

# Research Paper: An Analysis of Rural Tourism Marketing Indicators (The Case of Quri Qaleh Village, Ravansar County)

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Despite the paramount importance of tourism in achieving sustainable rural development, rural tourism has largely failed to achieve its goals. One of the most significant challenges of rural tourism is considering the marketing concept by policymakers and planners. Hence, the main goal of the current research is to investigate the status of rural tourism marketing components, conducted among tourists in Quri Qaleh village (Located in Ravansar County; Kerman-shah Province).

**Methods:** This study is applied research in terms of methodology carried out by descriptive-analytical method. The statistical population consists of all the tourists of Quri Qaleh village, out of whom 150 are selected as a statistical sample. The main instrument for data collection is a researcher-made questionnaire whose validity and reliability have been confirmed. SPSS software is employed for data analysis.

**Results:** The results showed that among the indicators of rural tourism marketing, the calculated mean score for two indicators namely planning and management as well as promotion is significantly lower than the average with values of 1.618 and 2.39, respectively. On the contrary, the mean score of five indicators including people, place, physical evidence and facilities, price, and product is significantly higher than the average with values of 3.936, 3.784, 3.712, 3.68, and 3.55, respectively. The findings of comparing the status of rural tourism marketing indicators indicated that the three indicators of people, product, and place have the best status with the coefficient of variation of 0.065, 0.092, and 0.094, respectively. The results of the overall status of rural tourism marketing revealed that the calculated mean score, with a value of 3.175, is significantly higher than the base average.

**Conclusion:** The weakness of the two indicators including promotion as well as planning and management are the main obstacles to the development of rural tourism marketing, and implementation solutions have been presented to strengthen them.

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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, rural communities face various challenges such as low wage income, economic fluctuations and instability, lack of land, climate change (Ghaderzadah et al., 2023), unemployment, poverty, food insecurity, increasing migration, weak infrastructure, low welfare level, etc. (Jamini & Dehghani, 2022). Accordingly, to reduce the challenges of rural communities and achieve a more balanced, sustainable, and inclusive rural development, authorities and organizations worldwide have implemented a series of measures to promote and revitalize rural development (Komasi et al., 2022; Ma et al., 2024). One of the most prominent as well as recent strategies for achieving sustainable rural development is the development of tourism in rural areas (Jamini et al., 2024; Verma et al., 2024). Studies indicate that tourism could be the basis for revitalizing the socio-economic development of rural areas and obviate the rural development challenges and problems (Sheresheva et al., 2020) since tourism is one of the main drivers of economic growth through flourishing the industry of hospitality, transportation, construction, and retail activities as well as small businesses such as restaurants and tourism agencies (Andreopoulou et al., 2014). Furthermore, rural tourism plays a salient role in creating new jobs, additional income for the local population, improving the training level of the local population, and, in general, reviving the process of the population's return to smaller and rural areas (Grubor et al., 2019) and generally as a significant driver of economic and social development for host communities (Ruttanavisanon & Agmapisarn, 2022). Despite numerous attempts to develop rural tourism, rural areas still attract fewer tourists and could be largely deprived of its benefits (Lwoga & Maturo, 2020). The growth and prosperity of rural tourism depend on several factors, among which rural tourism marketing is one of the most significant and key components (An & Alarcón, 2021). Rural tourism marketing is one of the effective components associated with rural tourism noted as one of the prerequisites for rural tourism development and consequently sustainable rural development (Jamini, 2024) due to its benefits for local communities (Kastenholz et al., 2018). The most important goals of marketing in rural areas are creating a positive image among the general public inside and outside a region (Rovira et al., 2022), empowering rural areas for further competition, providing suitable conditions for increasing life quality, especially for the economically active rural population, promoting competitiveness by emphasizing the distinct advantages of rural areas, strengthening local infrastruc-

ture, attracting, creating and maintaining long-term relationships of rural areas with foreign partners/investors, and preserving and improving the environment by the principles sustainable rural development (Grubor et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the studies indicate that the issues related to rural tourism marketing have been less considered (Ramanauskienė et al., 2006) depriving rural communities of the benefits of rural tourism to a large extent.

At the macro level, the development of the tourism industry in Iran confronts various challenges such as the weak support of the government sector, political restrictions, comprehensive sanctions, etc., impeding the development of this industry (Jamshidi et al., 2022). In addition to these obstacles, the lack of attention to rural tourism marketing can intensify the challenges of underdevelopment of the tourism industry. According to published literature, rural areas with tourism potential require integrated, sustainable management and development of tourism (Sari et al., 2024). Lack of attention to accurate and realistic planning of tourism development, especially in pristine and geographically sensitive areas, not only disrupts future planning for tourism development but also causes adverse effects on host communities (Mariam et al., 2024).

Quri Qaleh village, with abundant tourist attractions, is one of the most frequented tourist destinations in Ravansar County, placed in the list of sample tourism areas of Kermanshah Province (General Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Kermanshah Province, 2022). Besides the existence of the Quri Qaleh cave located in the vicinity of this village, the pristine nature of the area, the existence of numerous coffee houses as well as rest areas, the existence of an area with amenities and services adjacent to the cave, the supply and sale of various agricultural and livestock products, the existence of numerous rental suites, being in the vicinity of the connecting road between two cities namely Ravansar and Paveh, etc., are other reasons for attracting tourists to this geographical space. Considering the significance of rural tourism in the process of achieving sustainable rural development and the key role of marketing in the prosperity of rural tourism, investigating the status of rural tourism marketing indicators in this sample tourism area can contribute to the prosperity of rural tourism and consequently reducing problems and challenges of rural development such as poverty, unemployment, migration, etc. Accordingly, the main questions of the current research are:

What level are the key indicators of rural tourism marketing?

What is the prioritization of rural tourism marketing indicators?

What level is the overall status of tourism marketing in Quri Qaleh village?

## 2. Literature Review

Studies indicate that the definition of rural tourism should include all aspects of tourism (such as farm tourism, green tourism, open space, agricultural tourism, and ecotourism or nature/wildlife tourism) in physical, social, and historical dimensions. The meaning and context of rural tourism are various in different regions and cultures (Dong et al., 2013). In a plain definition, rural tourism refers to any tourism activity occurring around the city; in a space named a village with features such as low population density, land use allocation to agricultural activities, "traditional" social structures, and a distinct community identity (Kastenholz et al., 2018). The development of rural tourism plays a prominent role in the integration of cultures as well as the tourism industry and facilitates the revitalization of villages. It also serves as an effective tool for enhancing the common welfare. The development of rural tourism contributes to the evolution of tourism destinations and changes in consumption patterns. In addition, it helps to increase human capital and increase the income of the residents and occupants of the community and subsequently reduces economic disparities in rural areas, consolidates industrial growth, and expands non-agricultural employment opportunities (Tong et al., 2024). Meanwhile, one of the most important and effective factors related to the development of rural tourism is rural tourism marketing (Jamini, 2024).

The major philosophy of rural marketing is to develop and implement guidelines to create a favorable image and protect it through an appropriate strategic marketing plan to protect the long-term benefits of an area. According to Saxena, rural tourism marketing is a diverse and multi-dimensional phenomenon linked intricately with how rurality is experienced and shaped by actors' enterprises and a wide range of sociocultural, political, economic, and material processes and practices (Giray et al., 2019). Marketing in rural tourism acts as a tool to achieve the strategic goals of developing rural tourism destinations through the long-term prosperity of tourism, gaining the tourists' satisfaction, increasing the profitability, increasing the duration of tourists' stay in the place, reducing the negative effects of tourism, stabilizing employment, supporting and diversifying existing economic activities, changing consumer behav-

ior in terms of increasing tourist expenses in the place (Mihailović & Moric, 2012).

Despite the significance of tourism in the economic and social development of rural settlements, as well as the key role of tourism marketing in the development of tourism and consequently the achievement of economic and social development in rural areas, only a few studies have addressed this issue, the results of some of which are in the following.

Badri et al. (2014) analyzed the factors impacting rural tourism marketing in the villages of the northern part of Tehran finding out that the most important factors affecting the development of rural tourism marketing in the study area are advertising, planning and management, people and employees, product, physical evidence and facilities, place and price, respectively.

Sheikhi and Pazoki (2017) assessed and prioritized the factors affecting rural tourism marketing using the marketing mix model in Jozan district, Malayer Township. The results showed that among the seven factors affecting rural tourism marketing (place, planning and management, physical evidence and facilities, promotion, people, price, and product), two factors namely people and place are more important.

Heidary et al. (2020) investigated the effect of tourism marketing (local mixture and people) on the development of rural entrepreneurship in the Rijab region of Kermanshah Province. The findings revealed that both aspects (place and people) are effective in the development of rural entrepreneurship. Mododi Arkhodi et al. (2023) studied the factors affecting tourism marketing in rural areas of Qaenat County. The results indicated that the components of people, product, place, promotion, physical evidence, process, and price are of paramount importance in tourism marketing and the performance of tourism authorities in their development is below average. Jamini (2024) identified the most important rural tourism marketing strategy in Kurdistan Province pointing out that rural tourism in Kurdistan Province has complex conditions in terms of internal and external factors related to rural tourism marketing besides the numerous strengths and opportunities of rural tourism marketing, there are also manifold weaknesses and threats. Furthermore, the results illustrated that an aggressive strategy is the most suitable strategy for the development of rural tourism marketing in Kurdistan Province.

Reviewing previous studies reveals that despite the importance of rural tourism marketing in the economic

and social development of the host communities, this issue has received less attention conducting limited studies with different objectives. To the authors' best knowledge, no coherent study has been conducted assessing the status of rural tourism marketing indicators. Therefore, this study is carried out to bridge this knowledge gap which can be considered as the novelty of this research. The conceptual model for the main dimensions of rural tourism marketing is depicted in the following (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The conceptual model of the research (The main dimensions of rural tourism marketing)



### 3. Methodology

In terms of geographical location, Quri Qaleh village is located with longitudes of 46°29' E and latitudes of 34°53' N. This village is the center of Quri Qaleh District with 254 households and a population of 891 people (Statistical Center of Iran, 2016). In the vicinity of this village, Quri Qaleh Cave, one of the largest water caves in the Middle East, is located. The internal and external attractions of the cave have led myriads of tourists from different places (Inside and outside of Iran) to visit this tourist space annually. The traditional texture of Quri Qaleh village, the supply of local products around the cave, and the existence of service and welfare infrastructures in this geographical space, have attracted more tourists to Quri Qaleh village. Accordingly, the Quri Qaleh sample tourism area is currently one of the most significant sample tourism areas of Kermanshah Province (General Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Kermanshah Province, 2022).

This quantitative and applied research aims to investigate and analyze the status of rural tourism marketing indicators conducted among tourists in Quri Qaleh village. This research is a single section in terms of time, carried out over 6 months (from September 2023 to March

2024). The required field data is collected by a questionnaire designed in two main sections. The first section is related to the personal characteristics of tourists such as age, gender, etc. and the second section is associated with the main indicators of rural tourism marketing and their variables. It should be noted that designing the questionnaire for selecting rural tourism marketing indicators and variables is based on the study by Sheikhi and Pazoki (2017) (Table 1). The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed after reviewing and modifying the initial questionnaire by the researchers in the field of tourism as well as rural tourism. Its reliability was confirmed by applying a pre-test completing 30 questionnaires and calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient which was obtained more than 0.7 (Table 1). A five-point Likert scale (very poor = 1, poor = 2, average = 3, good = 4, and very good = 5) was employed to investigate the indicators and variables of rural tourism marketing. The statistical population of the research includes all tourists frequenting Quri Qaleh Cave (Located in the vicinity of Quri Qaleh village), Quri Qaleh village, and its surrounding area. Due to the financial and time limitations of the researchers, 150 questionnaires were completed in the scope of the study. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS software and mean score, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, frequency distribution table, and mean comparison test (One-sample t-test).

### 4. Findings

#### Describing the respondents' demographic characteristics

The results of the study showed that the respondents' age ranged between 16 and 72 with an average of about 38 years old. The respondents' gender distribution indicated that 77.3% are male and 22.7% are female. The respondents' average household size is 3.87. The average income of approximately 9.5 million Tomans.

#### Investigating the status of the seven indicators of rural tourism marketing

The status of rural tourism marketing indicators was studied by applying, a frequency distribution table and one-sample t-test, considering number 3 as the test value discussed in the following.

##### 1. Investigating the status of place indicators in rural tourism marketing

The results of investigating the status of place indicator as one of the main indicators of rural tourism marketing

in the study area using the frequency distribution Table 2 show that according to 16.7% of tourists, the status of this indicator is at very poor and poor levels. 25.3% note it at an average level and 58% at good and very good levels. In fact, from the viewpoint of most tourists, the status of the place indicator is at an acceptable level. The results of the overall assessment of the place indicator using the mean comparison test (Table 3) indicated that

the calculated mean score with a value of 3.784 is significantly higher than the base average. It can be deduced that tourists have an acceptable level of satisfaction with the variables of this indicator namely visual appeal, security, service safety, service quality, design and layout of the tourist destination space, as well as paying attention to the tourists' interests and wishes.

**Table 1.** Rural tourism marketing indicators and variables and their Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Indicator	Variable	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Indicator	Variable	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Place	The amount of visual appeal of the tourist destination	0.760	Planning and management	Preserving the natural beauty of the tourist destination,	0.744
	The level of security of the tourist destination			Public sector investing in tourism destination	
	The level of safety of tourism destination services			Protecting tourist attractions	
	Quality of tourism destination services			The existence of a comprehensive tourism development plan in the tourist destination,	
	Design and layout of the tourist destination space			Quality of the monitoring process of service-provider units	
Paying attention to the tourists' interests and wishes	Using expert personnel	Using specialist managers of tourism development			
Physical evidence and facilities	Quality of roads and passages	0.780	Promotion	Holding local and indigenous festivals	0.798
	Waste management			Using specialized experts to provide correct information to tourists	
	Quality of health infrastructures			Advertising through mass media	
	Quality of accommodation services			Advertising through social networks	
People	Participation of local people in tourism activities	0.793	Price	Proportion of prices with the quality of products offered to the tourists	0.735
	Appropriate interaction and cooperation with tourists			Offering discounts to tourists while purchasing	
	Improving people's general culture in dealing with tourists			Reducing travel and accommodation costs for tourists	
	Existence of skilled and active human resources in the field of tourism			Sufficient monitoring of the price of products, services, and places of residence	
Product	The existence of intangible tourism attractions	0.809			
	Variety of local products and productions for tourists				
	Variety of tourist attractions				
	The uniqueness of tourist attractions				
	Quality of local products and productions for tourists				
	Quality and variety of artificial tourism attractions				
Authenticity of local products and productions for tourists					



**Table 2.** Investigating the status of place indicator in rural tourism marketing

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Very poor	5	3.3	3.3
Poor	20	13.3	16.7
Average	38	25.3	42
Good	51	34	76
Very good	36	24	100
Total	150	100	-



**Table 3.** The status of place indicator in tourism marketing using a one-sample t-test

Test value=3						
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
25.883	149	0.000	3.784	0.784	0.726	0.842



**2- Investigating the status of planning and management indicators in rural tourism marketing**

The results of investigating the status of the planning and management indicator in rural tourism marketing (Tables 4 and 5) reveal that according to 60.7% of tourists, the status of planning and management is at a very poor and poor level, and from the viewpoint of 26.7%, it is at an average level and only 12.7% point it out at good and very good levels. The results of the overall assessment of this indicator using the mean comparison test show that the calculated mean score with a value of 1.618 is significantly lower than the base average. According to the obtained results, it can be said that the status of the study area in terms of variables such as preserving natural beauty, public sector investing, protecting tourist attractions, existence of a comprehensive tourism development plan, quality of the monitoring process of service-provider units, using expert personnel and managers, are not in an acceptable status and there are many limitations and shortcomings in this field.

**3- Investigating the status of physical evidence and facilities indicators in rural tourism marketing**

The findings of investigating the status of physical evidence and facilities indicator in rural tourism marketing (Table 6) show that according to 10% of tourists, the status of this indicator is at very poor and poor levels, 8.7% note it at an average level and 81.3% state it at good and very good levels. In addition, the results reveal that the calculated mean score of physical evidence and facilities indicator with a value of 3.712 is significantly higher than the base average (Table 7). In other words, according to the obtained results, the overall status of the variables including quality of roads and passages, waste management, quality of health infrastructures, quality of accommodation services, and quality of recreational infrastructures in the study area is in acceptable status.

**Table 4.** Investigating the status of planning and management indicators in rural tourism marketing

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Very poor	17	11.3	11.3
Poor	74	49.3	60.7
Average	40	26.7	87.3
Good	13	8.7	96
Very good	6	4	100
Total	150	100	-



**Table 5.** The status of planning and management indicators in tourism marketing using a one-sample t-test

Test value=3						
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
-59.690	149	0.000	1.618	-1.381	-1.427	-1.336



**Table 6.** Investigating the status of the physical evidence and facilities indicator in rural tourism marketing

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Very Poor	6	4	4
Poor	9	6	10
Average	13	8.7	18.7
Good	11	7.3	26
Very Good	111	74	100
Total	150	100	-



**Table 7.** The status of physical evidence and facilities indicator in tourism marketing using a one-sample t-test

Test value=3						
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
17.810	149	0.000	3.712	0.712	0.633	0.791



**4- Investigating the status of promotion indicators in rural tourism marketing**

The results of investigating the status of the promotion indicator as one of the key components in rural tourism marketing indicate that according to 43.3% of respondents, the status of this indicator is at very poor and poor levels. 29.3% point it out at an average level and 27.3% note it at good and very good levels (Table 8). The overall status of the promotion indicator in the study area shows that this indicator with a mean score of 2.39 is

significantly lower than the base average (Table 9). Accordingly, it can be deduced that the overall status of the promotion indicator variables such as holding local and indigenous festivals, using specialized experts to provide correct information to tourists, and advertising through mass media and social networks in an unfavorable status. Necessary measures are required to be taken in this field to strengthen the promotion indicator.

**Table 8.** Investigating the status of promotion indicator in rural tourism marketing

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Very Poor	17	11.3	11.3
Poor	48	32	43.3
Average	44	29.3	72.7
Good	33	22	94.7
Very Good	8	5.3	100
Total	150	100	-



**Table 9.** The status of promotion indicator in tourism marketing using a one-sample t-test

Test value=3						
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
-11.599	149	0.000	2.39	-0.610	-0.713	-0.506



**5- Investigating the status of people indicator in rural tourism marketing**

People are one of the key indicators of rural tourism marketing. The findings of investigating the status of this indicator (Table 10) show that 8.7 % of tourists assess the status of this indicator at very poor and poor levels, 22.7 % at an average level, and 68.7 % at good and very good levels. The overall status of people indicator using the sample t-test (Table 11) reveals that the obtained mean score with the value of 3.936 is significantly higher than the base average. Thus, it can be concluded that the overall status of the people variables including the participation of local people in tourism activities, appropriate interaction and cooperation with tourists, improving people’s general culture in dealing with tourists, and existence of skilled and active human resources in the field of tourism in the study area is in a favorable status.

**6- Investigating the status of the price indicator in rural tourism marketing**

The results of the price indicator analysis (Table 12) indicate that 22.7% of tourists believe that this indicator is at a very poor and poor level, 6.7% at an average level and 70.7% note it at good and very good levels. The findings of the overall status of the price indicator (Table 13) show that this indicator with a mean score of 3.68 is significantly higher than the base average. According to the obtained results, it can be deduced that the overall status of the price indicator variables such as the proportion of prices with the quality of products offered to the tourists, offering discounts to the tourists while purchasing, reducing travel and accommodation costs for the tourists and sufficient monitoring on the price of products, services, and places of residence in acceptable status.

**Table 10.** Investigating the status of people indicator in rural tourism marketing

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Very Poor	5	3.3	3.3
Poor	8	5.3	8.7
Average	34	22.7	31.3
Good	82	54.7	86
Very Good	21	14	100
Total	150	100	-



**Table 11.** The status of people indicator in tourism marketing using a one-sample t-test

Test value=3						
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
44.230	149	0.000	3.936	0.936	0.894	0.978



**Table 12.** Investigating the status of the price indicator in rural tourism marketing

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Very Poor	16	10.7	10.7
Poor	18	12	22.7
Average	10	6.7	29.3
Good	105	70	99.3
Very Good	1	0.7	100
Total	150	100	-



**Table 13.** The status of price indicator in tourism marketing using a one-sample t-test

Test value=3						
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
17.726	149	0.000	3.680	0.680	0.604	0.755



**7- Investigating the status of product indicators in rural tourism marketing**

According to the findings of investigating the status of the product indicator in rural tourism marketing (Table 14), 7.3% of tourists note this indicator at very weak and weak levels, 30.7% at an average level, and 62% at good and very good levels. The results of the one-sample t-test (Table 15) indicate that the calculated mean score with a value of 3.55 is higher than the base average. In general, it can be stated that the product indicator variables such as the existence of intangible tourism attractions, variety of local products and productions for tourists, variety of tourist attractions and their uniqueness, quality of local products and productions, quality and variety of artificial tourism attractions and authenticity of local products and productions for tourists are in acceptable status.

**Comparing and prioritizing the status of rural tourism marketing indicators**

Having investigated the overall status of rural tourism marketing indicators, their status is compared using the coefficient of variation (Table 16 and Figure 2). It is worth noting that a lower coefficient of variation refers to a better status a higher coefficient of variation means a poor status of the indicators. The results illustrate that, from tourists' viewpoint, three indicators namely people, product, and place are ranked first to third with

the coefficient of variation of 0.065, 0.092, and 0.094, respectively. The coefficient of variation is calculated at 0.127, 0.131, 0.174, and 0.269 for the indicators of price, physical evidence, facilities, planning and management, and promotion, which are ranked fourth to seventh, respectively.

**Investigating the overall status of rural tourism marketing indicators**

The overall status of rural tourism marketing in the study area is investigated in the following. The results of the frequency distribution table (Table 17) reveal that according to 12.7% of tourists, the overall status of rural tourism marketing is at very poor and poor levels, 18% at an average while 69.4% note the status of rural tourism marketing in the study area at good and very good levels. The findings of the mean comparison test regarding the overall status of rural tourism marketing (Table 18) depict that the obtained mean score with a value of 3.175 is significantly higher than the base average. Accordingly, it can be deduced that the status of rural tourism marketing is acceptable and its main weakening factors are two indicators namely promotion planning and management. A coherent plan, therefore, is required to be developed to improve the level of these two indicators.

**Table 14.** Investigating the status of Product Indicators in Rural Tourism Marketing

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Very Poor	4	2.7	2.7
Poor	7	4.7	7.3
Average	46	30.7	38
Good	48	32	70
Very Good	45	30	100
Total	150	100	-



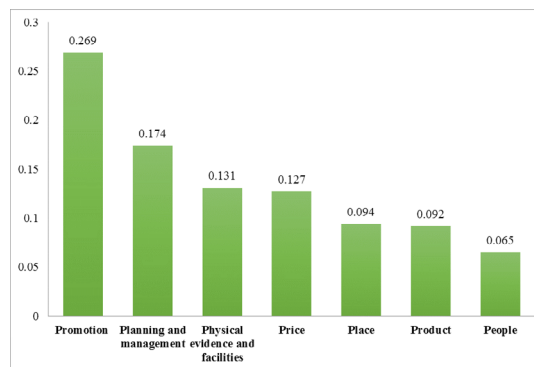
**Table 15.** The status of product indicator in tourism marketing using a one-sample t-test

Test value=3						
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
20.486	149	0.000	3.550	0.550	0.497	0.603



**Table 16.** Prioritization of tourism marketing indicators using the coefficient of variation

Indicator	Mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation	Rank
Place	3.784	0.357	0.094	3
Planning and management	1.618	0.283	0.174	6
Physical evidence and facilities	3.712	0.489	0.131	5
Promotion	2.390	0.644	0.269	7
People	3.936	0.259	0.065	1
Price	3.680	0.469	0.127	4
Product	3.550	0.329	0.092	2



**Figure 2.** Comparing and prioritizing the status of rural tourism marketing indicators



**Table 17.** Investigating the overall status of rural tourism marketing indicators

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Very Poor	4	2.7	2.7
Poor	15	10	12.7
Average	27	18	30.7
Good	73	48.7	79.3
Very Good	31	20.7	100
Total	150	100	-



**Table 18.** The overall status of tourism marketing indicator using a one-sample t-test

Test value=3						
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
12.335	149	0.000	3.175	0.175	0.146	0.203



## 5. Discussion

Nowadays, rural tourism is increasingly taken into consideration by policymakers, planners, and researchers of rural development due to its numerous economic and social benefits, and is pointed out in some cases, as a new strategy for rural development. Despite the myriad advantages of rural tourism, this industry has not had many positive effects on rural communities. One of the most prominent reasons for the failure of tourism thriving in rural areas is the lack of attention to marketing, particularly rural tourism marketing. The development of marketing while developing rural tourism can play an effective role in the process of rural development. Manifold research has been conducted on rural tourism. Nevertheless, rural tourism marketing has been addressed by few studies. Hence, this study was conducted to investigate the status of rural tourism marketing indicators. The results of the research illuminated that among the seven main indicators of rural tourism marketing, two indicators namely planning and management as well as promotion are in an unfavorable status which is compatible with the findings of [Mododi Arkhodi et al. \(2023\)](#). The weakness of these indicators from the tourists' point of view can have various causes such as the limited investment of the public sector in tourism development, the limited use of experienced managers and expertise, and the lack of a comprehensive tourism development plan, the gradual destruction of the environment and tourist attractions, poor advertising in various fields, lack of holding tourism festivals, etc. Contrary to the two mentioned indicators, the results indicated that the five indicators including people, place, physical evidence and facilities, price, and product are in a favorable status. Among the reasons for the acceptable status of these indicators in the study area can be appropriate interaction and cooperation of the local community with tourists, appropriate interaction with tourists, the attractiveness and uniqueness of the region, the various capacities of the tourist destination, the high level of security, reasonable price of products and offering discounts to tourists while purchasing, authenticity of products and productions, etc. The results of the comparison of rural tourism marketing indicators revealed that three indicators including people, products, and place have achieved the highest level of tourists' satisfaction which is congruent with the study of [Sheikhi and Pazoki \(2017\)](#). The favorable status of the study area in terms of the mentioned indicators is due to appropriate cooperation and interaction of the local community with tourists, the numerous and unique attractions of Quri Qaleh village, the attractiveness of tourism products, the authentic and native culture, the

high level of security which culminate in improving the tourists' satisfaction level.

The findings of the research regarding the overall status of rural tourism marketing depicted that its status is above the average level in the study area. However, considering the importance of marketing in tourism development and sustainable rural development, as well as the chain and unbreakable relationship among the concepts of marketing, tourism, and sustainable rural development, according to the findings, the following suggestions are presented to strengthen rural tourism marketing:

- More support and investment in the public sector through the allocation of free and low-interest loans
- Holding efficient and operational training courses for rural tourism marketing
- Compiling a comprehensive tourism development plan for Quri Qaleh village in short, medium, and long-term time frames
- Preventing the change of national land use belonging to the Natural Resources Department in the registered area of the village
- Using local and expert personnel to manage the cave and its surrounding areas
- Preventing the destruction of geomorphologic forms located inside the cave
- Holding various local festivals including local food festivals, introduction of cultural works, etc.
- Increasing advertisement, especially through social networks and provincial mass media
- Diversifying tourism activities (Climbing tours, adventure tourism, constructing nomadic tourism ecocamps, etc.)

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

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