

# Evaluation of effective factors in economic entrepreneurship of rural tourism destinations Case Study: target villages for tourism in Kohkiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province

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## Extended Abstract

### Introduction

Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in rural development, particularly in fostering economic opportunities through tourism. In developing countries, rural areas often face challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and migration, which can be mitigated by leveraging local resources like natural and cultural attractions for tourism-based entrepreneurship. This study focuses on Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province in Iran, a region rich in natural landscapes, historical sites, and nomadic lifestyles, yet underdeveloped in tourism entrepreneurship due to infrastructural deficiencies, lack of private sector support, and insufficient entrepreneurial culture.

The importance of entrepreneurship in rural tourism destinations stems from its ability to create jobs, generate income, and promote sustainable development. As highlighted in the literature, entrepreneurship acts as an engine for socio-economic transformation (Vladasel et al., 2021). Tourism, as a service-oriented industry, offers high potential for entrepreneurial activities, especially in rural settings where it can diversify economies beyond agriculture (Aggarwal, 2018). However, in Iran, particularly in rural tourism villages, economic entrepreneurship remains marginal, often overshadowed by social and environmental planning priorities.

This research addresses key gaps in existing studies by identifying and evaluating factors influencing economic entrepreneurship in rural tourism destinations. It builds on prior works emphasizing social, institutional, and ecological dimensions (e.g., Dahles et al., 2019; Sheldon et al., 2017). The study poses two main questions: (1) What are the effective factors in the planning model for economic entrepreneurship in rural tourism destinations of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province? (2) What is the appropriate planning model for such entrepreneurship?

### Methodology

This applied research employs a descriptive-analytical and survey method. The study area comprises Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province (area: 15,504 km<sup>2</sup>), bordered by several provinces and featuring over 300 natural attractions and 2,600 historical sites. Ten target tourism villages were selected: Imam Zamen, Khongah, Bi Bi Hakimeh, Kamr Dough, Cham Bolbol, Dil, Tang Sariz, and Barm Alvan.

The statistical population includes business owners (entrepreneurs) and local managers (village heads and Islamic Council members) from these villages. A census sampling was used for business owners and village heads, with random selection of 2-3 council members per village. Data collection involved library methods (books, articles) and field surveys using researcher-designed questionnaires. Questionnaires were validated with Cronbach's alpha ( $>0.7$ : 0.928 for local managers, 0.843 for entrepreneurs, 0.743 for tourists).

Over 60 indicators were operationalized across four main factors: economic (employment, investment), institutional (supportive policies, legal arrangements), social (participation, individual traits, security), and ecological (desirability, landscape). Data analysis used SPSS 24, including descriptive statistics, ANOVA for variance, Tukey's post-hoc test for factor contributions, Pearson correlation for relationships, and path analysis for modeling.

## Conclusion

**Descriptive Findings:** All village heads ( $n=11$ ) were male, aged 41-45 on average, with associate degrees and 11-15 years of service. Council members (97.1% male) were mostly aged 41-45, with diploma to bachelor's degrees, and  $<5$  years of service (53.3%). Entrepreneurs (64.5% male) were aged 20-40 (59.1%), with sub-diploma to bachelor's education (43.6%), and  $<5$  years experience (74.5%). Tourists (81.8% male) were aged 41-60 (64.2%), with master's or higher (52.2%), mostly government employees (67.3%).

**Inferential Findings:** ANOVA confirmed significant differences ( $p<0.05$ ) among social, institutional, and ecological factors in entrepreneurship planning from both groups' perspectives. Tukey's test revealed social factors (mean: 3.56 for entrepreneurs, 3.92 for managers) and institutional factors (mean: 3.40 for entrepreneurs, 3.25 for managers) had the highest contributions, followed by ecological factors (mean: 3.27 for entrepreneurs, 3.14 for managers). Pearson correlations showed strong positive relationships ( $p<0.01$ ): institutional ( $r=0.608$  entrepreneurs, 0.855 managers), social ( $r=0.771$  entrepreneurs, 0.839 managers), and ecological ( $r=0.603$  entrepreneurs, 0.754 managers) with economic entrepreneurship.

Path analysis modeled interactions: Laws ( $\beta=0.511$ ), participation ( $\beta=0.446$ ), supportive policies ( $\beta=0.399$ ), knowledge ( $\beta=0.186$ ), trust ( $\beta=0.140$ ), security ( $\beta=0.105$ ), and employment ( $\beta=0.008$ ) significantly influenced the entrepreneurship model (investment non-significant). Supportive policies were mediated by knowledge ( $\beta=0.756$ ) and trust ( $\beta=0.328$ ). Investment was affected by security ( $\beta=0.504$ ), individual traits ( $\beta=-0.845$ ), and policies ( $\beta=0.196$ ). Individual traits were influenced by security ( $\beta=0.525$ ), knowledge ( $\beta=0.206$ ), employment ( $\beta=0.171$ ), participation ( $\beta=0.081$ ), and investment ( $\beta=0.087$ ).

The model indicates a participatory and networked pattern, emphasizing community involvement and institutional networks.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The study confirms that social and institutional factors dominate in fostering economic entrepreneurship in rural tourism destinations, aligning with prior research (e.g., Abbasi et al., 2020; Guta et al., 2017). Social elements like entrepreneurial mindset, knowledge, and participation, combined with institutional support (policies, laws), drive sustainable development. Ecological factors, while significant, play a supportive role.

The proposed participatory-networked model integrates stakeholders for collaborative planning, addressing challenges like infrastructure gaps and migration. Policy implications include long-term governmental support in finance, anti-corruption, and tourism taxation to enhance entrepreneurship.

Limitations include reliance on self-reported data and focus on specific villages; future research could expand to other provinces or incorporate longitudinal analysis.

This research contributes to rural planning by providing an evidence-based model for tourism entrepreneurship, promoting economic diversification and community empowerment in underdeveloped regions.

**Keywords:** Economic Entrepreneurship, Tourism Destinations, Villages, Kohkiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad