studies and guide plans
(12) Population over 50 families
(13) Access network

Table 3: Sum of final scores of villages with respect to the importance coefficient

Index Village	1	ICC	2	ICC	3	ICC	4	ICC	5	ICC	6	ICC	7	ICC	8	ICC	9	ICC	10	ICC	11	ICC	12	ICC	13	Sum of scores
Ghalehno Kharghan	0.051	0.101	0.046	0.296	0.050	0.035	0.094	0.010	0.052	0.056	0.056	0.054	0.053	0.039	0.055	0.018	0.047	0.150	0.066	0.014	0.250	0.031	0.058	0.023	0.054	0.056904
Foromad	0.277		0.417		0.296		0.268		0.324		0.220		0.235		0.624		0.273		0.403		0.250		0.254		0.252	0.3189020
Chashem	0.107		0.088		0.111		0.042		0.152		0.165		0.129		0.127		0.132		0.129		0.250		0.156		0.167	0.127901
Ghalehbala	0.565		0.449		0.543		0.576		0.473		0.560		0.582		0.204		0.548		0.403		0.250		0.532		0.527	0.73595

Importance coefficient of

Source: author (based on the extraction of Expert choice software and charts)

Accordingly, the priority of villages of Ghalehno Kharghan and Foromad by earning the most scores is located on first and second as the target villages of tourism. Certainly, according to the results obtained and examined all factors effective on the selection of target villages of tourism, any planning and investing on them leads to more and better efficiency than the other villages.

Discussion and conclusion

First hypothesis: it seems that there are certain indices (13 indices) effective on determining and ranking the target villages of tourism in Iran.

According to the investigation done in this study and the experts' point of view as well as the operational working group of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization it can be said that the indices of target villages of tourism in the country include 13 indices presented in the section of developing the indices of the study.

Second hypothesis: it seems that the indices with more effectiveness on selecting a village as the target village of tourism play more important roles.

According to the investigation done in this study and the experts' point of view in this study, each of the indices effective on determining target villages of tourism has different effectiveness ranked in this study using AHP model of ranking and valuating.

Table 4: Final ranking of Target villages of tourism in Semnan Province

No	Target villages of tourism	Score	Priority
1	Ghalehno Kharghan	0.73595	1
2	Foromad	0.318902	2
3	Chashem	0.127901	3
4	Ghalehbala	0.056904	4

Source: author

Third hypothesis: it seems that ranking the target villages of tourism in Iran is effective on their development based on evaluating indices.

According to the table 7 that shows the ranking of the target villages of Semnan Province and matching it with table 2 that summarizes the features and characteristics of the mentioned villages it can be seen and argued that villages with higher priority were more to be selected as developed target villages of tourism or at least are more developed in some indices but what is very clear and specific is that the villages with higher ratings in the process have development speed much more quickly than other villages and this not only confirms the third hypothesis of this study but shows the issue following of rural development approaches and strategies.

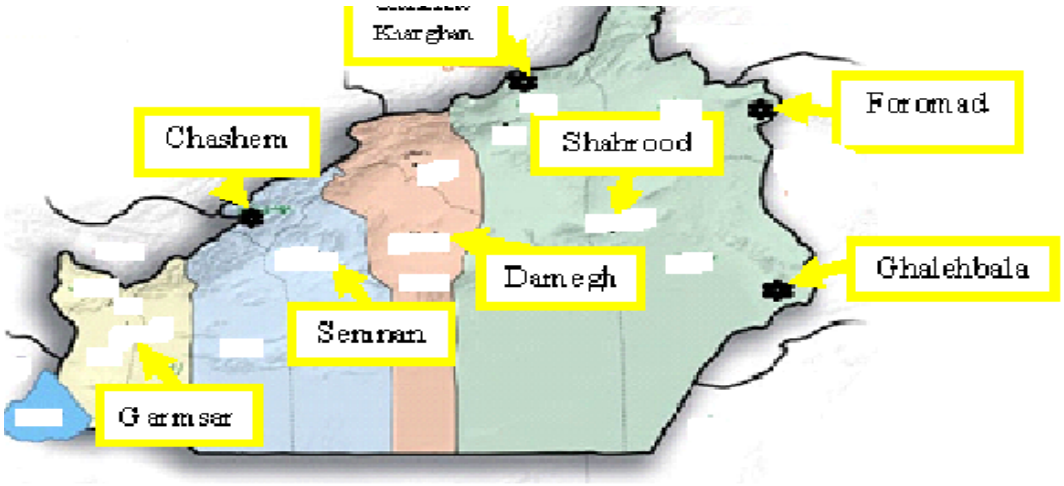

Figure 15: The location of the target villages of tourism in Semnan Province

Rural development based on the strategy of development and improvement of rural infrastructure with an emphasis on rural tourism

Rural tourism and determining target villages of tourism based on infrastructure indices, public services units, access network, tourism cooperatives, and officials' and people's preparation whatever with higher weight value will speed up the development of the villages.

Rural development based on industrialization strategy of the villages with an emphasis on rural tourism

Rural tourism and determining target villages of tourism using different indices including tourist destination, tourist attractions, access network, and the population over 50 families and etc. based on industrialization strategy of the villages can quickly cause comprehensive development of the villages or increase the development speed.

Rural development based on the strategy of meeting the basic needs with an emphasis on rural tourism

Accordingly, rural tourism development through determining target villages of tourism based on different indices including public services units, infrastructure, tourist attractions, and the area to be owned that provide the creation fields and increase in employment in this industry; in fact, provide new ways to meet the basic needs of the villagers, such as: income (productive work) and the required life services; therefore, it causes or accelerates rural development. Based on similar reasoning, other strategies for rural development presented by Dr. Estelaji are also seen and confirmed in the results of the research.

● Rural development based on the strategy of social development with the emphasis on rural tourism

● Rural development based on the strategy of people's participation with the emphasis on rural tourism

● Rural development based on the strategy of spatial analysis with the emphasis on rural tourism

● Rural development based on the strategy of rural-urban development with the emphasis on rural tourism

● Rural development based on Yuferd strategy with the emphasis on rural tourism

● Rural development based on the strategy of hierarchical system of settlements and planning of rural centers with the emphasis on rural tourism

● Rural development based on the strategy of integrated regional development with the emphasis on rural tourism

● Rural development based on the strategy of eco- region development with the emphasis on rural tourism

● Rural development based on the strategy of sustainable and comprehensive rural development with the emphasis on rural tourism

Applied recommendation

● No need to classify the indices of target villages of tourism (requirements, priorities);

● The need to assess all the villages of the country based on the 13 indices;

● Classifying the villages based on the type of indices;

● The need for tourism strategic studies for target villages of tourism and use it as the superiority study for rural guide plans projects;

● The need to give training related to tourism and hospitality to villages and local officials;

● The need to attract investment in tourism facilities in the target villages of tourism and giving the required facilities.

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