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### Investigating the Role of Social Intelligence and Social Capital in Tourist Attraction (Case Study: Sareyn County, Iran)

Hossein Rahimi Kolour<sup>1</sup> and Reza Kazemzadeh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author, Assistant Professor of Management and Economy Department, Faculty Literature and Human Science, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran. Email: [brk6809@gmail.com](mailto:brk6809@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>BS Student of Psychology, General Psychology Department, Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran

#### ABSTRACT

Tourism is a complex and multifaceted subject as one of phenomena in the contemporary world; and its investigation needs crossing the boundaries of common academic disciplines and adoption of an integrated approach. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the relationship between tourists' lifestyle and self-efficacy in Sareyn County. The research method was descriptive and correlational. Statistical population of research consisted of all tourists who visited Sareyn in summer of 2015. A total of 200 subjects were selected by purposive sampling method; and the social intelligence questionnaire (Aung Tun Thet, 2008) and social capital questionnaire were used for data collection. Data analysis was done using Pearson correlation and regression analysis. Results of the present study indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between social intelligence and social capital ( $P = 0.01$ ). Results of multivariate regression analysis indicated that the cognitive, structural and relational components in social capital significantly predict social intelligence. R-Squared value equal to 0.21 indicated that 0.21 percent of the total variance of social intelligence could be explained by social capital components. F statistic also indicated the significance of this percentage of variance ( $F = 4.23$ ; sig: 0.01). In other words, the relationship of social intelligence of a linear composition based on the least squares of predictive variables may not be accidental. Results of regression coefficients also indicated that among the predictive variables, the resulted T of a constant score ( $t = 9.58$ ) was significant at the level of 0.05 and it predicted the social intelligence. Descriptive results also indicated that the majority of tourists had moderate social intelligence and social capital.

**Keywords:** Social intelligence; Social capital; Tourism, Sareyn County.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the tourism resources and attractions have become important in all sectors of tourism planning and management; however, the use of tourism benefits is not only possible by providing a suitable basis for tourism development. Therefore, it seems essential to plan for their development at the next stages and identify attractions at the first stage (Mohammadi-Yeganeh, Cheraghi, Valaei, 2013). Tourism has become now as one of the largest and most profitable industries in the world economy (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2013: 2) with a dynamic economic approach and unique features (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2013: 2), and it is also considered as a basis for creating social and economic changes in most developing countries (World Trade Organization (WTO), 2009: 14). In addition, the profit of tourism industry is not limited to economic benefits, but this benefit can be evaluated from different aspects such as introducing the national culture to other countries. Characteristics of tourism structure of each place are in turn influenced by the importance, validity, nature, diversity of role and religious, cultural, recreational, and commercial functions, and in general, its spatial attractions, and on the other hand, they are derived and influenced by local residents and tourists' social, cultural (beliefs) and economic characteristics (Ebrahimzadeh, 2011: 116). From the social point of view, the tourist acceptance in a region can affect the human actability, how people interact and their livability. Nowadays, the tourism expansion in tourist areas has positive and negative effects and can lead to the cultural and social, economic and physical development in the rural environment through influence on all aspects of life in that area (Azkia and Imani, 2008: 330). Due to the prospects, natural attractions and different capabilities in tourist attraction, tourist areas show different types of tourism which are based on the classification criteria and have some different features (Rezvani et. al., 2011: 64).

Social intelligence is among the preparations of tourist attraction as Rajesh introduced the social capital as the infrastructure of attraction. Social capital is a concept which suggests social communications and need high social intelligence (Goleman, 2010). The social intelligence concept was introduced by Thorndike in 1920. This term refers to the ability to understand other people, and act and behave smartly and cleverly in relationships with others and apply it in adaptive social interactions (Kihlstrom & Cantor, 2000). Rethinking of social intelligence should be undoubtedly along with rethinking about the social brain and also consider the very high importance of human relationships which are often neglected (Goleman, 2010, 565-567). According to Goleman's findings, people with high emotional intelligence know how to control their own and others' emotions and feelings (Goleman, 1998). Goleman introduced a model for social intelligence. He adapted the social intelligence to emotional intelligence; adapted social awareness to self-awareness; and social skills to self-management. According to his research, the basic tasks of social brain, the coordination of interactions, types of empathy, social cognition, mutual cooperation skills, and compassion specify the path and lines of social intelligence (Goleman, 2010, p. 566). People transform the social relationships into the psychological functions through interactions. This transformation of social relationships into mental functions leads to the cognitive development (Fayyazi and Ahmadi, 2007). Knowledge acquisition ability also includes learning, internalization, conversion and application of new knowledge (Naeiji and Abbasalizadeh, 2010). Dimensions of intelligence are related to each other like the loops which generally show the human intelligence structure. However, people often make the use of one of dimensions depending on the situation; and a dimension may be suitable for the next dimension and reinforce it. But this collaboration between dimensions is affected by numerous environmental and heritage conditions. Cultural and social context, which shapes the human interactions, is one of environmental

factors that can contribute to the development of non-cognitive intelligence. This change from the first to excellent functions is possible through impact of culture in the field of social historical context (Ahmadi and Sheikholeslami, 2011).

Changes in the social capital of these societies are among the effects of tourism on the host society (Mohammadi-Yeganeh, Cheraghi, Valaei, 2013). Social capital is a meta-disciplinary concept which has recently been considered by most branches of human sciences (Field, 2005: 11). The social capital concept was first used by Jane Jacobs in 1961 as the complex “social networks” (Sadeghi and Ghanbari, 2009: 8; Motevaseli, 2005: 29). The social capital concept has different definitions. According to a view, the social capital is a part of structure of social relations including the social norms and networks and it specifies the social action and enables people to do the collective action. According to other definitions, social capital plays role as available resources to individuals or social groups through connection to social networks and it is obtained from the combination of three factors namely the trust, norms and networks and helps to specify (Kawachi, 2008: 15) the collective action. Socialist theorists have long paid attention to the quantity and quality of social relations. The thinkers’ contemporary contemplation and concerns about social capital is a redefined concept and reflects most social thinkers’ thoughts in the nineteenth century as they redefined this concept within the framework of social capital theory in a new style (Azkia, 2010: 241). Nowadays, the social capital is considered as both input and output during the development of a country along with a variety of capital (including the natural, human and material) (Azkia and Ghaffari, 2010: 385). Meanwhile, social capital is considered as an important aspect of practical development of local communities and sustainable development. In rural societies, the social capital is the social infrastructure thinking in entrepreneurship, facilitator for identification of trusted models of interaction and a collective approach to issues, and increases the local ability to respond to challenges within a framework with rapid changes (Eftekhari, 2010: 214). In fact, social capital now plays a much more important role than the physical and human capital in organizations and societies; and networks of collective and group relationships create the coherence between humans, organizations and humans, and organizations and organizations. In the absence of social capital, other types of capital lose their effectiveness; and thus it becomes difficult to cross the path of cultural and economic development without social capital (Khamar et. al., 2011: 96). In this regard, Weibing’ research indicate that social capital affects the tourism business. From Weibing’ point of view, each component of social capital has different effects. Among the various components of social capital, structural and relational social capital has a positive relationship with individual abilities in tourism entrepreneurship. (Weibing, 2011)

Nowadays, the humans inherently overcome their needs and live in interaction with others. Effects of these interactions and their roles are in such an extent that their removal makes the life impossible. Considering the fact that a few studies were conducted on the roles of social intelligence and social capital in the tourism development, the present study aimed to investigate the role of these two variables in the tourist attraction.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research method was descriptive-correlational. Statistical population of study consisted of all tourists who visited Sareyn County in the summer of 2015. 200 of them were selected through purposive sampling. Data collection was done according by the following tools:

1. *Social intelligence questionnaire (Aung Tun Thet, 2008)*: This questionnaire contains 45 dual-choice items (yes, no) which are scored with zero and 1; and each subject's score is from 0 and 45. The higher score means the higher social intelligence. Aung Tun Thet (2008) reported that the reliability and validity of this test were desirable and acceptable.
2. *Social capital questionnaire*: It is designed based on Nahapit and Goshal's model (1998) and consisted of three dimensions (cognitive, relational, and structural). It should be noted that the seven-point Likert scale (1: very low to 7: very high) is the measurement scale. Given that this questionnaire has been used in several studies, the validity of this questionnaire was confirmed. On the other hand, Cronbach's Alpha method and SPSS15.0 were used to determine the reliability of data collection tool. Therefore, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of social capital questionnaire was equal to 0.83 which indicated the reliability of this questionnaire.

### 3. FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics of the sample group in studied variables are presented in the following table.

**Table 1**  
**Demographic characteristics namely the age, gender, education and occupation, marital status and current residence in research samples**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Female	102	51
	Male	98	49
Marital status	Single	80	40
	Married	120	60
Educational level	Under high school diploma	19	9.5
	High school diploma	32	16
	Associate degree	46	23
	Bachelor	70	35
Job	Master and above	33	16
	Governmental	74	23.5
	Self-employment	47	21
	Student	42	18.5
	Others	37	25.5
Current residence	Tehran	25	26
	County	126	63
	Village	22	11
Age	Under 25	34	17
	24-45	100	50
	45-65	56	28
	Over 65	10	5

*Source:* Calculations of the present research.

Results of Table 1 show that the highest percentage of samples had the age ranges of 24 and 45 years. The majority of samples belonged to females (51%) and married (60%); 35% of samples were master students; and 63% of samples resided in counties.

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive characteristics of social intelligence and social capital according to the number of research samples**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Social intelligence</i>	<i>Number (N)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Tourists	Low social intelligence	8	4
	Moderate social intelligence	112	56
	High social intelligence	80	40
	Total	200	100%
	<i>Social intelligence</i>	<i>Number (N)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
	Low social intelligence	11	5.5
	Moderate social intelligence	118	59
	High social intelligence	69	34.5
	Total	100	100%

*Source:* Calculations of the present research.

Results of Table 2 indicate that 56% of tourists had moderate social intelligence; and 59% of them had moderate social capital.

**Table 3**  
**Correlation matrix of tourists' social intelligence and social capital**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Social Intelligence</i>	<i>Social Capital</i>	<i>Cognitive Dimension</i>	<i>Relational Dimension</i>	<i>Structural Dimension</i>
Social intelligence	57.8 (2.35)					
Social capital	69.4 (3.82)	0.25**	1			
Cognitive dimension	24.42 (1.12)	0.23**	0.18**	1		
Relational dimension	23.32 (1.39)	0.31**	0.17*	0.25**	1	
Structural dimension	34.24 (1.98)	0.11*	0.19**	0.22**	0.23**	1

\*Significant at the level of 0.05

\*\*Significant at the level of 0.01

*Source:* Calculations of the present research

Results of Table 3 indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between social intelligence and cognitive ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $r = 0.23$ ), relational ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $r = 0.21$ ) and structural ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $r = 0.11$ ) components and total social capital ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $r = -0.25$ ).

Results of regression analysis indicate that 0.29% of total variance of social intelligence can be predicted by cognitive, structural and relational components. F-ratio also indicates that the social intelligence regression has a significant impact on the cognitive, structural and relational components.

**Table 4**  
**Results of regression analysis of social intelligence on cognitive, structural and relational components**

Criterion variable	Predictive variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R	F	Sig of F	B	SE B	B	T	P	Statistics		
												Tolerance	VAF	
		0.34	0.21	0.08	4.323	0.000								
Social intelligence	Constant						13.72	1.09		9.58	0.000			
	Cognitive dimension						0.29	0.06	0.23	4.35	0.000	0.86	1.16	
	Structural dimension						0.14	0.07	0.11	1.92	0.05	0.74	1.33	
	Relational dimension						0.21	0.04	0.18	3.45	0.000	0.67	2.43	

Source: Calculations of the present research.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate the roles of social intelligence and social capital in tourist attraction (case study: Sareyn County). Results of the present study indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between social intelligence and social capital (P = 0.01). Results of multivariate regression analysis also indicated that cognitive, structural and relational components in social capital significantly predicted social intelligence. R-squared value, which was equal to 0.21, indicated that 0.21 percent of total variance of social intelligence was explained by social capital components. F-ratio also indicates the significance of this percentage of variance (sig = 0.001, F = 4.323) meaning that the relationship between the social intelligence as a linear composition based on the least squares of predictive variables could not be probably accidental. Results of regression coefficients also indicated that among the predictive variables, the resulted *t* of a constant score (*t* = 9.58) was significant at the level of 0.05 and predicted the social intelligence. Descriptive results also indicated that the majority of tourists enjoyed high social intelligence and average social capital. This finding was consistent with results of research by Ahmadi and Sheikholeslami (2011), Sharron (2011), Williams and Norman (2005), Benjamins (2007), (Khamar et. al., 2011: 96), and Weibing (2011).

According to the explanation of these findings, small personal networks, which are parts of social capital in different societies, are very closed in most aspects and this can be one of the obstacles to tourism development since it prevents open vision against the foreign tourists. However, these communities can increase the tourists' hospitality by promoting the fact that the tourists' presence can be beneficial for the region. Local social networks can be also expanded horizontally and vertically. Horizontal social networks are created in families; and vertical social networks are created in organizations, regions and countries. A society, which consists of strong horizontal social networks, has necessary social capital to create new opportunities such as tourism development. Furthermore, a society with strong vertical social networks has brighter and more open attitude to tourism (Macbeth, 2004), bidokhti and Sharifi (2012). These results confirm the previous studies indicating that the tourist attraction increases or decreases only under the influence of social intelligence. However, the existence of formal and informal communication networks in

educational organizations approve that most tourists, who are always travelling, have high social intelligence. In fact, the high social intelligence is a factor for participation in the group and its positive consequence; and appropriateness, novelty and necessity of knowledge are other factors in a tourist environment. Social intelligence facilitates expression of emotion by tourists. Furthermore, the ability to understand different emotions in ourselves and others is one of the key elements of social intelligence as an important element for tourism and familiarity with different cultures and customs because it affects the organizational processes and emergence of social issues. In fact, most experienced emotions in life are created inside the social relationships, and people can actively use emotions to increase organizational effectiveness. Social intelligence also develops social capital and also estimates the available social capital. Tourists' ways of social perception of environment affects their social behavior. The basis of tourists' social intelligence is created through their interpersonal relationships with different cultures. As the non-cognitive intelligence dimensions, the social intelligence and social capital provide bases for attracting new tourists. Despite the fact that the social intelligence and social capital are not solely the main factor for increasing the knowledge acquisition capacity and there are numerous other effective factors, the abilities of tourists and host cities such as Sareyn are helpful for constructive and useful relationship and successful and positive presence in the group. Meanwhile, the tourism expansion in tourist areas through changes in interactions between humans creates changes in the social capital of the host societies. This is especially more evident in the tourist areas of the Third World countries which are at the first stages of tourism development.

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