

Original Research Article

Socio-Cultural Impacts of Backpacking in Rural Destinations with an Emphasize on Local Residents' Attitudes (Case Study: Darak Village)*

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Abstract Backpacking tourism is a type of adventure tourism that has increased significantly in recent years. Backpackers are tourists who travel with only one backpack and the lowest possible budget. Their target destinations are lesser-known areas and nature. Backpackers travel to discover new destinations and communicate with locals to better understand them. They play an effective role in identifying and introducing lesser-known tourist destinations. Although choosing a backpacking travel style by young people in Iran is increasing, less research still exists in this field and its effects on the tourism industry of Iran and the local community has not been investigated. This study aims to recognize the attitudes of rural residents towards the phenomenon of backpacking and identify its socio-cultural effects on rural host communities. For this purpose, Darak village located in Chabahar city of Sistan and Baluchistan province was selected as a case study. To collect the required data, the interview method was used. Gathered data were then analyzed by using the content analysis method. Findings indicate that backpacking, directly and indirectly, has significant positive and negative socio-cultural effects on Darak village. The results and findings are presented and discussed in more detail.

Keywords | Backpacker, Tourism, Locals' Attitudes, Socio-Cultural Effects.

Introduction | As one of the forms of travel that has been rarely studied, backpacking is a rapidly growing phenomenon. Also, due to the low cost and independence of this type of traveling, it is the first choice of youth when deciding to travel. Factors that traditionally distinguish backpacking from other types of tourism are the use of public transportation as a means of travel, the choice of hostels instead of hotels, and the interest in meeting and interacting with local and indigenous people in addition to seeing the scenery. In the simplest possible definition,

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backpackers are defined as tourists who travel with a backpack, a certain budget, and usually for a period of time, which is longer than a regular vacation. According to Muzaini (2006), Theo & Leong (2006), and du Cros (2014), the beginnings of backpacking have historically come mainly from wealthy economies such as Western Europe, North America, and Australia. Then, in the first decade of the 21st century, Asian backpackers were observed in Southeast Asia and other countries.

As one of the important types of tourism, rural tourism in today's world is considered as an important economic activity. Being one of the important types of tourism, rural tourism is considered to be a significant economic activity.

Today, the tourism industry provides appropriate opportunities for tourists to understand the importance

of preserving culture and how to protect local culture and natural landscapes better (Ghasemi, 2009). The main objective of this research is to understand Darak village residents' attitudes towards backpacking and to recognize its socio-cultural effects on the rural community of Darak. Backpackers are self-organized tourists who are interested in experiencing the local lifestyle and being local spectators. They often focus their recreational activities on nature, culture, or adventure. This pattern is consistent with the backpacker's desire to travel more and to following unusual routes than other tourists. They are known as people who have different experiences from other tourists (Moaz, 2007). As Sorensen (1999) has emphasized, backpacking is a structural-social identity rather than a well-defined category. Hampton (1998) has stated that backpacking is an important element in the youth tourism market, and given the growth in income and freedom of this type of travel, this market is likely to receive more attention in the future.

Darak village is located in Sistan and Baluchistan province, 170 km west of Chabahar, Konarak city. This amazing village, which is located on the shores of Makran, has four types of rocky, sandy, coral, and sandy beaches nearby, attracting more and more tourists to this village. One of the main reasons for the popularity of this region is that Darak village is the only coastal point in Iran and one of the few beaches in the world where the contrast between the desert and the sea can be seen. Since the village has been discovered and introduced by backpackers and a large number of tourists visit this rural tourism destination, this study aims to investigate the socio-cultural effects of backpacking in the village. This study specifically is seeking to answer the question of what have been the socio-cultural effects of backpacking on rural society?

Theoretical foundations

Nowadays, backpacking as a style of travel is significantly increasing. This type of travel has far-reaching implications for the economy, culture, and environment of the places where backpackers visit. Previous research has shown that these effects are closely related to the characteristics of backpackers. There are many definitions for describing a backpacker. However, Hampton (1998) refers to them as independent tourists. Backpackers are defined as young people who travel independently and with flexible planning. Their emphasis is on staying in an affordable place and meeting other travelers and locals. Backpackers usually travel further and wider than other types of tourists, and their motivation is to discover new places, people, and cultures (Murphy & Pearce, 1995). Backpackers "use local transport, carry all their belongings on their back, bargain for goods and services

while guarding against rip-offs, and get away from crowds and discover new places (Hampton, 1998, 641). According to the study of backpacking culture, two important features of this style of travel are flexibility and mobility.

On the other hand, regarding rural tourism, in a situation where the pressure of urban life prevails, tranquility is one of the main features of rural communities (Sharpley, 1997 cited in Bagheri, 2016). As Szabo (2005) has argued about rural tourism in Hungary, in a classical sense, rural tourism can be considered as a type of tourism activity that provides additional income for those who have a main occupation such as agriculture and industry. "Rural tourism is an efficient means for both the presentation and preservation of natural and cultural heritage objects, namely buildings, landscapes, traditions, and customs" (Daugstad, 2008; MacDonald & Jolliffie, 2003; Su, 2006 cited in Balezentis, Krisciukaitiene, Balezentis & Garland, 2012, 1). Rezvani (2008) suggests that the character of rural tourism is the establishment in rural areas. Due to the natural and cultural capacities in the villages, this establishment can play an important role in creating employment and income for the villagers, preserving natural, historical, and cultural heritage, and in general, revitalize the villages. "This type of tourism focuses on ecological, managerial, cultural, social and economic aspects" (Zeynalian, 2007, 3). "According to the important economic, social and cultural roles of rural tourism, the need for studying this field is obvious" (Moshabbaki & Malek Akhlagh, 2003, 68). Regarding the effects of tourism on the destination, "In most rural areas, due to the absence of agricultural economy and its vulnerability, it can be guaranteed that more attention will be given to other developmental activities such as tourism, which is a complementary economic option to improve the living conditions of villagers" (Mahdavi, Ghadiri Masoum & Ghahremani, 2008, 40).

Today, tourism in remote rural areas is of special importance and is considered a means for the welfare of local communities (Ghadiri, 2004 cited in Saghaei & Javanbakht Ghahfarkhi, 2012). Assuming that rural tourism is a small part of a bigger tourism market, its role in the development of rural areas is very significant. Therefore, it leaves potential multifaceted effects in rural areas where the whole rural lifestyle is considered a major attraction (Rezvani, 2008). Due to the growth of tourism in the world, the success of a tourist destination is not possible without having a unique market. "In rural areas worldwide, tourism growth represents a potential solution to the decline of traditional extractive industries and the accompanying lost economic opportunities and population decline" (Petrzelka, Krannich, Brehm & Trentelman, 2005, 1121). "By diversifying the rural

economy and empowering the local people, it is possible to create numerous job opportunities in rural settlements and attract wealth and population from the industrial centers to the villages” (Dibayi, 1992, 44). Rural tourism is a fundamental solution for revitalizing deprived rural areas through additional revenues in the diversification process. Tourism in rural areas does not necessarily bring the expected benefits to local people. Motivation to participate in tourism activities is a vital factor for the successful integration of local communities and tourism activities. Regarding the effects of backpacking, Gibbons & Selvarajah (1994) and Haigh (1995), in their research, showed that backpacking could facilitate the achievement of goals in local economic and non-economic development in several ways. The local community of an area includes the indigenous people of the area who are in fact, the informal hosts of the tourists. Official hosts include owners and institutions of accommodation that provide tourism services to tourists (Hashemi & Khosravi, 2016).

Ardakani (2003) believes that tourists communicate with local communities during their stay in tourism destinations. These interactions positively or negatively affect the quality of life, value system, division of labor, family relationships, attitudes, behavioral patterns, and customs. It is necessary to be aware of how the local community perceives and perceives the effects of tourism to prevent the occurrence of subsequent social problems or reduce these problems as much as possible.

Researchers and experts in various fields, emphasize the important role of the local community in the success of tourism activities. They believe that in less developed areas, including rural areas, tourism development should first have an answer to meet the economic needs of residents, because poverty and unemployment are the two main problems in these areas that and development of tourism activities should be able to be effective in reducing these problems (Ghanian, 2010 quoted by Irandoost, 2016).

Literature review

Regarding studies conducted in Iran, Afrakhteh (1999) in his study on the capabilities of Sistan and Baluchistan province, explains that using integrated programs in rural tourism is a new system for creating wealth in rural areas. Expressing the capabilities of the villages of Sistan and Baluchistan province and explaining the problems facing this emerging industry, he offers solutions and suggestions for improving and developing the infrastructure services needed in this province. Sharifzadeh & Moradnejad (2002), in their article entitled “Sustainable Development and Rural Tourism,” have studied the various aspects of rural tourism and its sustainable dimensions. They

emphasize the role of tourism in the sustainable economic and social development of rural areas. In this article, they also point to the role of rural tourism in human resource development, diversification of the agricultural sector, economic development, as well as the creation of new opportunities in a close relationship with other economic sectors. They state that by proper policy and favorable investment, these achievements are possible for rural tourism in a sustainable manner. Rezaei (2003) also found that not only tourism has not positive impacts on the economy and development of rural areas in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, but also has a devastating effect in places where the environment has affected. There was also a lack of proper planning, lack of facilities, and other obstacles and problems.

Maghsoudi and Lashkar Ara (2004) in their article entitled “Tourism and Rural Development” consider rural tourism a part of the huge tourism industry and argue that rural tourism can play a significant role in empowering local communities and developing human resources, as well as creating job opportunities. They also argue that the negative effects should not be ignored. In their opinion, the economic aspect of rural tourism usually benefits entrepreneurs and urban communities, and the rate of return on investment in rural communities is not considerable.

Mahdavi et al. (2008) aimed at recognizing the socio-economic and environmental effects of tourism in the villages of Dareh kan. They argue that from an economic perspective, tourism impacts have not only limited to the consequences such as low employment and income, but also high prices and land speculation. However, it has had more positive effects in the social context, such as increasing personal and public health literacy, increasing interaction with neighboring areas, and reducing migration. Regarding the environmental aspect, the entry of tourists has led to the destruction of plant and animal species, increased pollution, and environmental degradation. In this regard, Khani, Ghasemi Vasmeh Jani and Ghanbari Nasab (2009) also showed that not only tourism has been unable to create job opportunities and income, but also has increased rural migration and pollution. The environment has also been damaged by tourists. The research of Badri, Langerodi and Salmani (2009) was conducted to identify and analyze the effects of tourism in rural areas of central Nowshahr based on the principles of sustainable tourism. The findings showed that although tourism has positive impacts such as job creation- especially for young people - revenue generation and a multiplication effect in rural areas, it has also negative economic effects such as rising living costs as well as prices of products and land in the tourist season and the over-reliance of the rural economy on tourism.

On the other hand, Ghaffari and Turki Herchegani (2009) to identify the role of rural tourism in the socio-economic development of rural areas, conducted a study in rural regions of Saman district of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province and concluded that there is a significant relationship between the number of tourists, tourism prosperity and improvement of socio-economic indicators.

Bahrami (2010) in a study on capabilities and challenges of rural tourism development in Kurdistan province investigated the potentials and limitations of rural tourism development in this region. The findings indicate that rural tourism leads to the development of local rural communities, self-sufficiency, strengthening of the region's economy, the prosperity of handicrafts, increasing the quality of life, and solving employment problems. The research of Jomeh poor and Ahmadi (2011) also showed that the villagers are satisfied with the development of tourism in their villages. While stating that tourism has led to the spread of urban culture and Getting away from rural culture, they argued that this industry had caused the interaction and communication of villagers with tourists, participation in collective and public affairs, and environmental protection by villagers. From the economic dimension perspective, the seasonal employment and income from tourism and the weakening of the local economy are considered as disadvantages of tourism. Lack of tourism-related activities to strengthen handicrafts and arts in the village is another economic disadvantage of tourism, regarding rural development.

Asheri and Heidari Sani (2012), in a study, identified the socio-economic effects of tourism in the village of Khoshako Urmia. They have reached disappointing results in creating employment for the villagers. As they stated, although the current form of tourism and lack of proper planning, to some extent, have resulted in social empowerment, it has not been able to empower the village economically. On the other hand, Fatahidarni, Omrani and Nemati (2012) in their studies examined the attractions and capacities of tourism and anthropology in sustainable development (a case study of Kondoleh village in Kermanshah province). They found that with the arrival of tourists and visitors to each region, the development of various cultural factors also will be realized, which includes the creation of new facilities, construction of cultural infrastructure in the village, and respect for local customs and traditions. Ghadiri Masoum, Motiei Langeroodi and Mehrpouya (2013) explained the practical effects of tourism on Brun Bashm village located in Kelardasht district and found that the development of tourism is a contributory factor to the various positive and negative changes in the physical dimension of the studied village. Soleymani

Haroun, Khosravi Pour, Baradaran and Ghanian (2010), examined the attitudes of rural tourism residents towards the consequences of rural tourism. the results of stepwise multivariate regression calculations show that the two variables of "understanding environmental effects" and "understanding the economic effects of residents" have the most relationship with residents 'attitudes towards rural tourism development. Also, Ziari, Besharti and Shabani Kouchesfahani (2016) in their research entitled "Social and cultural consequences of tourism development," examined the Fooman-Masouleh route and aimed to identify the social and cultural impacts and consequences of tourism development. They found that the majority of indigenous people have a very friendly attitude towards tourists, and tend to attract more tourists to the region. They also consider tourism a contributory factor to the development, economic prosperity, and employment in the region. Momeni Rad (2015), in his research entitled "Study of factors affecting the increase of backpacking trips to Iran," concluded that backpacking could be the best way to attract travelers to third-world countries. She suggested that due to Iran's proper situation and political stability and security among the countries of the region and having multi-dimensional attractions, a cheap, easy and safe destination brand for the future of Iran's tourism industry can be introduced. On the other hand, regarding foreign studies, as Mathison and Wall (1982) state, tourism may have negative economic effects on the host society. Several examples of these effects are rising prices for goods and services, false increases in land prices, the rising cost of living, low return on investment, seasonal job opportunities, relocation of indigenous employment, and the disappearing of some traditional activities such as agriculture and fishing in rural areas. Weaver & Lawton (2001) achieved the same results. Pizam (1978) has achieved similar results in his studies (Niari, 2014). Weaver (1986), referred to "enhanced employment opportunities, increased income potential for local residents, diversification of the local economic base, additional tax revenues, heightened community visibility, and added cultural opportunities for residents" (Cited in Azadi, 2012). Liu and Var (1986) conducted a study on residents' attitudes toward the effects of tourism in Hawaii, which shows that locals strongly agree with the potential economic and cultural benefits of tourism but were skeptical that environmental issues could be attributed to tourism. They also found that protecting the environment was more important to residents than the economic benefits of tourism, but they are not willing to achieve this goal at the cost of reducing their quality of life.

The study of Allen, Long, Perdue and Keiselbach (1988) was conducted in 20 rural communities of Colorado

with different levels of tourism development. They considered seven dimensions of community life as public services, economics, environment, medical services, citizen involvement, formal education, and recreation services and found that citizen involvement, public services, and the environment are most sensitive to tourism development. Perdue, Long and Allen (1987, 427), in a study entitled “rural resident tourism perceptions and attitudes,” hypothesized that: “due to the opportunity costs associated with tourist use of local outdoor recreation areas, outdoor recreation participants would, when compared to nonparticipants, perceive more negative impacts from tourism and, consequently, have less favorable attitudes toward additional tourism development and more favorable attitudes concerning the appropriateness of special tourism taxes.”

They found no meaningful differences between outdoor recreation participants and nonparticipants in terms of tourism perceptions and attitudes. Woods (1992), Bourke (1995), Barr (1995), and Brass (1996) concluded in their research that rural tourism strategy should be in line with local goals and in accordance with the character, customs, and culture of that region, as well as adhering to local laws and regulations (Cited in Azadi, 2012).

Another study on the two Greek islands was conducted by Tsartas (1992), who investigated the negative effects of tourism such as rising land prices and the cost of living, the seasonality of tourism jobs, the acquisition of high-income jobs by non-locals, and the profitability of tourism development for landowners (Cited in Ziari et al., 2016). Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2007) in a study entitled “Residents’ perceptions of the socio-cultural impact of tourism in Mauritius” concluded that the majority of the host community had positive views and support for tourism development; however, they were concerned about the negative effects of tourism on the image of the region. Scheyvens (2002) in her study entitled “Backpacker tourism and third world development”, argues that due to the increasing importance of the backpacker market and its contribution to the communities especially in Third World countries, as well as its environmental and economic impacts, it is necessary to conduct further studies in the field of backpacking tourism. Visser and Barker (2003) in their study, entitled “Backpacker tourism in South Africa: its role in an uneven tourism space economy,” focused on the backpacker establishments recently expanded in South Africa, as well as its role in development. They found that generally, backpackers and backpackers’ hostels may play an important role in the development of the South African tourism system, as well as in the economic development of the region. Ruhanen (2010) in her research entitled “Working while traveling: Tourism

development opportunities for agricultural regions” examined the concept of the “working backpacker” and opportunities offered by the backpacking market for rural and regional areas. Her research found that although working backpackers visit the region only for doing work, they also create demand for local tourism products and activities. Byrd, Bosley and Dronberger (2009) in their study aimed to discover if there exist differences in perceptions of tourism’s impacts on a rural community between four stakeholder groups in eastern North Carolina. Results indicated differences in the perception of tourism impacts between stakeholder groups -including residents, entrepreneurs, government officials, and tourists, about the consequences of tourism development.

On the other hand, Sudana, Darma Putra, Sunarta and Acwin Dwijendra (2020) also examined the effects of backpacking on the tourist areas of Ubud in Indonesia. They found that backpackers who prefer to stay in low-cost accommodations are more environmentally friendly because they use less hot water, air conditioning, and baths than other types of tourists. Baltaci and Cervigen (2020) examined the perceptions of permanent residents about the effects of second homeowners on the economic and socio-cultural aspects of city life. The results showed that residents believe that although foreign owners increase economic costs, they can have more economic benefits. Regarding the socio-cultural aspect, they argued that the positive effects outweighed the negative ones.

By studying domestic and foreign research on tourism and its effects on local communities, it can be argued that less research in the country has studied backpacking and the behavior of backpackers. Therefore, considering that backpacking is increasing, and also due to the fact that backpackers choose farther and more original destinations for travel than other tourists, and to discover new places and connect with local people, it can be concluded that they influence the economy and culture of the host community. Therefore, it seems necessary to study their behavior and the attitude of the local community towards backpacking.

Research methodology

The present study, which is qualitative research, used the interview method and carried out a thematic analysis to interpret the text of the interviews and extract the results. The required data were collected through two methods of bibliographic and field study. For the bibliographic study, articles, books, dissertations, and scientific writings in Persian and English related to the research topic were reviewed and studied. For the field study, the interview method was used. In this study, semi-structured interviews were used. According to the questions and

objectives of the research, the interview questions were pre-determined, but there was flexibility in answers by interviewees. The statistical population of the present study consists of:

1. Backpackers who have traveled to Darak village located in Chabahar city of Sistan and Baluchistan province;
2. The host community of Darak village who have been in direct and indirect contact with the backpackers;
3. Experts who are active in the field of tourism.

The sampling method was a combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods due to the coronavirus pandemic during the research period. Thus, 6 experts, 17 backpackers, and 5 villagers were selected as the statistical samples of the research. The criterion for this number of samples was to achieve saturation, or in other words, duplication and convergence in the answers by continuing to interview new individuals. Tables 1, 2 & 3 show the demographic information of the interviewees.

Research findings

According to the objectives and questions of the research, as well as analysis and review of the answers, the main variables relevant to the socio-cultural effects of backpacking were identified and categorized. The effect of backpacking on the socio-cultural dimensions of Darak village was investigated. In this section, the opinions of the villagers, the backpacking society, as well as experts and activists in the field of tourism are interpreted.

• Residents

From the point of view of the effect of backpackers in creating crowds and noise in the village, 100% of the villagers argued that the presence of backpackers in the village did not cause crowds and noise. One resident explains: "They have no noise. They do not live in the village itself. They set up tents by the sea (R4)."

In terms of the impact of backpacking on the nature and environment of the village, 83% of the villagers explained that backpacking does not affect the nature and environment of the village. For example: "No effect. They always try to maintain cleanliness wherever they are (R5)."

The younger resident of the village, however, had a different opinion. He explained: "Some of them throw

garbage. There is no municipal worker here; we have to collect garbage by ourselves (R3)."

Villagers were asked about the health of the backpackers at their place of residence. 83% of the villagers believed that they consider hygienic principles in the village and their place of residence. For example: "Yes, they are concerned about the health of their environment. They respect. They collect their garbage. We did not see any damage from a backpacker (R1). Yes, they do. They even ask where the trash can be. They do not throw garbage (R2)."

Villagers were asked whether the presence of the backpacker had endangered the security of the village. 100% of the respondents believed that the security of the village had not been endangered in any way by backpackers: "No, Not at all (R2). Not at all (R5)."

From the perspective of the backpacker's relationship with the local community, 100% of the villagers said that the backpackers have a very good relationship with the local community. For example, one of the villagers argued: "40%. They communicate and talk much more than other tourists (R1)."

Another issue is the impact of backpacking on the youth of the village and the role models of backpackers. In this regard, 80% of the villagers stated that backpackers have both positive and negative effects on the youth and villagers. Positive effects include more motivation to speak Persian, more study, and motivation to travel. Negative effects include the demand for cigarettes by the backpackers from some of the village youth. For example, a villager who was 23 years old explained: "They didn't have a considerable impact. The effect I saw regarding myself and other young people was that we became travelers. We were more motivated to travel and speak Persian. We talk more with passengers. Motivation to study has increased. It has made donors pay more attention to this place. It resulted in painting the school of the village, as well as providing water coolers and other facilities for the school. Negative effects, yes. For example, they requested to buy tobacco here. In my opinion, smoking has increased in the village among youth. It is the effect of backpackers who request youth (R3)."

Or:

Table 1. Demographic profiles of village residents. Source: Authors.

Code	Age	Gender	Education	Job	Duration of stay in the village
R1	33	Male	High school	Fisherman	33
R2	27	Female	Undergraduate	Teacher	5
R3	22	Male	Associate Degree	Fisherman	22
R4	46	Male	High school	Fisherman	46
R5	35	Female	High school	Housekeeper	35

Table 2. Demographic profiles of Experts Source: Authors.

Code	Gender	Education	Job	Expert	Organization	Experience (Year)
E1	Male	Master	Food and Drug Inspector and local guide of Chabahar city	Tourism-Health	Chabahar Health Network	5
E2	Female	Master	Tour leader	Tourism	Private Company	7
E3	Male	Undergraduate	Tour leader- Photographer-Filmmaker	Tourism Director Photography	Private Company	8
E4	Male	Undergraduate	Law Expert- Tour leader	Tourism-Law	Private Company	13
E5	Male	Master	Dehyar (rural Municipalities) of Darak Village	Management	Iran's Municipalities and village administrators	6
E6	Female	Master	Tour Manager	Tourism	Private Company	14

Table 3. Demographic profiles of Backpackers Source: Authors.

Code	Gender	Number of visit	Experience (Year)	Activity field	Education	Age
B1	Female	2	2	Backpacker	Master	26
B2	Female	3	10	Backpacker and Tour leader	undergraduate	39
B3	Male	3	4	Backpacker	undergraduate	26
B4	Female	1	6	Backpacker	Master	33
B5	Male	3	6	Backpacker	undergraduate	24
B6	Male	1	3	Backpacker	Associate Degree	35
B7	Male	1	2	Backpacker	Master	27
B8	Female	5	7	Backpacker and Tour leader	Master	34
B9	Male	2	3	Backpacker	Master	27
B10	Female	1	2	Backpacker	Diploma	19
B11	Female	3	6	Backpacker	Diploma	41
B12	Male	1	12	Backpacker	Master	32
B13	Female	2	4	Backpacker	undergraduate	28
B14	Male	3	4	Backpacker and Tour leader	undergraduate	37
B15	Male	1	3	Backpacker	undergraduate	23
B16	Female	2	5	Backpacker	Master	35
B17	Female	2	4	Backpacker	undergraduate	36

“Both good and bad effects. Well, I think it seems that the motivation to study in the youth has increased. They like to travel and do it. The bad effect, like smoking, which I think (youth) have learned from backpackers (R3).” 80% of villagers said that backpackers respect their social norms and values. for example: “Yes, they do. The girls in the village wear hijab. So are the boys. They are comfortable outside the village and on the beaches, but they respect (social norms) inside the village. However, we had a case in which the village women complained about the hijab of the backpackers (R1).”

Regarding the impact of backpacking on social values (accent, fashion, etc.) and religious values (clothing,

etc.), 100% of residents believe that backpackers do not affect social and religious values. for example: “They had no effect because they respect values, they wear hijab as far they can. On the other hand, Baluchistan and Baluchi have their own clothing, and they keep this clothing in any situation. Not only backpackers, I think no one can easily influence their (village residents’) clothing or their accent and language (R4). They have no effect because this place has its own Baluchi language and local clothes and does not change so easily, especially when it comes to a backpacker who loves this dress and language very much (R5).”

Backpackers’ behaviors in the face of local customs and

the traditional culture of the villagers were evaluated. 100% of the villagers spoke of the backpackers' interest in culture and customs. For example, a villager explained: "They like to try Baluchi clothes. They wear a Baluchi scarf. The same goes for the ladies. They like local clothes. They are very interested in Baluchi music. They came to our wedding to see the customs. They are very interested in observing and participating in customs (R3)."

The effect of the presence of backpackers on the revival and preservation of traditional culture was also analyzed. 80% of the villagers believe that the presence of backpackers cannot "revive" the traditional culture. They attribute this to the authentic and strong Baluch culture that still exists as in the past: "No, this place has its own culture. It is many years that people are adhering to it. They (backpackers) cannot be effective (R1)."

60% of residents, however, believe that it may be possible to "preserve" traditional culture with the help of backpackers: "This culture does not disappear to be revived by backpackers or non-backpackers. However, it may make the villagers know that their culture and customs are beautiful to some. Some people like it, so they want to talk about it and be happy, and this will protect it (culture) (R5)."

Regarding the effect of backpacking on reducing rural migration to the city or reverse migration, 100% of the villagers spoke about the ineffective role of backpackers in migration. They pointed to variables such as the low unemployment rate in the village and the remoteness of the village from the center: "No, it had no effect. But it must be noted that immigration has been very low from the beginning. Everyone here is a fisherman, and no one is unemployed. It is very rare to migrate for work. Darak is also far from Chabahar and other villages. Reverse migration did not exist before it became a tourist destination, and it does not also exist now because the neighboring coastal villages are also engaged in fishing and are far from here (R4). No, I do not think so. Immigration has been very low. No one has migrated here before because there is no stranger here, like other villages (R2)."

• Backpackers

Regarding how to manage the waste generated during the backpacker's stay in the village, all of them explained that they collect their garbage and transfer it to one of the garbage bins inside or outside the village: "When we camped, we packed the garbage in one or two plastic bags, squeezed the bottles, and took them back to a large trash can on the beach next to the pavilion. In my residence, I tried never to leave garbage. I always warned the passengers (B14). We buried the skins of the fruits because we knew they would decompose. We also gathered the garbage around the camp and put it all in

the garbage bin that Dehyari (Village Administrators) had left on the beach (B16)."

One of the backpackers, however, made a significant comment: "We packed it in a bag and took it with us to the first trash we saw. However, unfortunately, the village was dirty, especially the part where tourists were present more. On the other hand, I saw a local minibus driver who was dumping garbage on the floor. I also must mention that some villagers or natives of Sistan and Baluchistan do not respect (environmental cleanliness) at all – as the natives themselves agreed. The dirty nature of Darak is not simply the fault of the tourist. Of course, this is not only the case for Darak. I have seen other places many times (R2)."

The next topic is the actions of backpackers to preserve the nature of the village. They came up with different solutions for this purpose. Measures such as collecting garbage around the campsite, ensuring that the fire is extinguished, lighting the fire in the area where the fire was previously set up, not polluting the seawater and breaking the branches, and so on: "As far as we collect our garbage, it is the first step to preserve the nature of the village. I care about the cleanliness of the sea, and I try to make the nature of the place where I camped like the moment I arrived or even better than before because we even had to collect other people's garbage (B3). For example, when brushing my teeth, I did not spill my saliva in the sea. When I need to go to the toilet, I try to be as far away from the water and the sea as possible and not in the way of people. I do not want the face of nature to be ruined. We also collected the garbage that I mentioned. The same goes for cigarette butts. I try not to damage the plants. The fire should not be near the tree. When it is turned off, I pour water or throw stones (B9). I do not contaminate seawater with chemicals such as toothpaste or Washing liquid. I look for dry wood to light a fire, and most importantly, I do not throw garbage (B17)."

The next topic discusses how the backpackers react if the norms of the villagers are against the behavior and tastes of the backpacker. 100% of backpackers stated that they respect the norms of the villagers. Some also pointed to the existence of cultural differences in different societies: "I try to adapt myself. If society is receptive to talking about differences, we will talk about exchanging information; otherwise, I won't do it. Maybe I can encourage others to look at things from another angle, but only if the conditions are right, not to break the norm. Every time I went there, I didn't want to deal with others (B9). I do nothing special. Well, just as my norms may be against their behavior and tastes, so their norms may be against my behavior. No one is going to do anything special. Cultures are different (B11)."

One backpacker also points to the negative impact of

norm-breaking in the village. He states: "I don't react. We must respect. We should not behave contrary to the norm in their place of residence. Breaking the norm has a bad social impact there. What effect? One (effect) is that they will perceive a bad image of tourism. Secondly, I think it may be difficult for them to feel deficient in their lives and to live in that environment. And this may cause them to leave their ancestral home and emigrate. We certainly should not make their culture decline or let the people there behave contrary to their own culture. I think this should not happen. You should not do anything to lose the originality (B16)."

Regarding the difference in the style of backpackers' clothing in the village and town where they live, it can be concluded that gender, climate, and backpacking conditions can be involved as variables. Both male and female backpackers stated that the difference in clothing style was noticeable but did not change significantly. There is no difference in male backpackers' clothing style: "I can say a lot. Of course, I mean I wore their own clothes. Baluchi clothes and they were very welcoming. But in the case of my own clothes, it has happened that my clothes are different from the clothes of the city where I live. I can say 50%. Of course, more in style, not quantity. I do not think there will ever be a difference for men in the amount. The difference in style is also because the priority in travel is comfort. Considering the big bag we carry behind us and the special shoes that we have to wear, I can say that those clothes are intended only for travel (B5). Very little it is different, very little. The only difference is the backpack, the hat, and the glasses that should be. Not too different in terms of coverage and style. I do not wear shorts either. I tell myself that they may not have a good view or a good feeling about it. Well, this goes back to the discussion of the host culture and the necessity for an acceptable appearance. In nature, the cover may be different. But not in the village (B15)."

Regarding the female backpackers, the difference in the amount of clothing is very small, and most of them pointed to differences in style: "For me, personally, it does not make much difference in the amount of clothing I wear. Like normal days. Even if the people in that area think my clothing is not acceptable, but I have my normal clothing. Of course, I have never heard anything like that from them. I am much more comfortable in nature and away from the village. However, there is a slight change in the style of clothing. My shoes may turn into mountain shoes or sandals. I may even wear tracking pants, but the change is not so great (B11). Since it is warmer, I wore looser and more comfortable clothes. In my own city, my clothes are more attractive. The style of clothing also changes because living conditions change during the journey (B16)."

The other backpacker expresses her opinion as follows: "Definitely, clothing is different during the trip. Well, in Darak and Baluchistan, people have their own beliefs, just like anywhere else in Iran. I do not like to show them something new when I get there. Clothing is different, but I try to have as much normal clothing as possible when entering the village. If I am going to wear a little more comfortable clothes that are not in line with their custom, it is definitely when I camped and moved away from the village and no one from the village is supposed to see me (B3). If I am going to wear a little more comfortable clothes that do not conform to their customs, I will only do this when I am in the camp and hiding from the villagers."

By the next question, the backpackers were asked whether they were interested in the villagers' traditional culture and local customs. They were then asked to state their reason. 94% of them stated that they are interested in knowing the culture and customs of the villagers. But 41% stated that they are only interested in learning about the culture and its history and not in the and local customs of the region: "I can say that I am interested in knowing them because knowing their culture is one of the ways to know society itself. Their customs show their history. I'm very interested to know where the roots of customs are. But I'm not really interested in their culture. No (B 1). Yeah. Very much. The discussion is the same as seeing and learning. I have always wanted to know about different cultures, and the same is true of Darak, Baluch, and Baluchistan (B6). Wherever I travel, I would like to know what their culture is; the purpose is discovering. I like some of their cultures and customs, but not all of them. For example, I did not accept the culture of marriage at a young age. But I liked the local clothes and the type of clothing and the variety of colors of the clothes and their hospitality, even though I think it is a deprived area (B12)."

One of the backpackers, who is not interested in knowing the culture of the villagers, stated the reason as follows: "I am not interested. I have a problem with their culture, especially the living conditions of the girls and their customs about their lives and their marriages. And this made me not eager to know and ask (K2)."

In terms of the amount of backpackers' communication with the local village community, 76% of them said they had a very good relationship with the rural community: "I can say a lot. They may have been small, but the communication was very good. We even exchanged Tel. numbers (B7). The communication was very good. I always tried to communicate, but fewer women can be found in the village. However, we had very good communication with the boys of the village, and we are still in contact (B13). To the extent that I know they

themselves are eager to communicate. Of course, I never saw any problem with communication from the villagers, and the communication I had was always good, and as much as I was eager to talk and communicate with them, I felt they are eager too (B14)."

The backpackers were asked about the quality of their relationship with the village youth. They were then asked to comment on the impact of backpackers on rural youth. 94% of them said they had a very good relationship with the village youth: "I can say we had a good relationship. They will definitely be affected. I think this relationship can be effective. regarding the negative dimension, it can be said that maybe those young people haven't the opportunities to travel and a better life like us. I always think that this regret can remain in their hearts. A life that may seem difficult to them. It can also have a positive effect. I think it makes them have a more open view of the world. Seeing and getting to know more, and perhaps seeing free people like us, can help them move and strive to achieve their dreams (B7). Very good. I met some young people. We talked. We sat around the fire. I asked about their customs and we are still in touch. As I talked to them, I realized that they were very motivated to travel and that they themselves said it was a tourist effect that motivates them to buy bags (to start traveling). Tourists influence the destination people, positive or negative, in Darak like anywhere (B10). Very warm and friendly. I got in touch well. They were sociable. They had a great desire to talk. There is an example that says, "neighbor's chicken is a goose." After all, I think they compare lives and think we have a better life in the city than they do, and they may even think that one day they may live like us -urban dwellers - to have more comfort. Yeah, I think I can influence them (B12). The person I got in touch with the most was a village youth. The connection was neither too deep nor too superficial. They live in a more closed society than we do. We just visit there and come back, but they are definitely more curious about us and I think they will be affected. Maybe not much, but they get it (B15)."

In the next part, the backpackers were asked to evaluate the importance of using products and accommodation that are compatible with the principles of sustainable development. 100% of them pointed out the importance of this phenomenon and described it as a necessity for sustainable tourism: "Definitely, it is Important. The nature of the village is less damaged. Villagers are more receptive to tourism. If the accommodation and products are based on and compatible with the principles of sustainable development, then tourism can certainly be more sustainable (B1). There must be products that are really environmentally friendly. It must be strongly managed and planned. Of course, designing and producing such products and planning should be much

broader and more detailed than the stage of selling and consuming them. It must be trustworthy for tourists and hosts, and it must be able to make them sure that the product they use is compatible with nature. On the other hand, it can be very effective in terms of accommodation. Perhaps it can bring a better attitude for the villagers towards tourism. It will attract more tourists if it is appropriate to the context and the climate of the village (B6). When local products are compatible with nature, this makes it more useful for the village. So, the attitudes of the villagers towards tourism will be better, so they provide better services and as a result, more tourists are attracted and tourism will be sustainable. As for the products, I can say that when I use products that are compatible with nature and the environment, it can affect the village itself and be useful to it. And this cycle of usefulness for the village and sustainable tourism is repeated. The tourist himself will be more satisfied with his trip (B12)."

• Experts

In terms of the impact of backpackers on the level of literacy and knowledge of villagers towards tourism, 83% of experts were of the opinion that backpackers played an effective role in raising the level of knowledge of villagers about tourism: "It has had a great impact. Until this phenomenon (entry of backpackers), even many people might not have been able to say hello in Persian. Their Persian language has been strengthened, the level of awareness of the villagers about tourism has increased much, and of course, they are eager to know about it. Children's level of literacy is more important. Previously, they only wanted boys to work from a certain age onwards (E 1). It can be said to have a significant impact. Darak village is far from the central region. The presence and companionship with the villagers due to the backpackers' interest in ecotourism and conversations have caused the experiences and conversations to be transferred between the two sides. The backpackers talk about their experiences and show a good angle of view to the people of the area. So they make better decisions for the growth of their region. Their attitudes towards tourism can be good, and they are learning more about it (E 3)."

however, 33% of experts did not believe in the role of backpacking in increasing literacy: "It did not have much effect. Academically nothing. The general public knows that a level of knowledge and literacy is enough to provide a good service (E 4). Not at the literacy level. Maybe less. 30%, but they are more in touch with strangers than in the past. Their knowledge about tourism is also higher (E 5)."

In terms of the impact of backpacking on rural youth, experts believe in the positive and negative effects of this phenomenon on rural youth. For example, a local tourist guide in Chabahar states:

"In general, too much. Backpackers talk to locals and

young people more than other tourists. If the information is positive, it will definitely have a positive effect. If the talk is conscious, but the information is negative, the effect will be negative. For example, doctrinal debates can have devastating effects. One metaphorical effect, if I may point out, is that the smoking of a small number of young people in the village is a result of tourism. But all in all, the impact has been positive. The view of villagers and youth on social issues has become more open (E 1).” Other experts explained: “The backpacking is very attractive to them. It can and may have an effect on girls’ independence, which, of course, I think is a double-edged sword, provided it gives them a new perspective on life, in the case that they see differences, think, choose and learn, not just imitation (E 2). They have created motivation to study, motivation to travel, and even backpacking. They were not ineffective. Negative impacts have been low, but in the long run, we may see more negative impacts. Of course, the problem is not only with the backpacker. We have to train the youth. We have no moral charter for ourselves. We are also to blame if something happens (E5).”

In the next question, the experts were asked to evaluate the backpacker’s attitude towards local customs. 100% of them answered that the backpacker’s attitude is good, acceptable, and respectful. For example: “Very good. They (backpackers) are even attracted to going to the mosque and seeing the congregational prayers. They like to see and know what history is behind each culture or etiquette. They are very nice. They never make negative “whys” about the cultural and social issues of the Baloch and do not make negative statements. They know that the customs and beliefs of these people are ancient and part of their culture (E 1). Backpackers usually respect the culture and are attracted to different customs. As a spectator, the backpacker likes to be everywhere. They are curious to know and treats well (E 4).”

One of the experts also explained: “The good thing about backpacking was that it finally took shape a decade ago. In the last few years, there has been a good growing trend due to social networks, but the sad thing is that young people just start learning without studying or reading about this style of travel and without knowing the philosophy of backpacking. Backpacking like a tour does not need a license and many can choose this style of travel without awareness. This generation of backpackers definitely has a negative impact on the destination. They do not know that they should be respected, the type of clothing, the behavior. None of these may be unfamiliar to the new generation of backpackers. It is not possible to say for sure whether it was good or bad, but it is both an experienced and inexperienced backpacker. The worrying part is that they may deal with such issues

emotionally. It has increased a lot, and of course, the growth of illiterate backpackers who are unfamiliar with the principles of tourism is increasing day by day. Anyway, we have both groups. Both those who respect and those who do not treat well (E 3).”

The next topic is the role of backpackers in helping to revive and preserve traditional culture. 83% of experts believe that the culture can be preserved with the help of backpackers: “It can be helpful, yes, very much. A backpacker can enter the indigenous community. Enter the family and enter the culture. He Asks about culture. He can talk to the natives. The natives also like to talk about these issues and explain. It can even change a culture, which can be positive. For example, backpackers ask about everything without a positive or negative guard. By talking and asking questions about marrying girls at an early age, they may be able to change this false culture (E 1). Yes. Backpackers, as I said, are very curious. They ask and find out about the traditions and culture of the region. This can be effective. It can be helpful (for culture) to be safe (E 5).”

One expert, however, offered a different opinion: “No, they have no effect. I do not think it is effective, because the culture of the Baluchi is very strong and old and they adhere to it a lot. It does not deteriorate so easily (E 6).”

In the next question, the experts were asked how much the backpackers care about the values and norms of the villagers. 100% of them stated that backpackers fully care about norms and values and provided thoughtful answers: “The real backpacker respects too much. Backpacking is a traveling style that has its own rules. I think the next generation of backpackers will pay much less attention to this issue. But the old backpackers care about the values of the villagers (E 2). In general, backpackers know the manners of the host and the guest. They know that even if the host’s opinions are against theirs, they should not react. They never leave a negative effect (E 4). They care. It is important for them not to be upset or to behave contrary to values. Their clothing is also good in the village; it is acceptable. Backpackers adhere to their clothing. They are comfortable in nature and the camp, but they observe it in the village. But these cases are less important for other tourists (E 5).”

In the next question, experts were asked about changing the traditional culture of the village under the influence of backpacking. 67% of them answered that backpacking could not cause such a thing. For example, one resident expert of Darak explains: “Not. In my opinion, culture is not changing under the influence of backpackers because it is a genuine and ancient culture. When a culture is very original, and its people are very committed to it, less can be penetrated or be changed. No, this didn’t happen (E 5).”

Or:

“Not. Of course, because of this (backpacking) and the prevalence of tourism, the minds of the villagers have become more open. But the culture has not changed. The main culture and the main tradition still remain (E 1).”

33% of them, however, spoke about the indirect impact of backpacking: “Yes. Again, indirectly a lot. When backpackers introduce a destination, other tourists flock to the area, and there may be an invasion and cultural change. But I do not think they will directly influence this issue. Because most of them travel with knowledge (E 2). Not direct. Influenced by other tourists, we may see the emergence of new and wrong cultures. Like begging of children (E 4).”

Summary of findings

According to the results of the interviews, backpacking has both direct and indirect positive and negative socio-cultural effects on the village of Darak. On the other hand, using the content analysis method, the categories were extracted, and the relevant thematic map was drawn. The extracted codes were merged into categories, and then the data related to each category was collected; In other words, the categories were identified. Then, the thematic map of the analysis was drawn, and in the next step, each category was defined by referring to its subcategories, and its relationship with other data and categories was expressed. In this stage, the categories are default, and in the later stages, correction or integration has been done. Fig. 1 shows an example of these codes for “positive aspects in the socio-cultural dimension.”

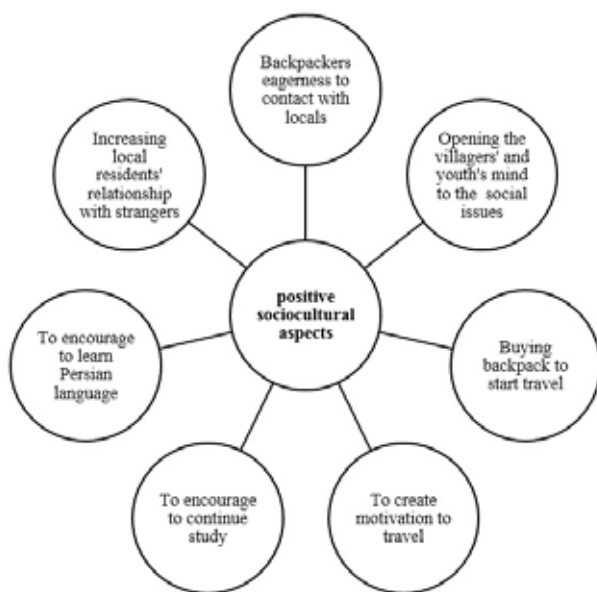


Fig. 1. An example of codes for Positive aspects of backpacking in the socio-cultural dimension. Source: Authors.

Review categories

At this stage, the relationship between the categories and the extracted codes was examined and reviewed where necessary. For this purpose, two positions were considered: first, reviewing the extracted codes to check and ensure their consistency to form a specific pattern, and second, reviewing the categories to add or remove codes or categories if necessary. Fig. 2 shows an example of categories for “positive aspects in the economic dimension of backpacking.” Fig. 3 shows the map of thematic analysis.

Transferability and credibility of research

Unlike quantitative methods, in qualitative research, validity and reliability are not based on specific principles. It goes back to the foundation and internal logic of qualitative research and its interpretive aspect. Even some qualitative researchers consider the validity and reliability of qualitative research to be useless due to different perceptions of behaviors and speeches by observers. However, on the contrary, due to the distinct nature of qualitative research, some other researchers have invented new concepts such as credibility and transferability instead of validity and reliability (Abbaszadeh, 2012). Validation refers to ensuring the accuracy of data and its interpretation. For this purpose, choosing the field of research, selecting interviewees, as well as the data analysis approach must be done carefully. In the present study, the participants in the interview were managers, activists, and experts in the relevant field who have the necessary and sufficient knowledge and experience in the field. Adequate time and accuracy

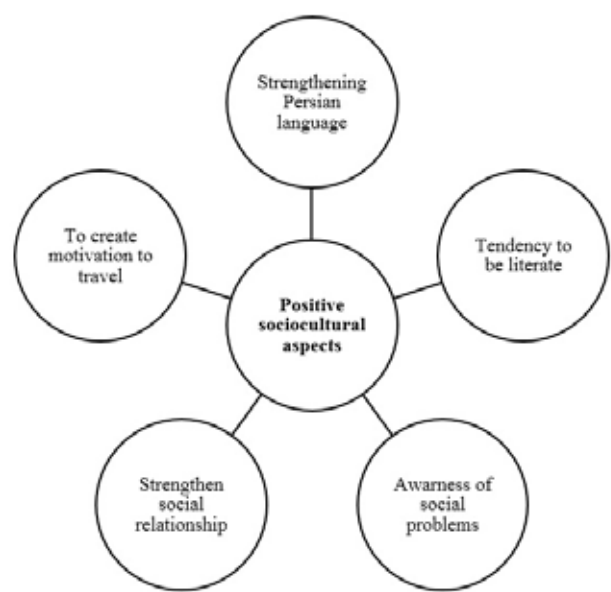


Fig. 2. An example of a combination of codes for positive socio-cultural aspects of backpacking. Source: Authors.

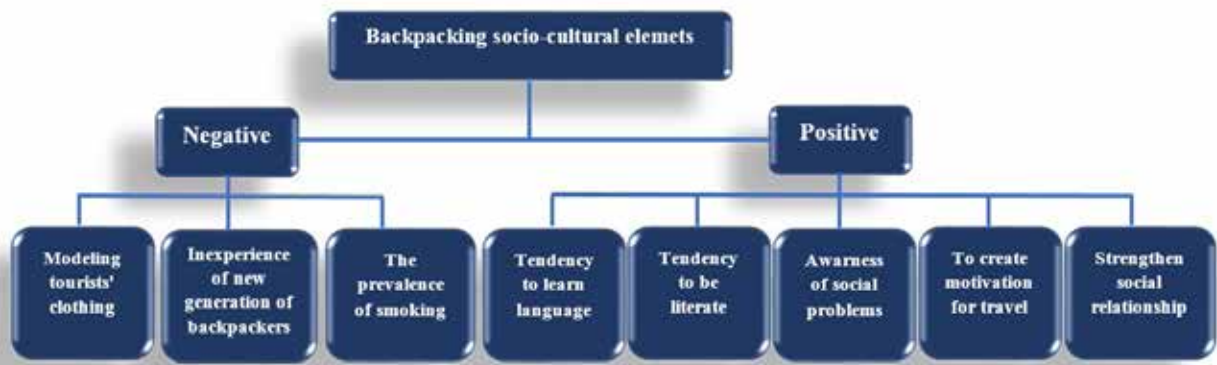


Fig. 3. Map of Thematic Analysis. Source: Authors.

in conducting the interview process, as well as the use of peer review strategy are among the items that have been effective in increasing the validity of this research. All interviews were conducted by one interviewer. Due to the semi-structured nature of the questionnaire, this will not be ineffective in increasing the validity of the research. On the other hand, according to what Lincoln and Guba (1985) have stated since the steps and details of the present research process are described in detail, its transferability is possible.

Discussion and conclusion

Backpacking has historically referred to low-cost, independent, and international travel. One of the factors that traditionally distinguishes backpacking from other types of tourism is the flexibility of this style of travel, its low cost, long travel time compared to traditional holidays, and interest in meeting and interacting with local people along with seeing the scenery. In this study, the positive and negative socio-cultural effects of backpacking in Darak village were investigated. The findings of this study indicate that backpackers have several direct and indirect socio-cultural effects on the village of Darak. The findings indicate that the backpackers not only increased the level of knowledge of the villagers about tourism but also they have provided the means to preserve the traditional culture of the village. It is because of their presence among the villagers and their interest in talking to them about the customs of the villagers and even participating in their ceremonies. According to the respondents, although the backpackers stay in nature and the camp with their intended clothes, they respect the social and cultural norms of residents when they are in the village. Respondents also stated that backpacking has no effect on reducing rural migration

to the city and reverse migration. They attributed this to the distance of the village from the city, the great distance of the villages from each other, and the availability of fishing jobs for all the men of the village. They also believe that the security of the village has not been compromised by backpacking. Another issue to consider is how the backpackers deal with the norms and social values of the village and the villagers. The findings show that the backpackers fully respect the norms and social values of the villagers and also do not react to norms that are contrary to their own beliefs. According to experts, backpackers travel with prior knowledge and are fully acquainted with the etiquette of guests and hosts. Regarding the relationship between backpackers and rural youth, it can be seen that backpackers have a very good relationship with rural youth, and under the influence of backpackers, the level of social relations between villagers and youth has increased and They have been more motivated to study and travel. According to the statements of the villagers, it can be said that the biggest help of the backpackers to the village is traveling to this area and showing the security of this region to the potential tourists, who have faded the wrong image formed in their minds. It can also result in increasing family traveling to the region. The results of the present study are in line with the results of previous studies such as Pierce, Murphy and Brymer (2009) (The benefits of backpacking over other types of tourists), Veisser and Barker (2003) (backpacking potentials for tourism development), and Westerhausen and Macbeth (2010) (The power of backpackers in helping to sustain and control the environment of local communities).

Recommendations

Several recommendations based on the research findings

and interviews are presented towards maximizing positive impacts, as well as minimizing the negative influences of backpacking.

- Because backpacking requires high interaction with the host community in traditional contexts with a high degree of cultural sensitivity, it is suggested that the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts hold training and familiarization programs to train the new generation of backpackers to become more familiar with the values and customs of backpacking.

-Implementation of educational programs by Village Administrator of Darak village regarding the empowerment of village women to develop handicrafts and home products that can be offered to tourists. Also empowering village women as handicraft instructors

so that they can teach their traditional arts such as needlework, knitting, and preparing local food and products to interested tourists.

Limitations and recommendations for future studies

The present study is based on interviews with village residents, backpackers, and experts active in the field of tourism. Villagers were interviewed at a lower rate due to their low willingness and lack of cooperation in participating in the interview. However, the interview was conducted face to face. On the other hand, the outbreak of the Coronavirus exacerbated the above factors. Therefore, future researchers can do more detailed research in the future by removing this limitation.

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