

# Research Paper: Modeling Community-Based Tourism in the Rural Areas of the Mountain Villages of Nowshahr City with the Grounded Theory Approach

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** In recent years, tourism development approaches have focused on the need for the participation of local indigenous communities, the protection of the environment and the culture of the host community, and the sustainable development of the community as a win-win approach. This research aims to model community-based tourism in the rural areas of the mountain villages of Nowshahr city.

**Methods:** This research has been done to collect exploratory information and the purpose of the fundamental type and with the process of grounded theory. The data collection tool was semi-structured in-depth interviews that were conducted with 20 activists and experts in the field of cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts in the region by using theoretical and targeted sampling. The collected data were done with open, axial, and selective coding and by Maxqda2020 software, and the final model of community-based tourism was extracted. This model presents the causal factors affecting action for community-based tourism, contextual and intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences.

**Results:** The obtained results of this model led to the presentation of 32 concepts and 16 categories, the central phenomenon of which was a passion for action.

**Conclusion:** The obtained judgment indicates that taking action in the direction of community-based tourism is a time-consuming phenomenon and requires the formation of specific conditions and the implementation of certain strategies, which leads to tangible positive and negative consequences for the local community.

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## 1. Introduction

The contribution of tourism to economic growth and development has been recognized and confirmed for a long time. Tourism is a key employment and income generation sector that improves livelihoods and development (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2019). On the other hand, tourism development in rural areas is increasing because people seek natural scenery and authentic local customs in quiet rural areas to escape from industrial and urban areas (Priatmoko et al., 2021). Tourism activities in rural areas are directly related to sustainable development by protecting their natural and cultural resources and their sustainable use and establishing a balance between economic and ecological aspects of development. Thus, rural tourism is one of the ways of sustainable development through which rural areas can achieve economic, environmental, and socio-cultural growth (Ćurčić et al., 2021). Rural tourism includes all types of tourism with welfare facilities and services in rural areas, which provides the possibility of benefiting from natural resources, nature's attractions, and participation in rural life (Ziaei & Torab Ahmadi, 2012). Rural tourism can cause economic growth and diversity of activities on the one hand and create employment and income generation for rural residents by attracting surplus human resources on the other hand. It is considered one of the opportunities for comprehensive rural development, which slows down the process (Papeli Yazdi & Saqaei, 2011). One of the regions that has become an important destination for tourism in the world is the mountainous regions. For many mountainous regions of the world, tourism has become an important economic source that brings new jobs and income from the traditional systems of that region. The characteristics of mountainous areas and their potentials, such as springs, peaks, geological features, plant diversity, and different animal species, are a valuable asset for mountain tourism development and will become increasingly important in the coming decades (Debarbieux et al., 2014). In addition to having diverse natural attractions and landscapes, mountain villages have become attractive places for tourists due to cultural contexts, traditions, and customs (Moulai Hashjin & Hossein Nejad, 2012). However, as tourism increases in mountainous areas, its environmental and social effects are expected to increase. Although tourism can provide benefits for people in mountainous areas. Usually, most of the economic benefits are taken to other areas and lead to the loss of resources and an increase in local prices for local people (Godde et al., 1998). The excessive growth of the tourism industry has

negatively affected the host destinations, including environmental degradation and cultural damage. As a result, destinations should choose effective tourism models for developing tourism as an economic sector and simultaneously achieve society's goals of preserving local cultural values and sustainable environmental development (Pham et al., 2021). To achieve this goal, thinkers introduced community-based tourism as an alternative approach to tourism (Hessam & Baghiani, 2017, cited by Hall, 2007; Najarzadeh & Torabi, 2016). This type of tourism is an essential approach to tourism that effectively and strongly supports sustainability at the local level (Han et al., 2019) and is a vital tool for poverty reduction, protection, and development of the local economy (Zielinski et al., 2020), and joining together of high-level community participation under the umbrella of sustainability (Sharpley & Telfer, 2008). Its successful development is an important contribution to creating various benefits for local destinations, such as job creation, helping to develop environmentally friendly tourism, community empowerment (Pham Hong et al., 2021), and maintaining traditional and cultural values, tourism behaviors support the environment and social values (Han et al., 2019). Community-based tourism is an approach to tourism in which the local community has more fundamental control over the activities and participates in the management and development of tourism. Thus, a significant share of benefits remains within the community (Hessam & Baghiani, 2017). Rural settlements in Iran are considered an exceptional opportunity to attract tourists by creating a connection between rural life, cultural, historical, ethnic, and geographical roots of villagers with natural attractions around them (Bayat & Khazaei, 2015) and community-based tourism in Rural and far areas that are facing various livelihood challenges and bottlenecks and at the same time attract tourists and have many natural and human attractions can be one of the important ways to escape from poverty and increase people's participation in development activities (Hessam & Baghiani, 2017). In many mountainous regions, people have limited means of generating income. Mountain areas often suffer from poor access and infrastructure, economic issues, and neglect. Tourism development in mountainous areas depends on the destination's attractiveness, security, appropriate level of local businesses, and hospitality structures (Debarbieux et al., 2014). However, community-based tourism in these areas can help improve the socio-economic status of the local people and allow them to focus more on improving their overall well-being and living standards, which are often low in these areas (Godde et al., 1998). With the development of community-based tourism, the

local community is actively involved in the decision-making and planning. This makes the local community feel more responsible for the development and management of the region. Also, this approach gives decision-making power to local people and prevents social and cultural concerns caused by dealing with tourists, ultimately leading to sustainable rural development (Zielinski et al., 2020). The villages in the north of the country have been a place for tourists since the past, and in addition to having natural attractions, the elements in the villages have also been able to attract tourists. Despite the high potential of the cultural and natural heritage of the mountain villages of Nowshahr city, the development of massive and unsustainable tourism has faced many problems such as the expansion of second home tourism, seasonal problems, the loss of traditional houses, the sale of land, the increase in migration to the city, The lack of suitable health and treatment facilities, low employment rate, low income, increase in land prices, conversion of agricultural land into illegal construction, false jobs (Moulai Hashjin & Hossein Nejad, 2012) have faced the inability of the tourism sector in Establishing an effective link with other economic activities and not supporting local economic activities indicates its conflict with the principles of sustainable rural tourism, and the process of tourism development in the mentioned area has an unstable pattern (Badri et al., 2008), among which the development of Community based tourism, as an effective sustainable approach, can provide the basis for solving these problems by developing rural tourism based on the local community and help economic, social and cultural development. Although some research has been done about community-based tourism inside and outside the country (Behzadfar et al., 2017; Hessam & Baghiani, 2017; Najarzadeh & Torabi, 2016; Zargham & Bazarafshan, 2015; Pham Hong et al., 2021; Nugroho & Numata, 2020; Rodrigues & Prideaux, 2017; Abukhalifeh & Wondirad, 2019) but few researchers have produced practical knowledge about the development of community-based tourism and solving tourism problems in mountain villages (Khartishvili et al., 2020; Dadvarkhani & Ghanian, 2017) And no research has investigated community-based tourism in the context of mountain villages in the north of the country and Nowshahr district. Therefore, this research examines the issue of community-based tourism and models it in the context of mountain villages in Nowshahr city for the sustainable development of community-based tourism.

## 2. Literature Review

Few studies have been done about community-based tourism, especially in mountain villages in Iran. Behzadfar et al. (2017) found in quantitative research in Nayband village that the development of community-based tourism has a positive and significant effect on the prosperity of residents' businesses. This research stated the objectives of community-based tourism in the political, economic, socio-cultural, and conservation areas. Najarzadeh and Torabi (2016) in Dizaj village of Shahroud found in qualitative-quantitative research that for the development of community-based agricultural tourism, product packaging, support for entrepreneurs, holding training classes, continuous holding of grape festivals, more synergy between those involved, Division of work among the workers according to their ability and responsibility. Dadvarkhani and Ghanian (2017), in a quantitative-qualitative analysis of community-based tourism development strategies in the Kan and Sulqan regions, found that for development, we need more alignment between the opinions of local people and managers. Hessam and Baghiani (2017), in research that measured the villagers' attitude towards the realization of community-based rural tourism among the rural households of the Fuman district, found that the economic factor of the local community and the preservation of resources are in good condition. The components considered for community-based rural tourism include economy and investment, local community and resource conservation, community and decision-making, government and management, and participation. The research of Zargham Borojeni and Bazarafshan (2015) in the survey of rural community-based tourism in the village of Asiab Sar Behshahr with a quantitative method regarding the success rate of the development of this type of tourism showed that the local community should receive the necessary training about the management and development of tourism and then the necessary facilities For tourism management, given to them to manage the development of tourism in the village by their own willing. The success factors of rural community-based tourism development in this research include ten factors of community participation, benefit sharing, protection of tourism resources, support from inside and outside the neighborhood, local community ownership, management and leadership, mutual relations between stakeholders, quality of life, scale of tourism development and tourist's satisfaction. Also, Shahmirzadi (2012) has considered social, economic, cultural, environmental, and political principles in his research on community-based tourism planning. The results showed that tourism in Shahmirzad is passive, and the location, climate, and unique heritage sites play an important role in attracting

tourists. In foreign research, Han et al. (2019) in their research related the role of community-based tourism in the development of the destination factors of local culture, local entertainment, local people, local natural environment, local monuments, local food and dishes, local products, accommodation considered the local areas as its dimensions. The Netherlands Development Organization has proposed four dimensions of gender equality: poverty reduction, business sustainability, and development of local capacities for community-based tourism management. Lee and John (2019) suggested factors for evaluating the sustainability of community-based tourism, including economic sustainability, socio-cultural sustainability, environmental sustainability, and satisfaction with quality of life. Yunikawati et al. (2021) considered rural community-based tourism's economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions. Dangi and Jamal (2016), for sustainable community-based tourism, considered economic dimensions (benefits, local employment and participation, institutional mechanisms, visitor management), environmental and ecological (protection of the natural environment, reduction of waste and effluents, environmentally friendly programs, evaluation, and monitoring) considered socio-cultural (welfare and satisfaction of the local community, participation, and empowerment, visitor satisfaction). Hosain and Uchinlayen (2018) stated that cultural, environmental, political, economic, and social dimensions should be considered for the participation of tourism in the local community regarding the development of rural community-based tourism. Also, Patwary et al. (2019) also considered the economic, political, sociocultural, and environmental dimensions of the development of community-based tourism and its effects. Rakhman et al. (2014) considered the aspects of empowerment, empowerment, protection, support, nurturing, and control for the development of community-based tourism. On the other hand, Suansri (2003), in his book, considered the components of community-based tourism as natural and cultural resources, local organizations, management, learning, and its various aspects as economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental. In their research, Witchayakawin et al. (2020) considered the factors affecting the development of community-based tourism as eleven factors: an abundance of resources, local community participation, marketing, external support, ownership, empowerment, leadership, participation, activities, entrepreneurship, and packaging design. In their model, Priatmoko et al. (2021) considered the way to achieve sustainable rural community-based tourism in four factors: the approval and enthusiasm of official leaders (village elders), the way of life and environment of the local

community, informal leaders, and the management team. Also, Kayat's (2014) model introduced competitive management, resource conservation, creating benefits for the local community, involvement and commitment of the local community, cooperation and networking, empowerment, and leadership to achieve sustainable rural community-based tourism. According to him, to play a role in sustainable development, the rural community-based tourism product should focus on competitive management, resource conservation, and creating benefits for the local community. The involvement and commitment of the local community must support these three elements. The result of the research background shows that in the field of internal research, most of the research paid attention to the attitude of local people towards the development of community-based tourism and its effects. However, external research, in addition to the effects of community-based tourism, also provides models in this field and shows the dimensions and components of community-based tourism. Therefore, in this research, we seek to present a model of community-based tourism in mountainous villages so that the beneficiaries of this area can use it to implement community-based tourism programs.

### 3. Methodology

In this research, a qualitative method was employed with the Grounded theory approach of Strauss & Corbin (1990) in the form of a 6-component theoretical model (causal, contextual, intervening factors, central phenomenon, strategies, and consequences). Farastkhah (2016) believes that Grounded theory can be used in three conditions: insufficient theory, insufficient hypothesis, and the need for a connected and fundamental theory. The main idea of the theory is that instead of testing hypotheses, verbal reports of people about their experiences are used as data to provide a set of theoretical concepts that best describe the data (Abbasi & Hatami Varzaneh, 2018).

The statistical population that was selected to conduct the interview includes 20 people at three levels: a) entrepreneurs and activists in the field of tourism, cultural heritage, and handicrafts in the mountain villages of Nowshahr, Kojur district (Seventeen people), b) local officials who are related to the organizational structure and tourism issues They were familiar with the region (One person) c) University professors and faculty members (Two people) who had studies and practical and research records in the field of tourism and related issues. The sampling method for selecting participants in the interview was purposeful and theoretical; the inter-



views were semi-structured and in-depth (Seven women and Thirteen men), and each interview lasted an average of 30 to 90 minutes. No new data were added to the interviews that could expand the characteristics of the categories, and it was considered theoretical saturation, which reached saturation in the 20th interview. The interview questions started with a general question about the individual's experience and why and how the tourism business was formed, and during the interviews, exploratory questions were used to obtain more information and clarify the content. In the analysis of the interviews with the help of Maxqda2020 software, with the continuous and systematic data comparison, first, codes were assigned to the sentences in the open coding stage. In the axial coding stage, concepts with a level of meaning close to each other were formed as categories, and the relationship between these categories in Selective coding was studied. The process of going back and forth between the three stages of coding, continuous revision of codes, and shifting of categories led to the refinement and trimming of the final model during the formation of the phenomenon and the discovery of the theory in a methodical way. The validity and reliability of the research were carried out with the evaluation method of Lincoln and Goba (1994) based on the criteria of accreditation, transferability, trustworthiness, and verifiability: the participants expressed their opinions about the research report, the analysis process, and the obtained categories. According to their comments, the results were revised and modified (adjusted by the members). The use of rich and first-hand data collecting a wide range of views and interviewing people from different levels confirm the transferability of this research. Also, documenting all stages of research, recording interviews, details related to how to collect data, categories obtained from data and researcher's notes, exchange of opinions with peers in the research process, and coding confirm its reliability. The researcher tried to improve the verifiability index of the research by minimizing the interventions in the descriptions.

The study area of this research is the Kojur section of Nowshahr city, Mazandaran province. Kojur is one of the districts of Nowshahr city. The Mazandaran Sea bounds Kojur from the north, Chalus River from the west, Soldeh (Nur) from the east, and Nur Valley from the south. This rural and mountainous part has three villages named Panjak Rastaq, Zanus Rastaq, and Kojur part, centered on Kojur city, which has over 70 small and large villages in this area. Geographically, this area is between two mountains, Damavand and Alam Kouh. The religion of the majority of this region is Islam and Shia religion. The inhabitants of the region are the na-

tives of Kojur, who are called Kojuri. Due to the vastness of pastures, the Kojur region is relatively scattered, and most villages are far from each other. This area is one of the critical areas of Mazandaran province in handicrafts. There are various workrooms for wool, knitting of long and short socks made of wool, and wooden crafts of the region, such as making wooden spoons, spatulas, and other wooden items in this area. According to the census of 2015, the population of Kojur was equal to 3,120 people, and it was upgraded to a city in 2015.

#### 4. Findings

This research was carried out with the participation of 20 experts and activists in the field of tourism, cultural heritage handicrafts, relevant local officials, and university professors in the mountainous villages of Nowshahr, Kojur district. The demographic characteristics showed that six of them were in the field of handicrafts, eight persons were in the field of tourism, three persons had an active ecolodge, one person was a rural expert and two of them were academic faculty members, and seven of them were women, thirteen men and most of them (Twelve persons) were married (See Table 1).

According to the results of Table 2, through the analysis of the interviews, 749 primary open codes were obtained, which were converted into sixteen categories of the second level by combining the obtained open codes at the next level and finally by connecting these sixteen categories and connecting them to the five categories of the paradigm model along with the core category, the grounded theory model components of the research foundation were formed.

According to the concepts and categories obtained from the data analysis (Table 2), the elements of the paradigm model are as follows:

The core phenomenon: examining the stages of coding and relationships between extracted concepts with the approach of continuous back and forth between concepts and categories, the central exploratory phenomenon in the process of community-based tourism in mountain villages was determined as "passion for action." This urge to act can be seen from the causal factors to the consequences.

Causal factors are the factors that cause the central phenomenon to appear. In this research, causal factors emerged as two mental and behavioral categories. Mental factors exist in participants' minds for community-based tourism, which includes belief, flourishing talent,

entrepreneurial thinking, interest, creative visualization, and vision. Among these factors, the concept of interest is essential in motivating people to take action. Participant Ten said this: "I like to have old things, I look for them, wherever I go, I look for cultural works, decorations, I used to buy beautiful things like baskets and put them in the house." Participant number three said: "I was interested; I am very interested in Iranian music instruments." Another critical issue in this field is the importance of people's views on community-based tourism. Participant number nineteen said: "First of all and more important than anything is to be ready or prepare the thinking and behavior of local people towards tourists and their level of satisfaction." Participant number eight said: "My mental model made me move in this direc-

tion and spend three years of my life completely on this project." Also, the obtained behavioral factors include great perseverance, having a goal, self-reliance, working seriously, motivation to create employment, concern for preserving traditions, ability, lifestyle, and identifying opportunities. Two of the most important things among the respondents are self-reliance and the concern of preserving traditions, which leads them to take action for community-based tourism. Participant number four said, "I like to be self-sufficient and have everything myself." Participant number two said: "My other motivation was that I wanted my father's art not to be lost. Someone should stand up and be able to revive it. My uncle did not care, so I wanted to do it."

**Table 1.** Statistical population and characteristics of the interviewed people

	Work area	Gender	Marriage	Age
1	Crafts	Male	Married	45
2	Crafts	Male	Married	55
3	Crafts	Male	Married	56
4	Crafts	Male	Married	48
5	Crafts	Male	Married	31
6	Crafts	Male	Married	34
7	Ecolodge	Male	Married	47
8	Ecolodge	Male	Married	44
9	Ecolodge	Male	Married	57
10	Tourism	Female	Married	35
11	Rural expert	Male	Married	44
12	University faculty	Male	Single	35
13	University faculty	Male	Married	38
14	Tourism	Male	Single	38
15	Tourism	Male	Single	39
16	Tourism	Female	Single	36
17	Tourism	Female	Single	41
18	Tourism	Female	Single	38
19	Tourism	Female	Single	43
20	Tourism	Female	Single	37

Table 2. Concepts and categories derived from the data

Second level category	First level category	Identified open codes
Causal Condition	Mental	Belief, flourishing talent, entrepreneurial thinking, interest, creative visualization, vision and insight
	Behavioral	Persistence, having a goal, self-reliance, working seriously, motivation to create employment, concern for maintaining traditions, ability, lifestyle, identifying opportunities
Contextual Condition	Group	Teamwork, support of friends
	Family	Family background, family support, family encouragement, influence of family environment, learning in family, family character
	Individual	Concerns (concern for the present, future, marriage, environment, local development), giving importance to tourists, willingness to act legally, lack of government employment, education (need to have skills, lack of skills, superficial education, lack of education, importance of education), limitation of illness, different previous experiences (childhood experience, second job), role model (importance of role model)
Intervening condition	Infrastructure	Infrastructural problems, attention to infrastructure  Lack of support (lack of conformity of related departments, lack of support of officials and departments, lack of support of local officials), support (support of other organizations, support of stakeholders, support of monetary financial organizations, need for support of beneficiaries), government policies (notification of executive plans ), the necessity of supervision, the necessity of having support (providing a work platform, the necessity of full cooperation, facilitating the creation of a business, facilitating the legal sector, real support), the performance and protection of cultural heritage (negative view of the heritage administration), not expecting from the officials, the necessity of the program tiny
	Political and laws	
	Sociocultural	The situation (people's reaction (local people's unwillingness to work, lack of acceptance of the new generation), bad conditions of the society, dissatisfaction with the current situation, lack of suitability of the current situation), local society (desire of the local community, attention to local culture, acceptance of local culture by tourists), the time-consuming nature of changes, lack of support from universities, the influence of the media, lack of information about government support, lack of information from people and officials, the impact of the environment, the necessity of cultivation
	Economical	Economic prerequisite (investment, need for support, importance of financial support, gaining the trust of tourists, the need to generate income for the local community, paying attention to the potential, the existence of product demand, the importance of product demand, economic concern, the importance of the target market, business growth potential, The necessity of tangible results, people's acceptance of traditional products, having a particular customer) economic limitation (tourism as a second job, lack of suitable working space, sales problem) (production limitation, raw material procurement limitation, tourism seasonality, customer's lack of purchasing power, pricing limitation ), lack of initial money, lack of expert staff)
Strategies	developmental	Production development, cooperation with specialists, obtaining permission, cooperation with organizations, action for work, job change, cooperation with heritage office, work development
	Marketing and product	Sales marketing training, holding a festival, sales methods (product creativity, slow product release, relational marketing), the importance of attending an exhibition
	Financial	Obtaining facilities, self-investment, no financial request
	Education	Experiential education and learning, reading books, trial and error, action for education, internet education
Consequences	Sociocultural	Negative (cultural invasion, job dissatisfaction) Positive (Having an impact, supporting the local community, improving the quality of life, changing attitudes, cultural exchange, not migrating to the city, strengthening the sense of empathy, accepting tourists, strengthening the preservation of their heritage, discovering people's talents)
	Environmental	Adverse (environmental pollution, spatial destruction, waste production) Positive (not having a negative impact, paying attention to the environment)
	Economical	Negative (negative economic impact, negative publicity) Positive (the cheapness of the product, creating value, having customers, producing a cultural product, an original product, economic impact (positive economic impact, job creation), increasing income, developing the business chain, positive advertising, the presence of investors)

Contextual factors: It is said to be factors that are the central phenomenon and impact strategies. This research divided contextual factors into Group, Family, and Individual factors. There are public group agents that participate in people taking action in community-based tourism by adopting it, such as the support of friends and teamwork. Participant number thirteen said in this regard: "On the other hand, the support and sympathy of the people in the village is critical because, with the sympathy of the entire population and using all the power of the village, it is possible to start a work that has a very strong and solid foundation and, in a way, it causes much useful employment." Family factors of the second category are contextual factors that include family background, family support, family encouragement, the influence of family atmosphere, learning in the family, and family character, and they have been a basis for people to act in the field of community-based tourism. For example, participant number three, active in local indigenous music, said, "The fiddle instrument, which is a Mazandarani instrument, and our grandfather played the fiddle, was our inheritance." The third category is individual factors, including concerns, importance to tourists, willingness to act legally, lack of government employment, education, disease limitations, various previous experiences, and being a role model. In the meantime, one of the concepts that has been emphasized a lot is various previous experiences that provide the basis for action in community-based tourism. For example, Participant Number Eight said in this regard: "Before that, I had the second private theater in Iran. I had the first multi-purpose art building. In 1995, we won the best private theater in Iran; before that, I was a contractor."

Intervening factors: environmental and general factors that increase or decrease the effect of causal factors. Intervening factors for community-based tourism include four categories: infrastructure, political and laws, socio-cultural, and economic. Infrastructural factors affecting the action for community-based tourism include attention to infrastructure and infrastructural problems. Participant 7 said in this regard: "The third thing that exists is the infrastructure layer; you want to consider community-based tourism, but you see that even mobile phones do not have an antenna there, many other things that should be there, also there is no electricity and many infrastructures. You can see there is a problem in terms of roads." The second category is political factors and laws, which include support and lack of support, government policies, the need for supervision, the need to have support, the performance and support of cultural heritage, not having expectations from the authorities, and the need for planning. The most crucial factor em-

phasized here is the role of the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Administration. For example, Participant Seven stated in this regard: "The main trustee in the field is the Tourism Cultural Heritage Administration, that the discussion of community-based tourism is developed by them, on the condition that they set a village day for each of these villages, for example, if Today is the day of Kandolus village, the next week is the day of Zanoos, under various pretexts of the local native festivals that it organizes, it can facilitate this part." The third category is socio-cultural factors, which, according to Table 2 and based on repetition, the most important include the situation, the lack of appropriateness of the existing situation, the lack of information from the people and officials, and the impact of the environment. For example, Participant Three stated regarding the impact of the environment on the action for community-based tourism: "Our locals are all musicians; in our village, most of the people are present at every wedding, every house has an instrument, either a reed or a fiddle or Violin or drum, it has been like this in our village since long ago. The fourth category is economic factors, which include two categories: economic prerequisites and economic constraints. According to the categories obtained in Table 2, the most important economic prerequisites are the importance of financial support, the need for support, and the region's high growth potential. Participant Eleven said in this regard: "I now have a very high natural potential of my garden due to having a garden and a river, but when I do not have money to build a structure that I can earn money from and provide services when I do not have money to build two good traditional buildings that have good permission, there is no point in taking it, I am just wasting my life." Also, the most important economic restrictions are not having a suitable workspace and sales problems. For example, Participant Number One said, "My workshop is not big; it is small, and my production is limited to that space. I should have a bigger space to present to increase my production based on the space and attract people from there." Participant Number Five said about the sales problem: "My obstacles are that I do not have customers; you have to have customers; when there are no customers, you have no soul in your body. If you do not have customers, how will you work?"

Strategies: What behavioral strategies and tactics do the activists use due to causal factors? What practices and methods do they engage in? The strategies obtained from the participants include four development components: marketing, products, finance, and education. In the development field, strategies such as cooperation with specialists, changing jobs, and obtaining a license have been the most frequently mentioned categories for

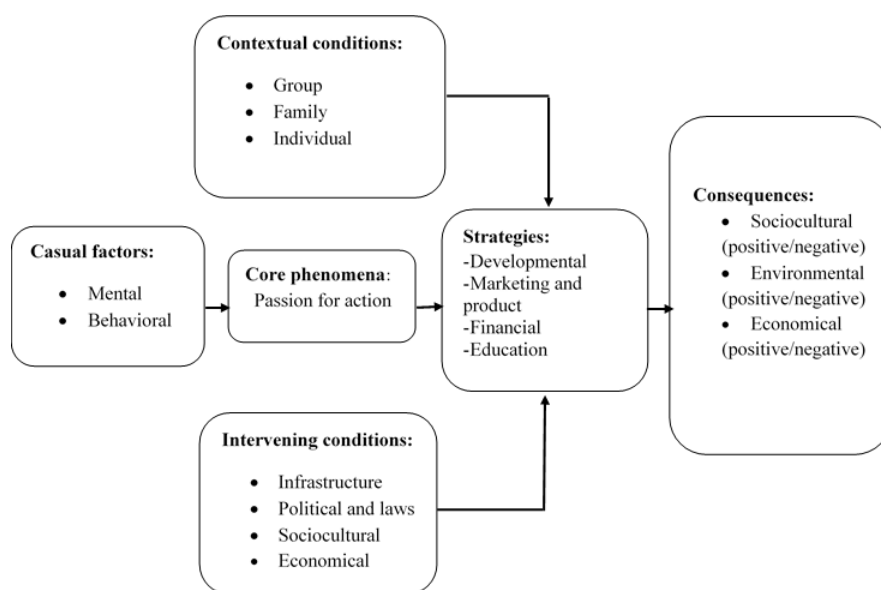


action in the direction of community-based tourism. For example, Participant Number Two said in this regard: “Little by little, I applied for a workshop permit, which I got through tourism administration, and now I am actively working.” The most frequent categories in marketing and product strategies have been sales methods, holding festivals, and attending exhibitions. Participant number two said: “When we went to the Tehran International Exhibition, we gave out promotional cards and attracted customers. They came from far away to attend the workshop while shopping and staying. Exhibitions have a great impact on our advertising.” In financial strategies, obtaining facilities has been the most critical category mentioned by the activists. The categories of trial and error and action for education have been the most frequently mentioned in educational strategies. For example, Participant Number One said, “I was able to get a letter from the university stating that they would give me a two-three-day training for work. I went to the Tehran Tourism Department, gave the letter, and they trained me for two or three days.”

**Consequences:** According to [Strauss and Corbin \(1990\)](#), the results of actions, reactions, and strategies lead to consequences for those who take action, which may be positive or negative. The community-based tourism strategies are divided into social-cultural, environmental, and economic consequences. Socio-cultural consequences include positive and negative consequences. In the field of negative consequences, the participants expressed cultural invasion. In the field of posi-

tive consequences, the support of the local community and improved quality of life were the most important categories. For example, Participant Number Nineteen said, “Men wearing shorts in the city has in some cases caused fights and violence among the local people, and this is not a good thing at all.” In the environmental field, the informants expressed the destruction of the place as an adverse effect and attention to the environment as its positive effect. In the economic field, the participants expressed negative advertising as a negative consequence, positive economic impact, value creation, and job creation as the most significant positive economic consequence. For example, Participant Number Two said, “I used to work individually. Now, I directly and indirectly cover several people.”

In this research’s last stage of analysis, selective coding was used. In this stage, the researcher gradually conceptualizes and categorizes, especially by forming categorical clusters and discovering the phenomenon; he gradually notices the details of a theory and, by completing the data cumulatively and transformative, the relationship of these details. It represents and cultivates a theory about the researched situation with the necessary creativity, which means reaching a paradigm model ([Farastkhah, 2016](#)). In this research, according to the obtained paradigm model, the primary and central phenomenon of “passion for action” was determined, and the research model was presented based on the systematic model of the foundation’s grounded theory as follows ([Figure 1](#)).



**Figure 1.** Paradigmatic model of results of open and axial coding of passion for community-based tourism action in mountain villages

## 5. Discussion

The purpose of the current research was to present a community-based tourism model in the rural areas of the mountain villages of Nowshahr. A model that can explain the formation process of community-based tourism relies on the experiences of those who have been active in the field of community-based tourism and setting up businesses in the study area. The results of twenty in-depth interviews with tourism activists in Kojur, Nowshahr region, led to the identification of 749 open codes and 16 core categories. The main phenomenon in the process of community-based tourism was “passion for action,” and other categories are in some way towards this main category. Based on the paradigm model of community-based tourism, mental and behavioral factors lead tourism actors to a series of strategies. Contextual factors have an effect on this relationship, but intervening factors can moderate the process, and this whole flow leads to consequences that can be positive or negative. Causal factors in the paradigm model of community-based tourism include mental and behavioral factors. At the mental level, the first step for local indigenous people to be able to enter the field of community-based tourism with their management and ownership is to change their vision and view towards their possessions and tourists, and by changing the view, change in Their beliefs should be fulfilled about their local indigenous heritage. When this change of view and belief is accompanied by interest and entrepreneurial thinking for this work, it can lead to their talents flourishing and people moving towards community-based tourism. At the behavioral level, the local community must consider different behavioral factors. Having a goal, perseverance, working seriously, and identifying opportunities are among the behavioral factors in this field. One of the most important factors mentioned by the participants was the concern of preserving traditions and paying attention to the background and authenticity. Therefore, if we want to develop community-based tourism in rural areas, we can act to strengthen this factor or make the local community aware of the importance of its background and authenticity. The casual categories obtained, including the change of views and beliefs and entrepreneurial thinking in this project, are in line with the community-based tourism research of [Dadvarkhani and Ghanian \(2017\)](#), [Karmian \(2019\)](#), [Jahanbin \(2021\)](#), [Mokhtari \(2012\)](#), [Lee and John \(2019\)](#) and [Kayat \(2014\)](#). Contextual factors in the paradigm model of community-based tourism include group, family, and individual factors. Family was one of the most important factors obtained as a basis for action in the direction of commu-

nity-based tourism. Character, background, learning, and family atmosphere have been the main incentives for the local indigenous community to act. Also, family support and encouragement are two factors that the participants mentioned a lot about their impact. Therefore, the family factor in community-based tourism in mountain villages can be considered an essential and stimulating category. Individual factors such as personal concerns (about present, future, marriage, environmental and village development), education, and various previous experiences are among the other fields that influence action toward community-based tourism. Considering the location and conditions of the mountain villages, most of those working in tourism in these villages are not limited to this field and have been working in other jobs as a second job in addition to tourism. Another important contextual factor is the issue of education, which, due to the characteristics of mountain villages, most of the tourism workers have started working either experimentally or without any training. Another important point they mentioned is the limitation of illness for the participants, and some of them are ill due to the difficult conditions. They are not able to continue their activities and development. The contextual categories obtained in this research, such as the importance and necessity of education and the role of the family, are in line with the research of [Ranjbar \(2021\)](#), [Mokhtari \(2012\)](#), [Yunikawati et al. \(2021\)](#), [Zargham Borojeni and Bazarafshan \(2015\)](#) and [Najarzadeh and Torabi \(2016\)](#). Intervening factors in the paradigm model of community-based tourism include infrastructural, political-legal, socio-cultural, and economic factors. Our findings show that there are many intervening factors in the field of community-based tourism in mountain villages that have greatly influenced people’s actions. In the field of infrastructure (water, gas, telephone and internet, road) in these villages, it will be difficult to complete the cycle of community-based tourism due to the weakness that exists. For example, the lack of city gas, the problems of supplying oil and diesel in the villages, and their harsh weather conditions make the local community go from the villages to the cities in the autumn and winter seasons and return in the warmer seasons. Therefore, the local community cannot enter the field of tourism for the whole year. However, if there are infrastructures, we can witness their permanent residence in the village and attract tourism investors. Past research, such as [Hossain and Uchinlayen \(2018\)](#) and [Ranjbar \(2021\)](#), also mentioned the category of infrastructure in community-based tourism, which is in line with the result of the present research. The most emphasis of the participants has been on the existence of political intervention factors and laws, which has been raised

as a big problem for their actions. In this area, one of the problems is the inconsistency of related departments in facilitating business. Legal obstacles, lack of support and appreciation of managers, weakness of managers, weak support, the reluctance of officials, and low knowledge of local officials in the field of tourism lead to the lack of support of officials, administrations, and local officials of villages for the development of community-based tourism. One of the most important custodians of this field is the Tourism and Handicraft Administration, which, although they are trying their best to develop tourism, sometimes their performance has created a negative view of them among the activists of this field. One of the most important intervening factors in mountain villages is financial and monetary support, which, due to the economic weakness of the native and local community, plays a vital role in setting up and taking action in the direction of community-based tourism. Financial support should be accompanied by supervision so resources are not used elsewhere. Providing a work platform, facilitating the creation of a business, facilitating the legal sector, and providing real support, not a show, are other important intervening factors in this field. Categories of legal obstacles, financial support, economic in the research of Mokhtari (2012), Lo and Janta (2020), Emami (2021), Charipouri (2017), Karmian (2019), Ranjbar (2021), Hessam and Baghiani (2017), Lee and Jan (2019) and Yunikawati et al. (2021) have also been mentioned, which is in line with the findings of this research. In the socio-cultural categories, one of the basic issues is whether the local community wants the development of tourism or not. People's reaction is important in this regard, and if this does not happen, the development of tourism with a community-based approach will not happen. The point that exists in this context is that if any development is to happen, it should be in line with the attention of the local native culture of the region because otherwise, it can leave negative effects. The lack of knowledge of the local people and even the officials about the potential of the region is one of the other intervening factors, such that the officials do not have accurate statistics and information about the activists of this area, and this issue causes the local culture and potential to be forgotten. Another influential factor is the impact of the environment. Living in the village atmosphere and being influenced by it encourages people to take action. Every village in this region has the potential that can be introduced as a creative village. In terms of the economic dimension, despite the great potential for the region's growth, if financial support is provided properly, it can lead to the growth of community-based tourism. One of the points in this field is that the local people need to

participate in community-based tourism to have concrete results. Suppose they concretely observe the positive financial effects and economic growth resulting from activities in community-based tourism. In that case, their resistance and participation in this field will decrease. Another economic problem that the local indigenous community is facing is severe problems in sales, which occur due to the seasonality of tourism in mountain villages, the lack of purchasing power of customers, the limitation of raw material procurement, and the limitation of product production. As a limitation of Tourism, development is community-oriented. In past researches such as Mokhtari (2012), Lo and Janta (2020), Witchayakawin et al. (2020), Dangi and Jamal (2016), Zargham Borojeni and Bazarafshan (2015), Jahanbin (2021) to the categories of local community participation, Sales and infrastructural issues are mentioned which are in line with the present research. Strategies in the paradigm model of community-based tourism include development factors, marketing and product, finance, and education. People under the influence of conditions, contexts, and causal factors engage in tactics, and these actions and reactions create the main phenomenon. One of the actions that people followed in response to the situation was to change jobs. For example, people left their previous jobs based on an unexpected event, illness, or low physical strength and turned to the field of tourism, which was easier for them. Secondly, this job change was based on my family background and interests, which has encouraged me to enter the field of tourism. People took actions to develop their actions, for example, cooperation with experts, obtaining permits, cooperation with organizations, and cooperation with the tourism department. In marketing and products, we see that one of the most important measures of people is attending exhibitions to present their abilities and introduce themselves, which is generally done by the official tourism department. Due to their poor financial status, it is often done without cost. Among the selling methods of people in this field are creativity in local native products, slow product supply, and relational marketing. Among the other actions of the participants in the financial field, it was either in the form of personal investment to start a business or by obtaining facilities, and some of them avoided taking loans for some reason. There is also much weakness in the field of education; most of the learning has been in the form of trial and error or experimentally. Using the internet, reading books, and taking action for education have been other strategies used by the participants. Cooperation with stakeholders and networking and training are among the categories that are mentioned in the research of Mokhtari (2012), Kayat (2014), Ran-

jbar (2021), Najarzadeh and Torabi (2016), and Zargham Borojeni and Bazarafshan (2015). It has been mentioned that it is in line with the present research. The results that appear as a result of strategies are the consequences of interactions that can take a positive or negative form. These positive consequences of community-oriented tourism development can lead to sustainable rural development in mountainous areas in three economic, socio-cultural, and environmental areas. The coding results for the consequences of community-based tourism in mountain villages included 32 concepts and three socio-cultural, environmental, and economic categories. Cultural invasion was identified as a negative socio-cultural effect, and cultural exchange, support of the local community, improvement of the quality of life, and lack of migration to the city were identified as positive socio-cultural effects, which resulted in sustainable rural development. Also, spatial destruction and attention to the environment were identified as this area's negative and positive environmental effects, respectively. On the other hand, as a negative economic effect, due to the lack of sufficient support for the activists, some of them have made negative advertisements for those interested in this field due to the fatigue and problems of this field. Creating value for customers, increasing income for local people, developing the business chain, the presence of investors, and the prosperity of local native businesses have been identified as positive economic effects of community-based tourism development. In addition to creating employment, community-based tourism is important in preserving local culture and identity. Considering that tourists travel to mountain rural areas to experience local culture and life, the local community can showcase their culture and arts and earn income from the sale of local products and arts. This helps to preserve local culture and identity and saves it from oblivion. The consequences of community-based tourism development have been considered in the research of Badri et al. (2008), Charipouri (2017), Shahmirzadi (2012), Lee and Jan (2019), and Yunikawati et al. (2021), which are in line with the results of the present research. In general, community-based tourism plays an important role in the sustainable development of mountain villages. By using local resources, cooperative development, and paying attention to local culture and environment, this type of tourism can help preserve culture, employment, and the environment in mountain villages.

Among the limitations this research faced was that it was impossible to conduct interviews with some experts for various reasons. The next issue was the difficult access to the mountain villages, which made the research process longer. The third limitation was that due to some

participants' low level of education and training, it was challenging to receive the desired information.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

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