



Rural Tourism Entrepreneurship Survey with Emphasis on Eco-museum Concept

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Abstract

Unemployment and scarcity of job opportunities count as major problems suffered in villages, especially by the youth. To this end, rural entrepreneurship, particularly in tourism and ecotourism sector, may contribute to the growth of rural economy through strategic and forward-looking planning along with other factors. Innovation and creativity are turning into one of the essential ingredients of continued development. Rural museums, such as "Eco-museum", are one of the measures taken with regard to protecting various material and spiritual phenomena resulting from traditional habitats. "Eco-museums" can be deemed as a project to support sustainability, and a significant factor for development of entrepreneurship and businesses, especially small- and medium-sized businesses. Espidan, a village in North Khorasan province of Iran, can exert such an effect and play such a role as an eco-museum. Through library resources and field studies, the present study attempts to examine the potentials of Espidan for strengthening its rural tourist properties and fulfilment of ecotouristic objectives in line with three main criteria: public contribution, exclusive eco-museum activities, and creating social, cultural and natural conditions (the determining the vital conditions for a place to evolve into an eco-museum). A study and evaluation of the recommended criteria in Espidan indicates that the village demonstrates considerable potentials for evolving into an eco-museum. As effective steps towards achieving continued development, practical solutions have been proposed for fulfilment of eco-museum objectives as such an evolution into an eco-museum can result in rural entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Eco-Museum; Sustainable Development; Espidan Village; Entrepreneurship; Rural Tourism.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship by improving the employment situation, income and productivity in rural communities can prevent the excessive migration of villagers and even lead to the growth of the phenomenon of "reverse migration". But entrepreneurship development, especially rural entrepreneurship, is facing serious barriers and challenges in all countries, including Iran. To date, research has paid less attention to the impact of the spatial context than to the social, economic and to some extent institutional contexts. In particular research on the localized spatial level has been limited and even more so when the spatial context is rural, since much of the research on the link between entrepreneurship and spatial context has focused on innovative environments and milieus, clusters and learning regions. Similarly, studies of rural development have generally devoted only little attention to the finer details of entrepreneurial activities or restricted their view of entrepreneurship to profit-oriented and short-sighted opportunistic behaviour. Consequently, linking the concepts of space and place to rural So far, different strategies have been introduced in different periods for rural development. Considering the concepts of space and place are crucial for understanding rural entrepreneurship. Rural entrepreneurship stands apart from other forms of entrepreneurship because of its particular spatial characteristics. While

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