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Motivation-based Market Segmentation in Rural Tourism: the Case of Sámán, Iran

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ABSTRACT

Market segmentation is a pivotal and under-investigated issue when evaluating decision-making processes and motivational factors shaping rural tourism. The present study has examined market segments of rural tourists in Iran based on their socio-demographic attributes, travel characteristics and preferred leisure activities, profiling rural tourists on the base of their motivational background. The survey results indicated that rural tourism in the study area is a heterogeneous market, whose development depends on general trends in Middle East tourism market. A comprehensive knowledge of rural tourism actors may help formulating appropriate marketing strategies for internal areas destined to tourism growth.

Keywords: Rural Tourism; Market Segmentation; Tourist Motivation; Field Survey

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Introduction

The use of rural areas for tourism and recreation has become increasingly common worldwide (Woods, 2011: 94). Consistently with a mainstream conceptualization of rural tourism in academic literature since the early 1990s (Cloke, 1992; Lane; 1994; Bramwell, 1994; Curry, 1994; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997; Page and Getz, 1997; Hall et al., 2003), tourism has been regarded as a key issue in strategies contributing to sustainable rural development (Nilsson, 2000; Cawley and Gillmor, 2008; Cuadrado-Ciuraneta et al., 2017). Market segmentation is sometimes promoting tourism development in rural areas (Priestley et al., 2005: 83). Identifying and understanding socioeconomic forces underlying rural tourism are crucial to a more comprehensive analysis of tourism development (Farrell et al., 2011: 110). However, segmenting rural tourism markets is likely one of the least investigated and understood processes in tourism studies (Allan and Shavanddasht, 2017: 2). In these regards, “despite the great potential of rural Iran to attract different types of tourists however, issues such as visitor motivation have largely been overlooked in the empirical tourism literature” (Varmazyari et al., 2017: 318).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, rural tourism emerged as a developmental strategy for rural areas in Iran. However, development policies and rural development authorities have paid little attention to the role of tourism in the development of Iranian rural areas (Rezvani and Bayat, 2013). Rural tourism literature reviews in national scientific journals represent 136 published articles in the context of rural tourism, from 2000 to 2013 (Bayat et al., 2013). However, market segmentation in rural tourism has been poorly developed, in comparison with other issues in the literature of tourism studies (Clarke, 2005; 95; Park and Yoon, 2009; Oh and Schuett, 2010; Sievänen et al., 2011; Dong et al., 2013).

The present study investigates the market segments of rural tourists in Sámán (south-western Iran), based on their socio-demographic profile, travel motivations, and preferred leisure activities. As a first analysis' step, the socio-demographic characteristics of tourists were examined in Sámán area; motivations to visit the area were then investigated. Leisure activities preferred by tourists in Sámán were also explored, obtaining a comprehensive profile of rural tourists visiting the area.

1. Market Segmentation in Rural Tourism

Segmentation analysis documents tourist heterogeneity grouping them into specific and homogeneous market segments (Dolnicar, 2008: 129). Such techniques identify groups of visitors with comparable attitudes, preferences and behaviors (Oh and Schuett, 2010: 33), assuming that a given tourist segment is interested in specific goods and services (Jang et al., 2002: 367). Identifying different segments of rural visitors with a distinct socio-demographic profile, can help tourism providers (i) to better orient

marketing strategies (Beldona et al., 2004: 68), (ii) to assess diversity in tourists' tastes and preferences and to define 'niche' markets for different products and services (Rid et al., 2014: 104), and (iii) to develop specific promotion programs (Park and Yoon, 2009: 99). Accordingly, cost-effective marketing could satisfy the identified needs of target groups through formulation, promotion, and delivery of purpose-designed products.

Segmentation studies assess different segments in rural tourism markets, enabling scholars, providers, planners and other stakeholders to ascertain tourists' segments which perceive and use the rural space differently (Molera and Albaladejo, 2007: 757-758). However, despite the economic potential of rural tourism in revitalizing rural areas, and the importance of market segmentation strategies for a successful tourism marketing, relatively few studies have been developed a comprehensive segmentation analysis of rural tourism markets (Page and Getz 1997; Park and Yoon, 2009; Farmaki, 2012; Dang et al., 2013; Varmazyari et al., 2017).

Generally, there are various approaches to analysis of market segmentation by considering (i) geographical matters, (ii) demographic or socioeconomic profiles, (iii) psychographic issues and (iv) behavioral characteristics (Swarbrooke, 2002; Swarbrooke and Horner, 2007: 92; Bigné et al., 2008: 151). Segmentation calls for identifying and analyzing different spatial units such as countries, regions, cities, municipalities or economic districts constituting homogeneous markets (Campiranon and Arcodia, 2008: 155). In relation to geographical segmentation, people from urban areas may seek out rural attractions and natural amenities or a better climate (Swarbrooke, 2002: 77). Socio-demographic segmentation refers to a wide range of factors including age, gender, education, income, occupation, family size, family life-stage, religion, culture, race and ethnic origin. Psychographic segmentation, a popular data-driven segmentation technique (Pesonen, 2012: 71), and provides useful information on the consumption patterns of the identified typologies (Roberts and Hall, 2001: 131). In psychographic segmentation, tourists or consumers are divided into different groups on the basis of variables such as trip purpose, life style, personality traits, attitudes, interests, values, benefits sought, motivations, behavioral relationships with the product, and purchasing behavior (Seaton and Bennett, 1996; Garrod, 2008: 34; Tkaczynski et al., 2009).

Rural tourists have been segmented based on benefits sought (Kastenholz et al., 1999; Frochot, 2005; Molera and Albaladejo, 2007; Almeida et al., 2014), motivations (Park and Yoon, 2009; Farmaki, 2012, Chen et al., 2013; Dong et al., 2013, Rid et al., 2014), visitor interests and preferences (Kutzner and Wright, 2010; Sievänen et al., 2011), visitor spending behavior (Oh and Schuett, 2010), visitor satisfaction (Devesa et al., 2010) and, finally, benefits combining pull and push factors (Pesonen, 2012). Overlapping such criteria for segmentation provides a multidimensional approach to segmentation of rural tourism markets (Roberts and Hall, 2001: 131). A summary of relevant studies carried out in different countries was provided in Table 1.

1.1 Tourist motivation

Motivation is a construct underpinning human action guided by individual's goals (Correia and Moital, 2009: 16). Tourism motivation is a dominant issue in tourism

research (Seaton and Bennett (1996: 66; Dann, 1997; Bright, 2008: 241). Pearce (1991: 113) believes that, travel motivation is 'the set of needs and attitudes which predisposes a person to act in a specific touristic goal-directed way'. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs is discussed as a key contribution to motivation in tourism (Page and Connell, 2006: 67; Heitmann, 2011: 40-41). Maslow argued that individual needs fall into different categories. Physiological and safety needs were described as lower-order needs and social (belonging and love), esteem, and self-actualization as higher-order needs. Maslow's theory has been frequently considered in empirical studies conceptualizing tourist's motivations (Crompton, 1979; Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983; Plog, 1994; Cooper et al., 1998; Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003; Hsu and Huang, 2008). Although there are no universally accepted frameworks conceptualizing tourist motivation, frameworks proposed by Dann's (1977), based on "push" and "pull" factors, and by Iso-Ahola's (1982), based on a social psychology theory of tourism motivation (escaping and seeking dimensions), have been commonly adopted in tourism studies. Dann argued that "push" factors, on the one hand, refer to tourists as subjects and deal with forces stimulating to travel. "Pull" factors (Dann, 1977: 186), on the other hand, attract tourists to a given site (e.g. sunshine, sea, culture). Based on Iso-Ahola's theory (1982: 258-259), tourist's satisfaction is associated with (i) escaping the everyday environment, and (ii) the desire to reach (intrinsic) rewards through experiences in a contrasting (new or old) environment. In summary, motivation has become a meta-concept that may shape (i) the reason(s) for travelling, (ii) the specific destination, (iii) and the overall satisfaction with the trip (Devesa et al., 2010: 547). In recent decades, the growing use of information and communication technology, and especially World Wide Web, has affected motivational factors of rural tourism. A survey by Eusebio et al. (2017: 204) indicates that more than 60% of domestic rural tourists refer to use information derived from Internet to plan their trips.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study area

The Sámán area is situated in north-east of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province, extending 458 square kilometers in the central Zagros Mountains, Iran (Figure 1). The area hosts a resident population of 20,422 people (Statistical Center of Iran, 2016). Sámán area is struggling to improve people livelihood by attracting tourists from other areas. There are many natural and cultural heritage attractions in this area. According to (i) the authors' extensive knowledge of the study area and (ii) a preliminary investigation carried out on national tourism guides, dedicated web sources and the owners of tourism accommodation activities in the area (see below), the most relevant attractions include the Zayandeh-Rood river, the surrounding (mountainous) landscape, the historical Zaman-Khan bridge, three pilgrimage sites and, finally, more sparse local culture and folklore sites (Table 2). One hotel and 26 rural inns for tourist accommodation settled in the area and are currently operating all over the year.

2.2 Data collection

A survey designed to investigate rural tourism market segments was implemented in Sámán area. Data were collected between March and November 2016. To eliminate (or at least reduce) the possible effect of the seasonal nature of rural tourism in survey response, a random sample was drawn from rural tourists who visited the area in three stages at spring, summer, and autumn in the same period of time. According to local entrepreneurs, rural tourism businesses find it difficult to attract customers or rural tourists during winter.

Interviews directed to the sample of tourists were based on a two-page self-administered questionnaire consisting of three sections. Section 1 included 13 questions relating to their socio-demographic profile and trip attributes. Section 2 incorporated 32 questions about their motivations for coming to Sámán rural area. Section 3 consisted of 16 items investigating visitor preferences and tourist activities. Questionnaire items were defined according to a review of rural tourism motivation literature (Kastenholz, 1999; Frochot, 2005; Molera and Albaladejo, 2007; Park and Yoon, 2009; Devesa et al., 2010; Kutzner and Wright, 2010; Farmaki, 2012; Pesonen, 2012; Chen et al., 2013; Dong et al., 2013; Rid et al., 2014; Martins-Almeida, 2014). The respondents were asked to rate the relevance of questionnaire's items using a Likert scale: for motivational items a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very undesirable) to 5 (Very desirable) was used. Rural tourist activity preferences were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Finally, from the 335 self-administered questionnaires distributed among rural tourists at rural trails, a total of 300 valid questionnaires were obtained (response rate: 89.5%): 35.7% were collected during spring, 37.0% during summer, and 27.3% during autumn.

2.3 Data analysis

SPSS software version 22 was used for data analysis. Data analysis was structured into five stages. First, descriptive statistics were used to assess socio-demographic attributes of respondents, income level, geographic location and travel characteristics (e.g. Pili et al., 2017). Second, a varimax-rotated Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was performed on 32 motivational items to identify underlying dimensions of rural tourism motivations in Sámán area. In this regard, mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, eigen-value, and proportion of explained variance were calculated for each selected component (Duvernoy et al., 2018). This approach has been intended as a standard procedure to explore motivations from survey data (Rid et al., 2014; 105). Third, a cluster analysis was run to identify different motivational segments among Sámán tourists. A hierarchical clustering with Ward's agglomeration method and squared Euclidean distance as a dissimilarity measure was performed to define the optimal number of clusters (e.g. Salvati et al., 2008). Subsequently, a k-means clustering was carried out to identify a small (a-priori determined), number of homogeneous groups (Albaladejo-Pina and Diaz-Delfa, 2005: 924). In this procedure, discriminant analysis was used to validate the empirical results of k-means clustering

(e.g. Salvati and Carlucci, 2011), verifying the classification of individuals into segments (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2008; 72).

Fourth, chi-square tests were run with the aim to determine statistically significant differences in socio-demographic and travel variables between clusters. Finally, one-way ANOVA tests were used to compare all segments in terms of their tourism activity preferences (e.g. Ceccarelli et al., 2014).

3. Results

3.1 Characteristics of rural tourists

Descriptive analysis showed that most of the tourists participated in the survey are males (70.3%) between 25 and 45 years old, the majority of them are married (69.7%), and graduated from college (52.0%), belonging to middle-income social class; 95.3% of the sample travelled by private car as family groups (67.0%); a high proportion of rural tourist lived in the neighboring province of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari (53.3%) or in Isfahan (30%), a big city in Iran; 47.7% are daily visitors. Free time (30.0%), weekend (30.0%), holidays (25.3%) and weekdays (10%) are the most important times when rural tourists travel to Sámán area (Table 3). Rural tourism attractions have a role in tourist's decision to visit the area (50.7%).

3.2 Principal component analysis (PCA)

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test were calculated to assess appropriateness of the data (e.g. Salvati, 2013; Colantoni et al., 2015; Zitti et al., 2015). The measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) was 0.744, being classified as "meritorious" according to Kaiser's criteria (1960); the Bartlett's test was highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Implementation of a PCA with eigenvalues > 1 , component loadings $> |0.4|$ and varimax rotation resulted in a final solution extracting 8 components that explain 61.4% of the total variance in the data matrix (Table 4). Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the selected components ranged from 0.65 to 0.83. These results indicate internal consistency of motivation items included in each axis. Principal components are related to the following motivational items (Table 4): (i) "space and environment" (10% variance); (ii) "buying local products" (9.6%); (iii) "rurality and learning" (8.3%); (iv) "outdoor recreation" (8%); (v) "escape and relax" (7.8%); (vi) "second residence and spirituality" (5.4%); (vii) "peace and tranquility" (4.9%).

3.3 Rural tourism segmentation

Respondents were clustered or segmented on the base of standardized component scores. Then, the k-means clustering algorithm was employed to classify rural tourists into homogeneous groups. According to the 8 rural tourism motivational factors, the clusters were labeled as follows: (Cluster I) "Local attachment and peace" ($n = 92$, 30.7%); (Cluster II) "Rurality, relax and spirituality" ($n = 108$, 36%); (Cluster III) "Environment and outdoor recreation" ($n = 100$, 33.3%). Empirical results from ANOVA

show a significant difference between clusters in terms of rural tourism motivation factors (Table 5).

3.3.1 Local attachment and peace

Respondents profiled in the “local attachment and peace” tourism segment (n = 92) are mostly married (90.2%), self-employees (40.2%), and salaried workers (35.9%). This segment is mostly based on family groups and daily visitors. A total of 30.4% of respondents in this segment enjoy free accommodation thanks to the hospitality of their friends and relatives. They were mostly motivated by “Buying Local products”, “Social and place attachment”, and “Peace and tranquility”. The most preferred visitor activities in this segment are picnicking, visiting friends and relatives, sightseeing, walking/hiking, nature excursion, and buying local products (Table 6).

3.3.2 Rurality, relax and spirituality

The second group, labeled as “Rurality, relax and spirituality” contained the largest number of respondents (n = 108). This segment of rural tourists appeared to be a group dominated by elder people, with 74.1% of respondents over the age of 36 years. They are more salaried workers (37%) or self-employed (25.9%) in this group; most of them are married (85.2%) or members of large family groups (80.6%). In this segment, accommodation in rental houses is the most important form of overnight stay (42.6%); 18.5% of visitors classified in this group stay in their own second homes. They are most often motivated by “rurality and learning”, “escape and relax”, “second homes and spirituality”. Diversity of rural tourism motivations appears to be more evident in this group. In comparison with other market segments, respondents in this group are more interested in visitor activities such as visiting historical sites, sightseeing, eating in a local restaurant or bed and breakfast (Table 7).

3.3.3 Natural environment and outdoor recreation

The third segment of rural tourism market in Sámán area, based on a total of 100 respondents, includes young people under 35 years old (76%). Nearly 34% of respondent in this segment are students. Most of them (62%) traveled to the area with their friends. Nearly half of respondents (47.7%) are day visitor. In terms of overnight stay, 32% stay at rental houses, 8% in their own second homes, and an additional 8% stay at homes of their family and relatives. In this group of rural tourists, “space and environment”, and “outdoor recreation” are the most relevant motivational push factors. Rural tourists in group 3 are more interested in outdoor activities such as nature excursion, mountaineering, swimming, driving, photography, fishing, and tent camping.

3.4 Discriminating among tourists' profiles

A discriminant analysis was employed to assess the accuracy degree of k-means classification and validate the cluster membership. Two discriminant functions were

identified and documented how the 8 rural tourism motivation factors significantly affected group membership. Classification results indicated that 97.3% of cases were correctly classified in one of the three groups, representing a very high accuracy rate. Chi-square analysis identifies significant differences in socio-demographic and travel attributes among the three segments. Significant differences were observed in the areas of age, work status, and marital status; among travel attributes, relevant differences were found in the travel group, and accommodation type.

In the final stage, an ANOVA test (Table 8) was carried out to investigate whether there was a significant difference between the three segments in terms of tourist activity preferences. Results show that, 13 cases of tourism activities were significantly different among the three segments of rural tourism market in Sámán area.

4. Discussion

The empirical results presented in this study provide valuable insights for tourism operators and managers to refine their business strategies and marketing efforts to expand their businesses into rural tourism markets. Our findings are in line with earlier works indicating that rural tourists are mainly young and middle-aged individuals living in urban areas (Garcia-Ramon et al., 1995; Cai et al., 2001; Oh and Schuett, 2010; Andriotis, 2011; Chen et al., 2013), with medium-high education level and disposable income (Martins-Almeida et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2013; Su, 2012; Cui and Ryan, 2011; Park and Yoon, 2009; Sharpley, 2002; Wilson et al., 2001; Cavaco, 1995). Furthermore, our results indicate that the highest rural tourism demand in Sámán area was grounded on daily visitors and family groups who travel by their private cars from the neighboring provinces of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and Isfahan. In this line of thinking, Cai and Li (2009: 759) argued that “in the United States, most of the tourists in rural destinations are domestic travelers, and in some states, the majority of tourists have merely traveled from neighboring areas”. Molera and Albaladejo (2007: 760) showed that the majority of rural tourists in rural destinations of south-eastern Spain lived in the neighboring provinces (Sievanen et al., 2011: 55). Empirical findings for the study area indicate that the rate of revisit of tourists to the Sámán area is relatively high, with more than 71% of rural tourists visiting the area twice or even more times.

Outcomes of the PCA ranked the 8 motivations among rural tourists visiting the Samán area as follows: “Space and environment”, “Buying local products”, “Rurality and learning”, “Outdoor recreation”, “Escape and relax”, “Social and place attachment”, “Second homes and spirituality” and, finally, “Peace and tranquility.” The first dimension (Space and environment) explains the largest proportion of the total variance. However, descriptive statistics show that the highest motivation for rural tourists is ‘Escape and relax’, which included motivations such as “Break away from the daily routine”, “Escape from overcrowded and stressful urban life”, and “Enjoy family leisure in a pleasant natural atmosphere”. These findings corroborate earlier studies in rural tourism (Martins-Almeida et al., 2014; Pesonen, 2012; Oh and Schuett, 2010).

Cluster analysis of rural tourists in Sámán suggests that the local tourism market can be classified into three segments: “Local attachment and peace”, “Rurality, relax and

spirituality” and “Environment and outdoor recreation”, with significant differences among segments in terms of socio-demographic and trip variables (age, work status, marital status, travel group, and accommodation type). Results from ANOVA suggest that in most cases there are significant differences between rural tourism segments in desire to recreational behavior or rural tourism activities. These results are in agreement with earlier studies carried out in rural areas (Dong et al., 2013; Frochot, 2005; Mehmetoglu, 2007).

Our findings specifically support Lane's (1994: 9) perspective about rural tourism definition that “rural tourism is a complex multifaceted activity”, suggesting that any workable definition of rural tourism needs a comprehensive assessment of demand and supply characteristics (Hall and Page, 2006: 285). This exercise has also practical implications for stakeholders involved in rural tourism development, planning, management, and marketing. Most of the rural tourists in segment I, “Local attachment and peace,” are family groups consisting of former rural migrants that return to their birthplace villages or to places where their families came from. Most of them have a marked sense of belonging to local community and environment. Compared with other two segments, they are more likely to buy local products. They often do not use paid accommodations, because they often stay at the homes of their hosts and, to a lesser extent, in their own second homes. Based on these findings, place attachments can be considered as one of the most important sources of demand in rural tourism market.

Motivational push factors of two segments, including “Local attachment and peace” and “Rurality, relax and spirituality” highlight the importance of intangible dimensions in supply of rural tourism. These findings confirm that a major requirement of rural tourism market is the ability to provide peace, quiet and relax in rural surroundings (Hall and Page, 2006: 286).

Segment II, “Rurality, relax and spirituality,” is mainly composed of family groups and shows interest in cultural heritage and different aspects of rural life activities. This type of rural tourism demand represents the distinctive characteristics of rural communities including local traditions, languages, costumes, foods, crafts, folklores, historical heritage, and traditional lifestyles. Compared to other segments, rural tourists in this group are more likely (i) to eat in a local restaurant and (ii) to stay in commercial accommodations.

Segment III, “Environment and outdoor recreation”, is predominantly composed of young and single people traveling with friends. People in this segment are much more 'active' rural tourists (e.g. Frochot, 2005; Huang and Sarigöllü, 2008) and typically motivated by natural environment and outdoor activities (Chen et al., 2013). Moreover, tourists in this group are willing to participate in outdoor recreations and physical activities in a natural, unpolluted, and peaceful environment (Marchetti et al., 2014); more than one quarter of individuals in this group stay overnight at rental houses.

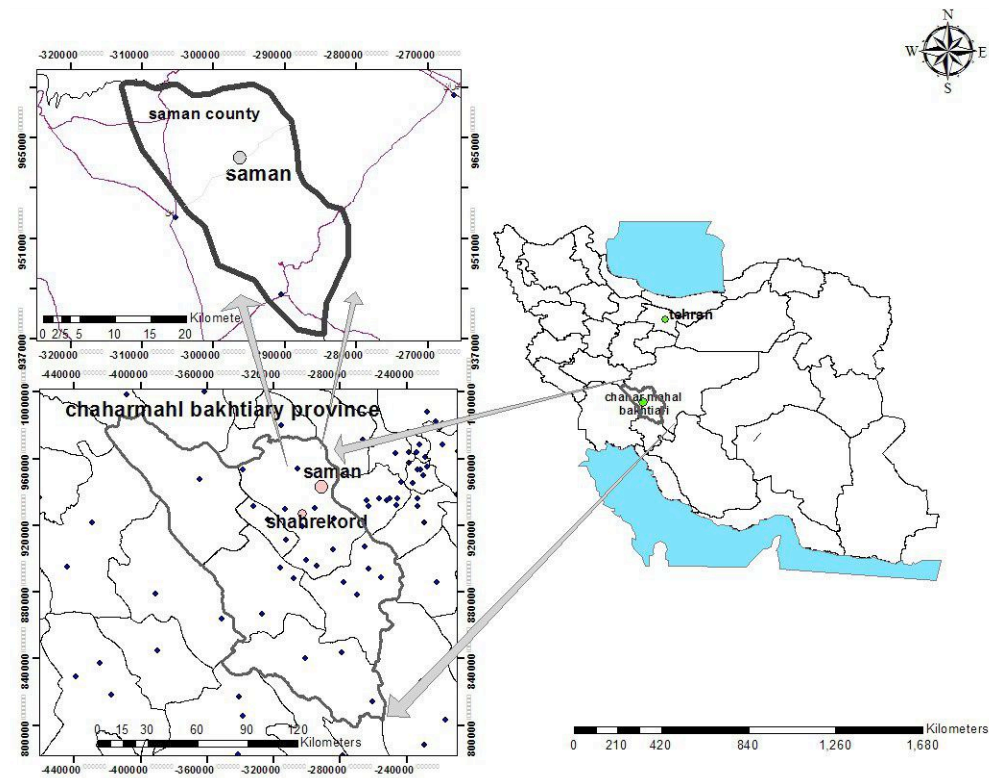
Taken together, findings of this study indicate that the relationship between tourism and natural environment is particularly marked in rural areas (Page and Connell, 2006: 424). A sustainable approach is fundamental to the successful and sustainable development of rural tourism.

Conclusions

Rural tourism in the study area requires more effective developmental policies. Segmentation analysis indicates that rural tourism is a quite heterogeneous market, since tourists have different characteristics and expectations (Rid et al., 2014; Molera and Albaladejo, 2007; Oh and Schuett, 2010; Kastenholz, 1999; Scott and Turco, 2007; Diaz-Martin et al., 2000). Market segmentation stimulates a cost-effective tourism marketing considering the impact of season (Park and Yoon, 2009: 100). Appropriate management and marketing strategies are also necessary to overcome the seasonal nature of rural tourism in the area; a specific strategy is especially needed (i) to stimulate tourism classified in all profiles at the beginning (early spring) and the end (late autumn) of the tourism season, (ii) to improve tourist re-distribution over space during the peak season (summer) and (iii) to identify and develop alternative forms of rural tourism for the winter season.

Destinations should be aware of the needs and wants of potential tourists in order to appropriately manage the destination resources and attract the correct customer groups (Pesonen, 2012: 69; Fyall and Garrod, 2004: 102). The empirical results of this study clearly state how monitoring and evaluation of changing trends in rural tourism market are vital for successful development of rural tourism. As our study demonstrates, a quantitative approach based on results of a field survey analyzed through inferential statistics and multivariate exploratory data techniques is suitable to fill this objective. Further research is required to shed more lights on changes in demand structure of rural tourists in order to formulate appropriate marketing strategies.

Figure 1. Geographical location of Sámán area.



Source: Ministry of Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2016

Table 1. Empirical studies assessing rural tourism market typologies

Reference	Case study location	Sample size	Variables studied	Results (market segments)
Almeida, Correia, & Pimpão (2014)	Madeira Island, Portugal	180	Benefits sought	Ruralist (18%); Relaxers (37%); Family oriented (19%); Want-it-all (25%).
Rid, Ezeudji, & Pröbstl-Haider (2015)	Gambia	450	Motivation	Heritage & nature seekers (41.4%); multi-experiences seekers (16.9%); multi-experiences & beach seekers (28.8%); sun & beach seekers (12.8%).
Dong, Wang, Morais, Brooks (2013)	Potter County, Pennsylvania, USA	343	Motivation	Experiential travelers (49.6%); Rural explorers (26.5%); Indifferent travelers (23.9%).
Chen, Lin, & Kuo (2013)	Taiwan	270	Motivation	Accessibility and socialization seeker (26.6%); Physical utility seeker (13%); Trend follower (28.0%); Novelty and relaxation seeker (31.8%).
Pesonen (2012)	Finland	727	Motivations & benefits	Social travelers (29.3%); Wellbeing traveler (22.5%); Home region travelers (20.3%); Family travelers (27.78%)
Farmaki (2012)	Troodos, Cyprus	54 (Qualitat. method)	Motivation	by purpose of travel (a) generic tourist and (b) special interest tourist; by interest (a) culture-oriented, (b) nature-lovers and (c) adventure seekers - by the level of participation/ interaction: (a) active/intense interaction, (b) passive/moderate interaction
Sievänen, Neuvonen, & Pouta (2011)	Southern Finland	736	Motivation & interest	Countryside and outdoor friends (23%); Safari riders (25%); Guided visitors (5%); Room and rental seekers (18%); Uninterested (29%)
Oh & Schuett (2010)	Virginia, USA	212	Expenditure	Excursion (87.6%); Overnight (12.4%)
Kutzner & Wright (2010)	British Columbia, Canada	337	Psychographic (visitor interest)	Culture Seekers (33.3%); Nature-Culture Observers (54.5%); Sightseers (12.2%)
Park & Yoon (2009)	Korea	252	Motivation	Family togetherness (37.0%); Passive tourists (19.3%); Want-it all (25.1%); Learning and excitement (18.5%).
Molera & Albaladejo (2007)	South-Eastern Spain	335	Benefit sought	Family rural tourist (30.4%); Relax rural tourist (25.4%); Rural life tourist (17.3%); Tourist of rural accommodation (15.5%)
Frochot (2005)	Scotland	734	Benefit sought	Actives (39%); Relaxers (35%); Gazers (13%); Rurals (13%).
Kastenholz, Davis, & Paul (1999)	Portugal	200	Benefits sought	Want it all (25%); Independent (24%); Traditional (30%); environmental (21%)

Source: Data elaborated by author

Table 2. Rural tourism attractions in Sámán area by season

Theme	Attraction	Seasonality
Historical and heritage sites	Historical bridges, such as Zaman Khan Bridge, Howrah Bridge, Kah Kesh bridge, Choobi bridge (picture 1)	Four season
	Literary site: such as tomb of the nineteenth century poet Dehghan Sámáni	Four season
	Old water mill: three sites in riverside of Zayandehrud river	Four season
	Pilgrimage/religious sites: such as Baba Pir Ahmad shrine	Four season
	Historic castles: such as Howrah castle and Garmdareh castle (picture 3)	Four season
Rural settlements	Historical village architecture such as Yaseh Chay a mountain village with Indigenous houses (picture 2)	Four season
	Riverside villages: rural landscapes alongside the Zayanderood river such as Chamali and Markadeh	Four season
Tourist Center	Touristic camp: such as Zagros complex with facilities such as: Hotel, Car park, shop, fair of souvenirs and crafts, camping place, children's playground, toilets, gas station.	Four season
Distinctive culture and heritage	Local customs, languages, costumes, foods, crafts, festivals, traditions, ways of life	Four season
Air/climate conditions	Comfortable climate/pleasant temperature	Spring, Summer, and the first half of the autumn
	Clean Air	Four season
Nature and environment	Landscape of farms and fruit and nuts gardens (such as: Almond, peach, cherry, apple, Walnut)	Spring, Summer, and autumn
	Stream, River and lake: especially Zayanderood river and dam	Four season
	Mountain landscapes and Trails	Four season
	Snowy landscape: (winter sports in Chelgard ski resort)	Winter and Second half of the autumn

Source: Data elaborated by author

Table 3. Socio-demographic profile of respondents

Variables	
Gender	Male: 211 (70.3%) Female: 89 (29.7%)
Age	15-24: 41 (13.6%) 25-34: 93 (30%) 35-44: 68 (22.7%) 44-54: 56 (18.7%) 55 and over: 42 (14.0%)
Marital status	Married: 209 (69.7%) Single: 91 (30.3%)
Education	High school graduate or less: 108 (36.0%) College level: 156 (52.0%) Graduate School and higher :36 (12.0%)
Work status	Salaried worker: 105 (35.0%) Self-employed: 93 (31.0%) Housewife: 33 (11.0%) Student: 39 (13.0%) Retired: 30 (10.0%)
Monthly average income	Less than 1000000 Rial: 90 (18.0 %) 10000001-20000000 Rial: 122 (40.7) 20000001-30000000 Rial: 54 (30.0%) Over 30000000 Rial: 34 (11.3%)
Previous Visit	One time 44 (14.7%) Two time 42 (14.0%) Two time and over 214 (71.3%)
Origin	Shahr-e Kord: 160 (53.3%) Esfahan: 90 (30.0%) Other: 50 (16.7%)
Destination attribute	Services and facilities" 44 (14.7%) Accessibility: 84 (28.0%) Attractions: 152 (50.7%) Place Attachments: 20 (6.6%)
Travel time	Weekend: 90 (30.0%) Weekdays: 30 (10.0%) Holidays: 76 (25.3 %) Whenever free time: 104 (34.7%)
Travel group	Alone: 12 (4.0%) Family: 201(67.0%) Friends: 75 (25.0%) Other: 12 (4.0%)
Transportation	Private car: 286 (95.3%) Public transportations 14 (4.7%)
Accommodation	Day visitor: 143 (47.7%) Rural rental house: 78 (26.0%) Second home: 35 (11.7%) VFR: 38 (12.7%) Hotel: 6 (2.0%)

Source: Data elaborated by author

Table 4.
Principal component analysis of motivations of rural tourists visiting the Sámán area

General motivation	Specific motivation	Mean	S.D	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Variance explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Space and environment	Sensation of space and freedom	3.38	1.08	0.76	5.69	9.97	0.74
	Observe the scenic beauty of the rural landscapes	3.61	1.05	0.69			
	Desire to connect to the natural environment	3.69	0.86	0.69			
	Sought cleaner air and an unpolluted environment	4.13	0.85	0.55			
Local products	Buying handicrafts and local souvenirs	2.49	1.19	0.91	3.56	9.58	0.83
	Buying farm production directly from rural households	2.41	1.18	0.91			
	Buying fresh and healthy dairy products	2.56	1.19	0.84			
Rurality and learning	Nostalgia to old ways of life and authenticity	3.00	1.07	0.68	2.96	8.33	0.72
	Opportunities to learn and explore different cultures	2.99	1.14	0.61			
	Interest in historical heritage sites	3.37	1.24	0.59			
	Experience the rural lifestyle	3.49	.71	0.56			
	Participate in farm activities	2.82	1.15	0.55			
	Interact with local residents	3.38	0.94	0.52			
	Rest mentally and physically	3.00	1.05	0.48			
Outdoor recreation	Exploring and discovering new places	3.84	1.04	0.79	1.78	7.99	0.70
	Experience the excitement of challenging situations	3.47	1.31	0.68			
	Opportunities for sports and physical activities	2.98	1.15	0.61			
	Longing to group activities in open countryside	3.46	0.99	0.58			
	Recover from everyday stresses in a peaceful atmosphere	4.04	0.84	0.51			
Escape and relax	Break away from the daily routine	4.26	0.78	0.73	1.73	7.83	0.69
	Escape from overcrowded and stressful urban life	3.84	1.04	0.61			
	Enjoy family leisure in a pleasant natural atmosphere	4.52	0.66	0.47			
Social and place attachment	Social interaction with friends and relatives	2.90	1.01	0.81	1.37	7.43	0.67
	Visit places family came from	2.33	1.32	0.76			
	Sense of belonging and place attachment	2.40	1.28	0.69			
	Having a good time with family	3.74	0.95	0.56			
	Fun and entertainment spaces for kids and children	2.50	1.18	0.50			
Second homes and spirituality	Owning a second residence for leisure times	2.08	1.31	0.77	1.31	5.37	0.66
	Experience a different lifestyle	2.97	1.18	0.62			
	Satisfaction of spiritual needs	3.77	1.03	0.53			
peace and tranquility	Search for peace and quiet with nature	3.12	1.00	0.62	1.20	4.88	0.65
	Providing opportunities for solitude and tranquility	2.86	1.14	0.51			

Total explained variance = 61.4%; Cronbach's a of all items= 0.78

Source: Data elaborated by author

Table 5.

Motivation factor means by cluster (N=300); grey indicates an average value > |0.4|

Specific motivation	n=92(30.7%) <i>Local attachment and peace</i>	n=108(36%) <i>Rurality, relax and spirituality</i>	n=100(33.3%) <i>Environment and outdoor recreation</i>	F	p
Space and environment	0.23	0.31	1.17	17.28	0.00
Buying Local products	0.91	-0.09	-0.65	39.16	0.00
Rurality and learning	-0.23	0.86	-0.51	26.02	0.00
Outdoor recreation	-0.40	0.05	0.81	6.53	0.00
Escape and relaxation	-0.52	0.64	0.00	13.58	0.00
Social and place attachment	0.65	-0.24	-0.25	11.50	0.00
Second homes and spirituality	-0.02	0.49	-0.34	6.26	0.00
Peace and tranquility	0.41	-0.22	0.04	2.38	0.01

Source: Data elaborated by author

Table 6. Results of a linear analysis discriminating among tourists' profiles in Sámán (* indicates the most relevant loadings to discriminant functions)

Function	Eigenvalue	% variance explained by function	Canonical correlation	Wilks' lambda	Chi-square	df	p
1	1.99	55.2	.816	.128	294.69	16	0.001
2	1.61	44.8	.785	.383	137.67	7	0.001
Discriminant loading		Function 1	Function 2	Classification results: 97.3% of original cases correctly classified			
Space and environment		-.434*	.314				
Local products		.290*	.105				
Rurality and learning		-.276*	.056				
Active recreation		.179*	-.124				
Escape and relaxation		-.114*	-.064				
Social and place attachment		.191	.418*				
Second homes and spirituality		.072	.374*				
Peace and tranquility		.045	.225*				

Source: Data elaborated by author

Table 7. Profile of the three tourists' segments visiting Sámán area

Tourist profile	Cluster			Total: 300 (100%)	Statistics
	I = 92 (30.7%)	II = 108 (36%)	III = 100 (33.3%)		
Age					
Under 35	30 (32.6%)	28 (25.9%)	76 (76%)	134 (44.7%)	Chi-Square=38.2, $p < 0.001$
35 and over	62 (67.4%)	80 (74.1%)	24 (24%)	166 (55.3%)	
Work status					
Salaried employees	33 (35.9%)	40 (37.0%)	32 (32.0%)	105 (35.0%)	Chi-Square=38.2, $p < 0.001$
Self-employed	37 (40.2%)	28 (25.9)	28 (28.0%)	93 (31.0%)	
Housewife	10 (10.9%)	17 (15.7%)	6 (6.0%)	33 (10.4%)	
Student	0 (0.0%)	5 (4.6%)	34 (34.0%)	39 (13.0%)	
Retired	12 (13.0 %)	18 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	30 (10.0%)	
Marital status					
Single	83 (90.2%)	92 (85.2%)	34 (34%)	209 (69.7%)	Chi-Square=29.2, $p < 0.0001$
Married	9 (9.8%)	16 (14.8%)	66 (66%)	91 (30.3%)	
Travel group					
Family	77 (83.7%)	87 (80.6%)	37(36.0%)	201 (67.0%)	Chi-Square = 32.2, $p = 0.001$
Friends	7 (7.06%)	7 (4.4%)	61 (62.0%)	75 (25%)	
Alone	8 (8.7%)	2 (1.8)	2 (2.0%)	12 (4.0%)	
Other	0 (0.0%)	12 (11.2%)	0.0 (0.0%)	12 (4.0%)	
Accommodation					
Day visitor	57 (62.0%)	38 (35.2%)	48 (48.0%)	143 (47.7%)	Chi-Square=23.2, $p = 0.001$
Rural rental house	0 (0.0%)	46 (42.6%)	32 (32.0%)	78 (26.0%)	
Second home	7 (7.6%)	20 (18.5%)	8 (8.0%)	35 (11.7%)	
VFR	28 (30.4%)	2 (1.9%)	8 (8.0%)	38 (12.7%)	
Hotel	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.9%)	4 (4.0%)	6 (2.0%)	

Source: Data elaborated by author

Table 8. Activity preference of rural tourism segments in Sámán area

Tourist activity	Cluster			Total N=300	F	p
	I: 92 (30.7%)	II: 108 (36%)	III: 100 (33.3%)			
Nature excursion	3.83	3.98	4.64	4.15	21.39	0.001
Picnic	4.06	3.48	3.81	4.09	8.77	0.001
Visit Historical Sites	3.50	4.00	3.16	3.63	12.76	0.001
Eating in a local restaurant	1.90	4.17	2.20	2.59	29.43	0.001
Visiting friends and relatives	4.23	2.64	2.32	3.06	18.31	0.001
Mountaineering	3.02	2.70	3.56	3.09	8.73	0.001
Buying local products	3.67	3.07	2.06	2.92	39.24	0.001
Walking/Hiking	4.07	4.13	3.94	4.05	0.77	0.47
Sightseeing	4.13	4.43	4.12	4.23	1.99	0.14
Swimming	2.52	2.15	3.24	2.63	10.81	0.001
Recreational driving	2.78	2.72	3.06	2.85	1.45	0.24
Photography	3.00	3.04	3.62	3.22	3.51	0.03
Farm activities	2.93	3.54	2.60	3.04	11.83	0.001
Fishing	2.00	1.67	3.18	2.27	25.82	0.001
Hunting	1.87	1.48	1.90	1.74	2.20	0.11
Bed and breakfast	2.33	3.44	2.68	2.85	7.70	0.001
Tent camping	2.98	3.62	4.00	3.52	7.64	0.001

Source: Data elaborated by author

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