



## **THE ROLE OF HANDICRAFTS IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM WITH AN EMPHASIS ON INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE**

**Elham Hosseinnia<sup>1†</sup> --- Baharak Shoja<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>M.A of Geography/ Payam Noor University, Iran

### **ABSTRACT**

*Tourist is a process that had been existed a long period of time with different forms in human societies and has gradually solved its historical and evolutionary processes. As the tourism has influenced in the economic, social and cultural countries that economists have called it as an invisible export. On the other hand, rural tourism is one of the most important subgroups of the development of tourism in each region that nowadays is considered one of the most popular forms of tourism and in the form of tourist activity takes place in the village. Descriptive and analytic study based on library studies and documents. At first, we evaluated the quality and importance of Indigenous knowledge and sustainable development with the approach of tourism and with regard to conceptual framework and fundamental issues related to rural handicrafts and tourism. Then, findings from the study In relation to effects of Socio - economic Handicrafts tourism development in Iran were extracted and analyzed by the research subject. And the results show, by combining "Indigenous knowledge" and "modern knowledge" and regarding to existence of rural conditions such as Indigenous areas, taking into account the resources, the potential and conditions of each region can be acquired grounds for an favorable model from sustainable rural development. Despite the frequency of human resources in rural areas, the Lack of water and land push on farmland and cause to migration of labor efficient from rural to urban areas where efficiency is reduced because of lack of expertise. Therefore, in rural areas where there are no grounds for agriculture that can be used the non-farm economy, "such as local industries, etc."*

**Keywords:** Handicrafts, Indigenous knowledge, Tourism, Rural, Sustainable development, Local industries, Societies.

**Received:** 2 January 2016/ **Revised:** 20 April 2016/ **Accepted:** 16 August 2016/ **Published:** 3 November 2016

### **Contribution/ Originality**

This study contributes the roll of indigenous knowledge to the development of rural tourism and preservation of handicrafts Which leads to creating employment so that it is caused to prevent migration from rural settlements. Therefor rural environment is considered as National treasure that it can help sustainable development.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is a process that has been existed with different forms in human societies since long ago and has passed through its historical and evolution stages. Tourism industry has been so effective in economic, social and cultural development of the countries that is considered as an invisible export by economists. Today tourism is considered as one of the foundations of the development of societies, especially in developing countries. Using the term smokeless industry for tourism industry indicates its harmless role in the development of societies. Thus tourism improves all indicators of sustainable development, including employment, economic development index, promotes culture through cultural exchanges, protects of historical, cultural and natural heritage and provides

environmental protection without the need for heavily investment (Ziarati, 1996). On the other hand, rural tourism is one of the most important subgroups of tourism development in each region which is one of the most popular forms of tourism which happen in the form of tourism activities in the villages. Village can be defined geographically and describe the cultural characteristics of non-urban communities. The villages not only have a great potential to attract tourism and job creation but also can help to develop agriculture and the mass production of these products provide a good help to the economy, in other words, tourism and rural tourism is one of the great sources of economic exchange that has desirable functions. Some of these functions such as agriculture and forestry are an integral natural and social part of the village. But the analysis of the talents and capacities to create employment in the economy of regions is one of the most important government tasks in the current conditions. Given that employment is one of the problems of each community and unemployment is one of the major economic and social problems, in such cases the development of handicrafts as an integral part of the rural economy is associated with many tourism attractions. Hence the importance of the development of handicraft will play a prominent role through identifying and creating new capacities, creating employment and improving economic condition and income level, livelihoods and well-being of thousands of housewives who are active in this field (Manouchehri, 2011).

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is a descriptive- analytical study based on library and document studies. First the quality and importance of indigenous knowledge and sustainable development is analyzed by tourism approach according to the theoretical framework and fundamental issues related to rural handicrafts and tourism. The obtained results on the economic- social handicrafts and the tourism development in Iran were extracted and analyzed.

## 3. INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Indigenous knowledge has been focused in the past two decades and it is now considered as an important tool regarding the environmental issues which even criticizes modernity. There are different views on naming and definition of indigenous knowledge such as indigenous knowledge or indigenous technical knowledge, knowledge of rural people of the traditional knowledge used by researchers so far (Abdoli, 2010). Indigenous knowledge was first discussed formally in "Rio" conference in sustainable development (Warren *et al.*, 1995). Indigenous knowledge has two advantages over technical knowledge:

It has no cost and it is easily accessible (Ahmed, 1994)

It is socially affordable, environmentally friendly and contains minimal risk to farmers and rural producers (Appleton and Jeans, 1991).

Several definitions have been offered by experts on indigenous knowledge each one have addressed the issue from a different angle. Each one have focused on specific aspects of indigenous knowledge in their views and perspectives.

The Oxford Dictionary defines the term indigenous knowledge as "created or produced naturally in a specific territory or area related to the inhabitants of that region" (Azkia and Imani, 2008). In other words, indigenous knowledge refers to the terms of knowledge that originates from the geographical area and is produced naturally.

### 3.1. Indigenous Knowledge Features

Similar to its concept, indigenous knowledge features are stated different ways by the experts that is discussed as follows.

- **Based on experience:** indigenous knowledge is the results of centuries of human experience that has dealt with this knowledge.
- **The work on it has been tested for centuries,**

- **It is compatible with the environment and local culture:** indigenous knowledge originates from within the local community and is shaped according to local needs and over time the things that have not been compatible with the local environment have been removed. So the thing that is remained is compatible with the environment and its culture.
- **It is a dynamic and ever evolving phenomenon:** by the change of the indigenous culture, the indigenous knowledge has been changed (Zare and Yaghoubi, 2000).

Table-1. The comparison between indigenous and scientific knowledge (formal)

Scientific knowledge	Indigenous Knowledge
The truth is assumed to be approx.	The truth is assumed to be real
It is worldly	It believes in super natural
It is learnt	It is learnt by storytelling
Learning by formal education	Training through experience
Written	Oral and visual
Analytical - based on a subset of the total	Based on holistic systems
Based on the model or hypothesis	Sensory
Reductive	Community oriented
Actual	Mental
Proof-oriented	Experimental
Quick access to knowledge through acquisition	Long-term acquisition
Short term forecast	The knowledge acquired in the long term
Power on using natural principles of documents (logical validity)	Its strength is in using local knowledge
Weakness in the use of local knowledge	Weakness in using the knowledge of remote areas
Approximate projection models - Linear from scratch	Symbolic models based modeling (Cyclic)
Definitions based on the hypothesis, theory and law	Definitions based on examples, anecdotes and stories

Source: Yousefi (2010)

### 3.2. Indigenous Knowledge and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development principles can be summarized as: development must be environmentally sustainable, socially equitable, economically efficient and consistent with society culturally. In most of the forty principles of Charter of sustainable development, considering indigenous people knowledge is emphasized as one of the necessities of sustainable development directly or indirectly. Indigenous knowledge can present unique characteristics of a society or provide its association with other communities and can tie the past to the future. In this context, indigenous knowledge can know as a part of the unique culture of each ecosystem or land and that is the knowledge and a result obtained for compatibility with the environment and ecosystems through experience and has become part of the social and productive culture of that society. These knowledge and methods present environmental compatibility and a reasonable relationship between human being and his environment and in this case they are in full coordination with the indigenous principles and sustainable development (Jomepour, 2006)

## 4. RURAL TOURISM

Rural tourism is a term first used in the 19th century and today is considered an important part of the tourism industry in the world that is composed of different sectors such as cultural and natural tourism, ecotourism, agritourism and farm tourism. Tourism industry with an annual revenue of close to a trillion dollars in the world is among important industries that can compete with industries such as oil, automobile and so on. Countries with tourism attractions have a great talent to attract tourists in terms of natural, cultural, ancient and religious civilization attractions and proper investment in the industry and maintaining the secure place in the world can lead to billions of dollars in line with sustainable development and environmental protection. The tourism industry is

considered as a source of stable income which in addition to its positive impact on the economy on the countries, it is considered as an employment sector and reduced the poverty of rural areas (Jahed, 2009).

#### 4.1. The Importance of Rural Tourism

Why is it important to consider rural tourism and develop it? What is the importance of rural tourism? To answer these questions first we address some introductory points. The first point is that in countries like ours, more villages are abandoned due to the migration every day. The reason of most migrations is the shortage of employment and facilities in rural areas. According to most planners if the economy in the villages is flourished and employment opportunities are increased and more facilities arise in them, they will be more livable than urban areas. The second thing to know is that in many countries, rural tourism is an important economic activity along with other economic sectors such as agriculture, industry and commerce.

According to the two points mentioned above, it is possible to understand the importance of rural tourism and in fact one of the ways to the economic boom in villages is to develop tourism in these areas based on the touristic resources in them (Masoum, 2003). Also the village is a homogeneous natural, social and economic unit in which people with common have ideas and thoughts are living. Villagers are forced to perform agriculture, animal husbandry, handicraft or a combination of these activities to earn a living and in the third world countries despite high labor, the peasants and farmers are among low-income members of the society who have problems to provide the cost of living. In the countryside, rural tourism potential can be a new source of income for villagers, especially the rural population especially the developing countries' villagers and can solve or alleviate to some of their problems. This requires specific planning and management. Tourists may travel to villages for their curiosity so that they could become familiar with their culture in addition to visiting a place.

Tourists have a particular interest to buy village products such as handicrafts, local products, and traditional foods ... and this means the increased income of the villagers that are involved in this industry directly and indirectly. Furthermore, establishment and operation of hotels and restaurants as well as entertainment venues and sports will create job and income and on the other had reduced unemployment and poverty.

#### 4.2. Rural Industries

In general the industries in the production of which skill, talent and insight are essential are defined as rural industries.

#### 4.3. Classification of Rural Industries

Classification of rural industries based on economic and social situation includes:

- 1- Handicrafts and traditional works,
- 2- Alterant industries,
- 3- The technical and industrial services that based on the importance of handicrafts, they are discussed here.

#### 4.4. Traditional Handicrafts

These industries that are classified into domestic and workshop crafts do not require sophisticated technology and are based on local and traditional expertise. The majority of raw materials used by them are provided from inside the country i.e. natural sources. This presents the independence and economic self-sufficiency in this type of industry compared with other rural industries. In addition, handicrafts have both artistic and applied features. This industry includes the insight, talent, thought and culture of rural communities. The use of technical and Indigenous knowledge in this industry represents the originality of this industry in villages. In one division village handicrafts include:

- Framed woven industries: they are products produced by horizontal or vertical frames such as carpets and rugs
- Traditional textile industry: This type of handicrafts are looms that produce products like woolen cloth, shawls and cotton and wool cloths
- Knitted handicrafts: They are produced by knitting needles like socks – scarves
- Refinish industry: in this industry the products are created by sewing on the fabrics without motifs such as embroidery and filigree
- Felting industry: the industry includes artifacts produced by compression and matting wool in a good technical condition such as felt hats and felt coat
- Ceramics and pottery industry: this industry is obtained by clay and the potter's wheel. In addition to the above industries, there are other rural industries including glass, etching, lattice work , wood engraving, seal-making, mat weaving, production of leather, etc (Jahangard, 1996).

The properties of handicrafts based on the definition of Handicrafts Council of Iran:

- The crucial role of human resources in production
- Lack of complexity of the means of production and the need for significant investment as well as quick return
- Complementary role of crafts for agricultural economy in rural areas
- The possibility of being replaced by some machine production due to consumption characteristics
- Carrying cultural load due to being manual
- The possibility of oral transmission and discipleship of the skills and expertise
- In handicrafts manual labor is more required than investment and the role of work is more than investment
- The added value of handicrafts is much more than other manufacturing activities and about 70% of the sales price of a manual process is paid as the wage and only 30% is paid for the raw materials (Eftekhari, 1996).

#### 4.5. The Economic- Social Effects of Handicrafts

Today the economic and social development and growth is not possible regardless of its components and the distribution of employment among main sectors of economic activity is subject to the parameters of labor and capital where handicrafts can be among the most important solutions to fight with unemployment in the country due to the excellent properties such as investment and saving, hardworking, participation of women in production, diversifying sources of household income, reduced income risks, use of internal concepts and many other economic and cultural factors such as high value-added, preservation of culture and indigenous origin, transmission of indigenous and local culture and other components and will have long-term effect on the economic and social development by satisfying the following roles:

- Civil and National Development
- Creating attraction for tourism development
- Mobilizing resources and creating regional balance in development
- Increased per capita income
- Increased national production and export development
- The most significant limitations to develop handicrafts

Handicrafts as an effective factor in economic and social development are faced with obstacles and constraints to achieve the objectives of the missions the most important ones of which include:

- Limitations and problems of resource mobilization
- The problems of marketing, advertising and media supply and distribution system

- Technical and technological constraints
- Educational , promotion and research deficiencies
- legal regulation shortcomings
- administrative and management system problems (Emadi and Hassanzadeh, 2012)

## 5. CONCLUSION

Today, monuments or natural attractions are not the only means of tourism attraction in developing countries which often have an ancient civilization and additionally handicrafts with their special design and originality are among the important factors in attracting tourists around the world and can be complementary to the natural and historical sights in each country to the extent that in some countries which are the source of handicrafts we see that along with the production of handcraft centers, some tourist facilities are provided so that the tourists while staying in them would become familiar with handicrafts and purchase souvenirs in addition to this familiarity.

Villagers can also use modern science in making their handicrafts. This will help the quick return process and marketability of their products. The beautiful rural knitting with many buyers in other countries as well as holding needlework industry workshops, making and cutting the glass, woodcarving, jewelry, textile, leather etc. are among suitable employment areas in the rural areas and can be effective in sustainable rural development along with other areas.

It is concluded that it is possible to achieve an optimal model of sustainable rural development by the inclusion of "indigenous" and "modern" knowledge with the existing contexts in rural and indigenous areas of the country and considering the resources and potential of each region.

Water and land scarcity despite the abundance of human resources in rural areas causes stress to farms lands and leads to the migration of efficient human resources to the urban areas who have no performance due to the lack of expertise.

So in rural areas it is possible to use other potential to create jobs where there is no area for agriculture without causing stress to non- renewable resources and reducing ecological balance and use non-farm economy like "indigenous industry" and etc.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Contributors/Acknowledgement: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

## REFERENCES

- Abdoli, N., 2010. Indigenous knowledge and development process. Available from <http://mirasfarda.org>.
- Ahmed, M.M., 1994. Indigenous knowledge for sustainable development in the Sudan. Khartoum, Sudan: Khartoum University Press.
- Appleton, H. and A. Jeans, 1991. Technology from the people: Technology transfer and indigenous knowledge. *Science, Technology and Development*, 9(1& 2): 47-57.
- Azkiya, M. and A. Imani, 2008. Sustainable rural development information dissemination. Tehran: Ettelaat Publication.
- Eftekhari, R., 1996. Rural craft and profession as a stable job for women, *Payame Zan monthly*, 59. Qom: Islamic Propaganda Office. pp: 84-90.
- Emadi, A.M. and R. Hassanzadeh, 2012. The role and functions of the craft in economic and social affairs. Industry news website. Available from <http://archive.is/www.sanayenews.com>.
- Jahangard, E., 1996. The role of rural products in Iran's economy. *Jihad Journal*, Tehran: Ministry of Agriculture, 16(190-191): 5-11.
- Jahed, S., 2009. Agritourism, *Dehyariha magazine*. Tehran: The Country's Municipalities and RMs, 5(26): 28-31.

- Jomepour, M., 2006. Using indigenous knowledge and culture, social science quarterly 33. Tehran: Allameh Tabatabaei University. pp: 27-64.
- Manouchehri, M., 2011. Examining the role of rural handicrafts in entrepreneurship and employment for tourism. National Conference on Sustainable Development, Islamic Azad University of Kermanshah, March.
- Masoum, J., 2003. The principles and concepts of rural tourism. Tehran: The Country's Municipalities and RMs, 1(4): 18-30.
- Warren, D.M., D. Brokensha and L.J. Slikkerveer, 1995. Indigenous knowledge systems: The cultural dimensions of development. London: Kegan Paul International.
- Yousefi, J., 2010. The theoretical issues of indigenous knowledge. Available from <http://1442.persianblog.ir/post/108>.
- Zare, H. and J. Yaghoubi, 2000. Attitudes to indigenous knowledge. Jihad Journal, Tehran: Ministry of Agriculture, 19(230-231): 51-58.
- Ziarati, E., 1996. Tourism and development of the national economy. Tehran: The Country's Municipalities and RMs.

*Views and opinions expressed in this article are the views and opinions of the author(s), International Journal of Geography and Geology shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability etc. caused in relation to/arising out of the use of the content.*