

Ecotourism Development Strategies in Chahardangeh District of Sari County

Saeid Kamyabi*¹- Mohamad Ali Rajaee Rizi²

1. Associate Prof. Climatology, Semnan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Semnan, Iran.
2. Assistant Prof. Geography & Urban Planning, Art University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

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Abstract

Purpose: This study was conducted to investigate the ecotourism development strategies in Chahardangeh District of Sari to provide an appropriate image of the current state, and to help identify (external and internal) factors effective in the regional tourism. Moreover, the study was set out to come up with appropriate applicable strategies for ecotourism development.

Method: The study was conducted in a descriptive-analytical method and data was collected by library research and field-work (questionnaires, observation, interviews).

Findings: The total score of internal factors and external factors were 2.51 and 2.57 respectively. This demonstrated that the management of ecotourism activities with regard to internal and external factors is in a favorable, and higher than moderate state, and it is also in an aggressive mode, but the figures obtained are very close to other strategies, which will change if there is no proper planning.

Practical implications: In order to develop ecotourism in Chahardangeh District and enjoy its benefits, in the first place, the local community needs to receive the training necessary for ecotourism management and development; then, they should gain access to essential facilities required for ecotourism management, and they should encourage public participation. Besides, in line with regional ecotourism goals, they may use advertisement and efficient instruments to improve tourism facilities required to lead ecotourism tours into the area.

Originality / values: In terms of research method, this study was conducted like other similar studies. However, the strength of this study was taking into account all aspects of ecotourism (including biotourism, agritourism, village tourism, green tourism, health tourism, and geotourism). As Chahardangeh District is situated in an important part of Iran, which is very significant in terms of tourism and natural attractions, no significant research was conducted with practical economic and environmental goals. Proper planning can change this rural area into an ecotourism hub in the international level.

Keywords: Appropriate strategy, ecotourism, Sari county, Badab sort, Pele Azni lake, Miansheh lake

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1. Introduction

In the past, 'tourism' included trips taken for pleasure and fun, but it has changed over time (Mahalati, 2009). Tourism is a process based on research and evaluation, a search for optimum conditions in making relationships between tourism, welfare, and protection of the environment (Monshizadeh, 1997). Ecotourism is a responsible journey to the nature which preserves the environment and promotes welfare of the local people. Tourist attractions can attract tourists. In fact, the structure of tourism in a location includes the factors that could provide more incentives for the development of tourism in that area. Natural factors such as topographic constructions, climatic conditions, water resources, vegetation and wildlife are among the most important factors that form the natural landscape in their own ways. Mountains, valleys, plains, caves, rivers, springs, waterfalls, seas, beaches, lakes, wetlands, vegetation, and wildlife are among the natural tourist attractions (Danesh Kar, 2006). The main economic activities in the world are based on tourism industry the effects of which on factors influencing the domestic and international economy are quite significant. Based on World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), there has been \$890 direct economic income per tourist. Furthermore, the revenue of tourism industry per capita is \$2,500 i.e., an estimated total indirect revenue of \$1,750 billion. The growth of this giant industry in 1990's was approximately 70 percent (World Tourism Organization, 2006). The tourism industry in the world involves 230 million people (11% of the global employment). In 150 countries, it is one of the five major sources of foreign exchange earnings and in 60 countries, it is the first major source of foreign exchange (Akbari & Gharakhlou, 2010). It is expected that in 2010 and 2020, respectively 1550 and 2000 billion dollars enter the global economy through tourism industry (Rahimpur, 2008). Employment created by tourism brings about economic prosperity. In recent decades, thanks

to environmental and ecological potentials, ecotourism has become more significant than other forms of tourism, and is regarded as one of the most favorable types of tourism in the world. According to the World Tourism Organization, ecotourism has approximately grown between 10 to 30 percent. Due to its different climates, Iran is unique in the field of ecotourism. Iran is among the world's top 10 countries in terms of tourist attractions (Lotfi et al., 2012). At the end of 2010, 50% of tourism was of ecotourism type. In terms of natural attractions, Iran is in the fifth place in the world. Up to now, more than 300 ecotourism regions have been identified. In Iran, Mazandaran province, with about three thousand ecotourism attractions like caves, ponds, spas, beautiful waterfalls, forests, mountains and the Caspian Sea, is among the top regions in attracting tourists as more than 15 million domestic and foreign tourists enter the province every year (Mohammad-pour & Abdari, 2013). To enjoy the benefits of this situation, we need to create a favorable atmosphere in the form of a comprehensive plan. One of the strategies that could be used to develop the tourism industry, is to better identify tourism potentials and capabilities in the areas, and make detailed plans to test the feasibility of these areas for becoming a tourist destination. The practical assessment and analysis of such qualities, along with environmental considerations are absolutely necessary in today's world. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for basic planning for tourism development and management. However, public participation is essential for its development and sustainability. The basic idea is that local communities are the core of tourist destinations, and healthy communities are a measure of success in tourism industry. Experience has shown that wherever tourism has developed without a planning framework and a clear strategy, it has faced various environmental and social problems and in the long-run, the negative consequences have been more than its benefits (Ranjbarian & Zahedi, 2000). In order to improve and use the environmental and tourist privileges in the area, such as the Alandan and Badab Sort Lakes which please the tourists thanks to their

structure, and their ecological and living space for recreation, it is essential to devise viable strategies for tourism development in the study area. These strategies have to account for the environmental conditions, attractions and ecological products (Fazelnia & Hedayati, 2010). Bearing the abovementioned points and the potentials and tourism restrictions in Chahardangeh District in mind we tried to investigate whether there are any guidelines for tourism development that may lead to national and regional tourism development.

Besides, we tried to study and analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to tourism development in Alandan and Badab Sort Lakes. Finally, in the light of these views, some strategies were proposed for tourism development using SWAT technique for optimized and targeted use of the strengths and opportunities, and strengthen or eliminate the weaknesses and threats in order to achieve tourism development in lakes of Badab Sort, Pele Azni, and Miansheh.

Table 1: Expected benefits from an ecosystem

(Source: Eshragi, 2006: 45)

complex	subdivision	main target community	type of the roles
economic	microeconomics	local people	creating sustainable employment
	macroeconomics	governments	paving the way for strategic planning and increasing GDP
environmental	biodiversity	governments	To protect the valuable plant and animal species
social	cultural	governments	To preserve the cultural heritage
	social	governments	To stabilize the local communities in macro level

Accordingly, tourism development of the lakes of Badab Sort, Pele Azni, and Miansheh, on the one hand provides new employment opportunities for the people of the region (Sari County and the villages around the lake) which is a means that gives new life to the area and facilitates the development of the region. On the other hand, the development of the tourism industry of the lakes of Badab Sort, and Alandan, without proper planning will cause irreparable environmental damage. Thus, according to environmental and ecological features of the study area, a specific type or a combination of these strategies and approaches (defensive, aggressive, revision, and diversity), briefly discussed in the following lines, could be employed for tourism development in the lakes of Badab Sort, Pele Azni, and Miansheh.

2. Research Theoretical Literature

The first book written in the field of tourism was “a tourist guide book” by Thomas Nog Net in 1778. In fact, the investigation of tourism industry is a new phenomenon that dates back to early 19th century. (Papali, Yazdi, & Saghaei, 2007). Ecotourism investigation by SWO is a relatively new method that is used in various parts of the world. For instance, it was used in forest areas of Willichers in Turkey, in Central Forests of Victoria in Australia, in Madid National Park in Bolivia, and in the US National Park in 2005. In Iran, over the last decade, a relatively large number of research has been conducted using the SWAT. Table 2 summarizes some of the most important studies conducted in this field in recent years.

Table 2: A review of Literature on some relevant studies conducted in Iran in 2011-2016.

(Source: Research findings, 2016)

Research title	Date published	Author(s)	Results
Evaluation of Tourism Development in Zanjan County Using SWOT Model: A case study of Zanjan-rud area	2011	Meshkini & Heidari	According to the regional tourism capabilities, the study area could become an endogenous development factor, which itself requires a comprehensive plan for revealing the strengths, improving the opportunities, overcoming the threats and weaknesses.

Research title	Date published	Author(s)	Results
Optimal strategies for ecotourism development in Ardebil Province using strategic planning (SWOT)	2013	Haji Nejad, A; & Aqae, W.	The use of quantitative strategic planning methodology and 21 fundamental strategies with the prioritization of each of them were developed for promotion of ecotourism in the province.
the strategic Management Plan for ecotourism Development in Qeshm Island	2013	Rezayan Sahar, Jozi Seyed Ali, Pirasteh, Asma	Despite rich resources that could make this island a tourism hub, there are some shortages in the infrastructure and lack of appropriate marketing and advertisement, which have put the island in a strategically competitive conditions.
The role of ecotourism and its effects on development of rural areas using SWOT (A case study of Uraman Takht village)	2012	Danesh Mehr, Hossein; Karimi, Alireza; Safari, Vorja	The beautiful and unique landscapes of the village, along with the gardens and green spaces, have been the most important strengths. The lack of planning and government investment in this area is one of the main weaknesses in this area, the more attention of the authorities to planning and investing in the region were the most important external opportunities, and eventually the lack of management for ecotourism issues was the main threat.
An assessment of ecotourism development efforts in Talesh County using SWOT	2014	Panahi Hossein, Zeinali Bahram, Shahi Dariush	According to SWAT analytical model, the strategies of ecotourism development in Talesh County are revision and defensive strategies. The ecotourism paths of the county included five roads: 1- rural areas of Hasht-par 2-Asalem 3- Beaches 4- Havigh 5- Lisar.
The importance of environmental planning education for sustainable development of Iranian ecotourism	2014	Momeni, Masoomeh	The final objectives of the research included: identifying environmental training goals, developing practical solutions for environmental training, identifying educational priorities and suggestions for holding environmental training courses as well as reviewing the training courses.
An analysis of the consequences of tourism development in rural areas (A case study of Kaseliyan Rural District, Mazandaran Province)	2014	Ebrahimi Kooh Baneh; Mohammad Sadeghizad Esmail	The results of factor analysis show that the most important positive effects resulting from the arrival of tourists to the villages can be attributed to factors such as: infrastructure development, economic development and employment. The most important negative effects caused by the arrival of tourists to rural areas include, change in business environment, the rise in social and cultural anomalies and degradation of rural cultural space.
Ecotourism development strategies in Kurdistan using SWOT	2014	Movahed, Ali; Kahzadi, Salar; Abedinzadeh, Farimah	Based on the evaluation matrix of internal factors (strengths and weaknesses), the total final score was 2.43, which indicates that the strengths are less than weaknesses. This means that the management of ecotourism activities is weak in terms of internal factors. Evaluation matrix of external factors (opportunities and threats) with a total score of 2.91 suggest that in the current situation, an appropriate strategic response to threats can be expressed by strengthening opportunities. Therefore, ST strategy is the best ecotourism strategy in Kurdistan.
The role of ecotourism in sustainable rural development using SWOT: A case study of Razi Abad, Shahriar)	2014	Naderi, Mostafa; Amiri, Mohammad Javad; Karami, Shaho; Naderi, Mahboubeh	The current process of exploitation of nature, in spite of some restrictive activities and measures is beyond the capacity of ecosystem, and it is likely to cause serious damage and destruction to natural and economic capabilities of the region.

Research title	Date published	Author(s)	Results
Strengths and weaknesses of rural tourism development: A case study of Echo moze h, Abyaneh rural area	2013	Hejazi Zadeh, Z; Rajaei Rizi, M; Hosseini Amini, H	Revealing the strengths and weaknesses of rural tourism development in Abyaneh Village and sustainability of local communities
Analysis of sustainable tourism development strategies based on "internal-external matrix" and strategic SWOT analysis (A case study of Khorramabad County)	2016	Keshavarz, Mahnaz; Ghadiri ma'som, Mojtaba; Ayashi, Athareh; Sarparast, Hussein	Development of ecotourism and histo-cultural attractions, expansion of communications, national congress with the aim of further development of tourism, making ground for private sector investment, integrated management, establishing united procedure in managing the organizations involved at urban tourism affairs and avoiding from waste of human, financial and technical resources, with presentation of more desirable tourism services, protection and development of available resources, and more effective role in achieving the goals of sustainable tourism development in Khoram Abad County.
The role of social capital in public ecotourism development from the perspective of villagers in Mazandaran province	2016	Ghazani Ezzatollah; Bijani, Masoud; Chizari, Mohammad	The results of inferential statistics indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between the views of villagers about social capital and their views about the possibility of ecotourism development ($r = 0.783$). Besides, the results of regression analysis showed that social capital can account for 65 percent of the changes in the variable of the villagers' view about the possibility of developing public ecotourism. Finally, based on the research findings, some suggestions were made.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Geographical Scope of the Research

Chahardangeh district is one of the four districts of Sari County in Mazandaran province in northern Iran bordering Semnan province (Administrative divisions, 2011). Kiasar is the capital of the district. There are

three major tourist areas in Chahardangeh: 1) Badab Sort in the Poshtkuh Rural district (Dehestan), 2) Miansheh Lake in Garmab village, 3) Alandan lake (Pele Azni Lake).

Figure 1 shows the situation of Chahardangeh District and ecotourism attractions of Badab Sort and Alandan (Pele Azni) Lakes (Table 3).

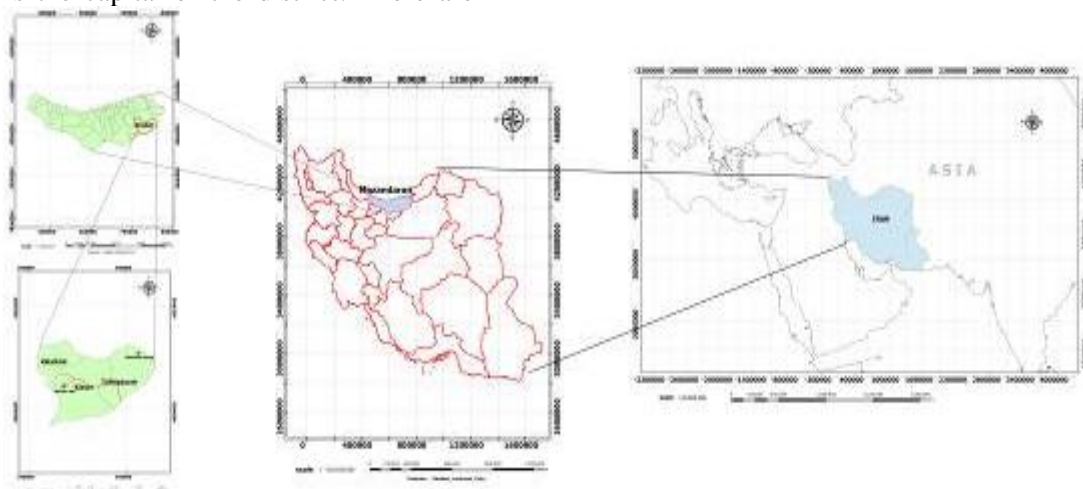



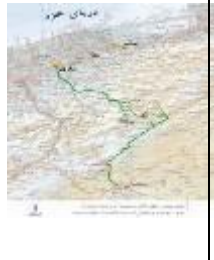
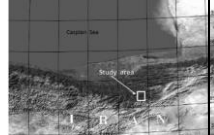




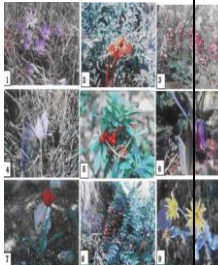


Figure 1: Situation of Chahardangeh District and ecotourism attraction of the region

(Source: Research findings, 2016)

Table 3: Specifications of Chahardangeh Tourist Attractions

(Source: Research findings, 2016)

Rows	Name	Type	Features	location	Tourism type	De mand	Scope and performance range	Geographical coordinates	Image or map
1	Badab Sort	natural	A Travertine source - The second national natural monument after Mount Damavand which included two springs. One of them is a salty one, and the other is a sour one. A part of it, is similar to stars, and has colorful ponds.	Near Ervest village in Poshtkuh Rural District	ecotourism	a lot	National and international	53 51 20 E 36 21 19 N	
2	Alandan lake (Pele Azni)	Semi-natural	It has an area of 17 hectares which extends to 30 hectares in raining seasons. The surrounding area is forest, very beautiful and it has the basic facilities.	Near the rural areas of Azni and Pele, 15 km west of Kiasar	ecotourism	a lot	national	53 25 2 E 36 14 14 N	
3	Churett lake (Mian sheh)	natural	The lake is in the rift of a valley with a steep slope; round the lake is covered by virgin forest and old trees	Churet village in Garmab Rural District	ecotourism	moderate	regional	53 30 1 E 36 22 20 N	
4	Sari-Semn an Road, between Kiasar-Folad Mahaleh	artificial	It is among the 10 most beautiful tourist roads of Iran, and the longest forest road in Iran exceeding 90 kilometers.	Between Kiasar and Folad Mahaleh	ecotourism	alot	National		
5	Count ryside and springs	natural	Villages such as Telma Darreh, Eyval, Sunam, Board	Chahardangeh District	Ecotourism and health	Average	regional		

Rows	Name	Type	Features	location	Tourism type	Demand	Scope and performance range	Geographical coordinates	Image or map
6	Crops and livestock	natural	-vegetables(cucumbers, tomatoes, green beans, garlic) -apples, plums and cherries; -potatoes, onions, tobacco, rapeseed and sunflower, rice	Chahardangeh District	food tourism and agro tourism	A little	regional		
7	architecture and rural handicrafts	cultural	the villages of Arvest, Mal Khast, and Qaleh Sar, Churet and Board with their special architectural features in mountain areas -making scarves, mats, embroidery	Chahardangeh District	Rural tourism	alittle	regional		
8	Diversity in vegetation	natural	450 plant species, a total of 259 species belonging to 211 genera of 65 type - 23 species of risk-meter group, in general 18 species of Flora Park unique to Iran. It is a location for rare plant species such as Ori and Sorkhdari oaks and wild tulips.	Chahardangeh District	Biotourism	Average	regional		
9	animal varieties	natural	habitat of some species including chamois, goats and sheep, leopards, bears, wild boar and variety of birds, especially pheasants, partridges	Chahardangeh District, Sari County	Biotourism	Average	regional		
10	Kiasar National and Preserved Park	natural	Area: 7312 Hectares - mountain slopes covered with flowering plants and grasslands, historical and cultural monuments (old castle) unique outlook	Kiasar	Biotourism	Average	regional	28 43 53 E 36 8 N	

3.2. Method

This qualitative study is an applied and developmental one which has used qualitative content analysis (inductive approach). The

participants were a number of experts, locals, and tourists in Chahardangeh District, Sari province. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, at first, a hybrid approach (a

descriptive-analytical method) was used. In this phase, using the available secondary information, we assessed the tourist attractions, tourism facilities and services and their effects on regional development of the study area. In the next step, we used SWOT model to analyze the data and provide a strategy for tourism development. To develop a strategy in SWOT format, one can create a matrix from the elements known as SWOT matrix or assessment matrix. In this method, we aimed to evaluate opportunities and threats on the one hand, and the strengths and weaknesses on the other hand. In fact, analysis of strengths and weaknesses in the internal environment and the analysis of opportunities and threats in the

external environment are systematic processes. In this study, in order to remove or reduce the weaknesses of tourism development in the lakes of the study area, appropriate strategies have been provided. Quantitative analysis of SWAT produces more detailed data for SWAT analysis, and this method has adopted itself to multi-attribute decision making (MADM), which uses multi-layered plans to simplify the sophisticated problems. Therefore, it is able to implement SWAT analysis at the same time for this study, and use the methods used in SWAT analysis including external factors evaluation matrix (EFE) and internal factors evaluation matrix (IFE).

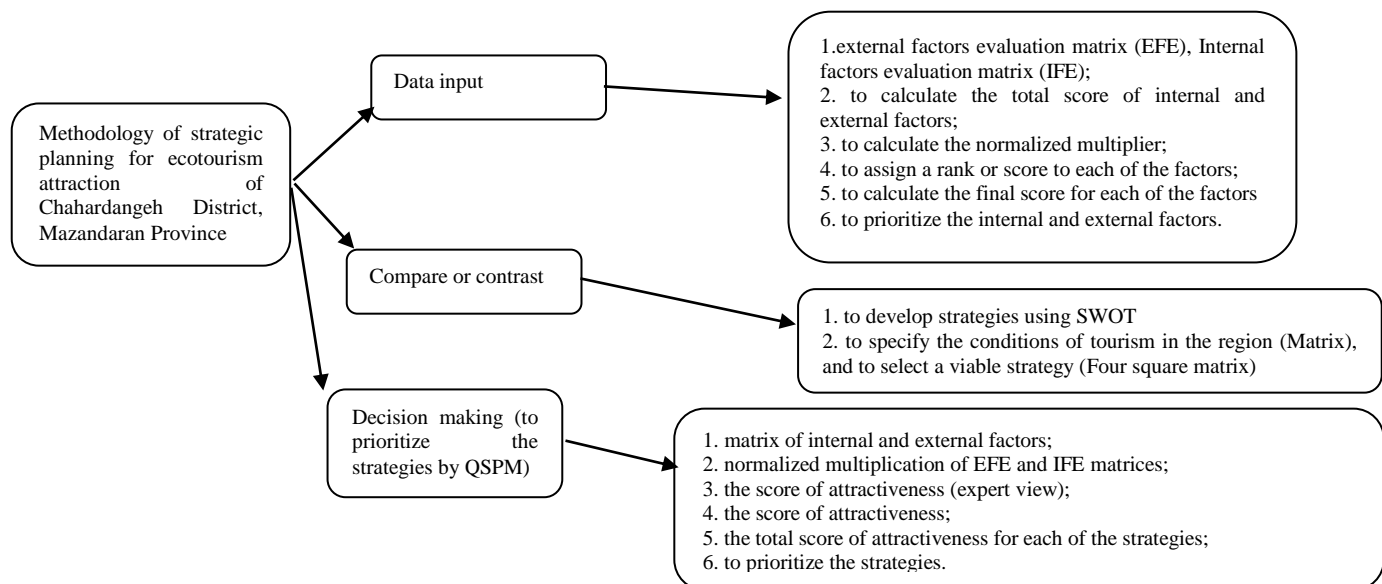


Figure 2: Research process
(Source: Research findings, 2016)

4. Research Findings

In order to develop solutions and policies for development through the above mentioned tourist attractions, it is necessary to identify the four main factors (SWOT) in order to address weaknesses and threats, and improve the strengths and opportunities. Therefore, development strategies for these regions were identified through specifying the strengths and opportunities for 1. providing aggressive strategies based on exploiting regional

advantages, 2. explaining the most important opportunities available to overcome the weaknesses in the region and remove the threats outside the area, 3. putting emphasis on diversification strategies in order to meet the needs of the natural attractions and 4. proposing defensive strategies to address the vulnerabilities of the area. SWOT matrix makes it possible to formulate the above four strategies. However, in the course of implementing the techniques and strategies, they are likely to overlap with each other, or

they might be implemented in coordination with one another. The four strategies are shown in [Table 4](#):

Table 4. Matrix of strategies

(Source: Research findings, 2016)

SWOT Matrix		Internal Environment	
		Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
External Environment	Opportunities (O)	Aggressive strategies (SO) (Max-Max)	Adaptive strategies or revision (WO) (Min-Max)
	Threats (T)	Variation or contingency (ST) (Max-Min)	Defensive strategies (WT) (Min-Min)

4.1. The Internal Factors Affecting Tourism in the Study Area

This study aims to assess the internal environment of the study area to identify the strengths and weaknesses, i.e., the aspects involved in achieving the goals of planning and performing the tasks of that favorable or preventive subject. Therefore, in this part, we focus on available strategies, resources, performance as the strengths and weaknesses in the framework of development (economic, social, ecological, and institutional) aspects summarized in the Table 5. [Table 5](#) shows the matrix of internal factors affecting tourism in the study area.

Table 5: Matrix of internal factors affecting tourism attractions in Chahardangeh District, Sari Province

(Source: Research findings, 2016)

Dimensions of development	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Economic	S1 – the potentials of the area for investment in tourism industry, and efficient use of natural resources, and the need for a little investment in ecotourism in the region S2 - high economic capacity (water, rowing, skating, villages around the lake and Badab Sort spring, easy transportation and villas) - the sale of agricultural, horticultural, livestock and forest products	W1-lack of proper and adequate government and private sectors investment W2- lack of proper financial planning and investment in how to use the economic advantages and potentials W3-lack of coordination between the private sector and relevant tourism organizations in the province
Socio- cultural	S1-customs and local culture and special handicrafts produced by people of the region, including Sari, Kiasar and surrounding villages; S2 - community participation and public increased awareness and sense of hospitality in the region, multiple rural areas suitable for hosting tourism tours S3–high social security in the region and reduced rural-urban migration rate S4- historic and religious monuments in the region	W1- lack of adequate sanitary facilities and services W2 - lack of skilled and trained workforce in various sectors of the region W3- the impact of tourism and visitors on cultural heritage and local customs
Ecological and Environmental	S1- unique roads and landscapes, various ecotourism attractions (the region has different ecosystems including forests, pastures, mountains, plains, rivers, and lakes); S2 – special ecotourism attractions (Badab Sort springs, Churet Lake, semi-natural lake (Ab-Bandan) Alandan (Pele Azni);	W1- inadequate environmental and physical infrastructure such as ecotourism camps tailored to the environment W2 - the destruction of forests, meadows and risk of degrading the flora and

Dimensions of development	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Ecological and Environmental	S3 - beautiful landscapes and protected areas and national parks with wildlife and vegetation diversity (diversity of flora and fauna); S4 – being valuable at the regional, national and international level, in scientific dimensions of bio-tourism and ecotourism and agritourism, village tourism and green tourism; S5 - quiet and pristine mountains, surrounding attractions for tourism leisure, hiking (ecotourism and health) and village tourism; S6 - strategic location of the area, proximity to ecotourism attractions providing strong incentives for tourists to visit natural attractions.	fauna by local community through hunting and cutting off the trees W3-subsequent change in agricultural and horticultural land use for building houses and villas W4 –contamination of water, soil and air resources by local communities, for instance through overuse of chemical fertilizers, irregular plowing, infiltration of leachate and odor caused by incorrect site selection for landfill, and wastewater of urban and rural areas w5 - The vulnerability level of the natural attractions of the lakes, and Badab Sort through digging wells and soil erosion around the attractions
Institutional	S1 – paying more attention to issues of tourism by officials and local authorities trying to attract more tourists S2 – attention payed by tours and NGOs to regional natural attractions and NGO’s ecotourism	W1 - lack of training provided by related organizations for people to know how to use the potentials of the attractions W2 – lack of a local unique management to monitor the use of nature, and the absence of prosecution of offenders by relevant agencies

4.2. External Factors Affecting Tourism in the Study Area:

In this part, we sought to identify the effects of the external environment in the study area, and identify the opportunities and threats associated with expansion of tourism. Based on the studies and the status of the environment around the study area, the range

of existing opportunities and threats affecting the area in terms of tourism in the form of development dimensions (economic, social, ecological and institutional) is described in Table 6. Table 6 shows the matrix of external factors affecting tourism of the lakes and Badab Sort spring.

Table 6: Matrix of external factors affecting tourism attractions in Chahardangeh District, Sari province
(Source: Research findings, 2016)

Dimensions of development	opportunities	threats
Economic	O1 - the increasing interest of the private sector to invest in the tourism sector, and increase the participation of local people and improve tourism products and the joint venture of public-private sector O2 = to create employment and income for different types of work force (unskilled workers to experts) and creating new job opportunities based on natural and cultural potentials of the area O3- potentials for creating an ecotourism hub to attract more tourists (biotourism, ecotourism and health, agritourism and tourism economy)	T1 - lack of public sector investment proportional to increased findings T2 –economic depression and lower income of Iranian which may affect tourism economy of the families T3 - lack of funds and investment for providing furniture, infrastructure of tourism in the study area T4- speculative sale of lands, unproductive employment and unauthorized construction

Dimensions of development	opportunities	threats
Socio-cultural	<p>O1-Increased motivation of tourists to visit this area thanks to numerous natural and eye-catching attractions in the region</p> <p>O2 - potential development of tourism resources and special ecotourism tours and festivals on a national and international level</p> <p>O3 - regional potentials for winter tourism, agritourism and centralized tourism and attracting sport tourists</p>	<p>T1 - lack of proper training and supervision as a centralized and semi-centralized natural resort</p> <p>T2 - the lack of appropriate facilities, equipment and accommodation services in the region</p> <p>T3 - lack of cultural interaction between host and guest community, and the impact of tourism on host culture and degradation of local culture and traditions.</p> <p>T4 - seasonal distribution of visitors and more thriving summer tourism, and decentralized regional tourism</p> <p>T5 -change in demographic and social structure of the region</p>
Environmental and ecological factors	<p>O1- high value and importance in regional, national and international level, in educational and scientific dimensions: tectonics, sedimentology, geology, hydrology and research</p> <p>O2- proximity to beautiful Semnan-Kiasar and Sari road, being situated between Mazandaran and Semnan provinces and natural attractions such as Soleiman Dam, Strait of Shahid Rajaei, and the coast of the Caspian Sea</p> <p>O3- a suitable climate and exposure to air and watersheds and water resources suitable for tourism development planning;</p> <p>O4- Nature therapy and sports such as paragliding, hiking, etc.</p> <p>O5- being ecotone (intermediate between two climates and ecosystems of the humid Caspian and hot dry desert) and having thermal comfort bioclimatic suitable for outdoor tourism</p> <p>O6 -Mazandaran province has about 3 million tourist attractions and annually attracts more than 15 million domestic and foreign tourists</p>	<p>T1 - environmental threats and damage to nature as result of tourists, cutting trees off, illegal hunting, fire, etc.</p> <p>T2 - air pollution, contamination of water resources, and soil by tourists through dumping waste in nature, particularly around natural attractions;</p> <p>T3 - potential environmental hazards in the region, such as floods, droughts, landslides, etc.</p> <p>T4- Lack of adequate and clear understanding of environmental and ecological issues among different classes of tourists.</p>
Institutional	<p>O1- the increased number of tourists compared to previous years and the attention of tourists and tourist agencies to the region</p> <p>O2-websites and media which introduce the natural and recreational attractions of the region, and the potential for development of information networks and services</p>	<p>T1- Lack of single local management to monitor how the nature is used</p> <p>T2 -improper use of tourist attractions by tourists, and dispute between the Department of Natural Resource, and the Cultural Heritage Organization over management of natural attractions such as Badab Sort</p> <p>T2- incorrect site selection for cement plant and landfill, non-normative extraction of minerals, disorganized use of agricultural lands and cadastral layout of the area by relevant organizations</p>

4.3. Analysis of Internal and External Factors

Table 7: Analysis matrix of internal and external factors affecting tourism in Chahardangeh District, Sari Province

(Source: Research findings, 2016)

Dimensions of development	Internal factors					External factors				
	People / Experts / Tourists					People / Experts / Tourists				
SWAT analysis	Strength Weakness	Total score	Total normalized score	Score	Final Score	opportunity Threat	Total score	Total normalized score	Score	Final Score
Economic	S1	125	0.041	2	0.082	O1	116	0.038	2	0.076
	S2	124	0.041	3	0.082	O2	125	0.041	3	0.124
	S3	104	0.032	3	0.068	O3	120	0.039	3	0.120
	W1	121	0.039	3	0.117	T1	91	0.030	1	0.030
	W2	118	0.038	2	0.077	T2	85	0.028	1	0.028
	W3	125	0.040	3	0.120	T3	98	0.031	1	0.031
						T4	85	0.028	2	0.064
Socio-cultural	S1	105	0.039	2	0.078	O1	114	0.037	2	0.074
	S2	100	0.032	2	0.066	O2	120	0.039	1	0.039
	S3	95	0.031	2	0.062	O3	115	0.038	1	0.038
	S4	104	0.033	2	0.070					
	W1	119	0.038	2	0.076	T1	101	0.032	2	0.065
	W2	118	0.037	2	0.074	T2	100	0.032	2	0.064
	W3	100	0.032	1	0.032	T3	100	0.032	1	0.032
						T4	103	0.033	2	0.066
						T5	100	0.032	2	0.068
Environmental and ecological factors	S1	127	0.041	4	0.164	O1	125	0.039	4	0.164
	S2	130	0.041	4	0.165	O2	108	0.034	4	0.105
	S3	109	0.035	3	0.105	O3	115	0.038	3	0.114
	S4	120	0.038	3	0.114	O4	110	0.035	3	0.105
	S5	125	0.040	3	0.120	O5	113	0.036	3	0.108
	S6	130	0.041	3	0.123	O6	115	0.038	3	0.114
	W1	120	0.038	3	0.114	T1	128	0.040	4	0.160
	W2	111	0.035	3	0.105	T2	118	0.037	4	0.158
	W3	134	0.043	4	0.172	T3	107	0.033	4	0.142
	W4	128	0.041	3	0.123	T4	110	0.034	2	0.068
						O1				
						O2				
Institutional	S1	115	0.036	2	0.075	O2	117	0.036	3	0.110
	S2	100	0.032	3	0.096	O3	115	0.035	4	0.140
	W1	102	0.033	2	0.066	T1	103	0.033	2	0.066
	W2	107	0.033	2	0.068	T2	95	0.031	2	0.062
						T3	110	0.034	3	0.102
Sum			1		2.51			1		2.57

With respect to Table 7, the total score of internal factors and external factors were 2.51 and 2.57 respectively. It means that management of ecotourism activities with regard to internal and external factors is in a

favorable and higher than moderate state, and it is also in aggressive mode. However, the figures are very close to those of other strategies. In case of lack of proper planning, the position and strategies will change.

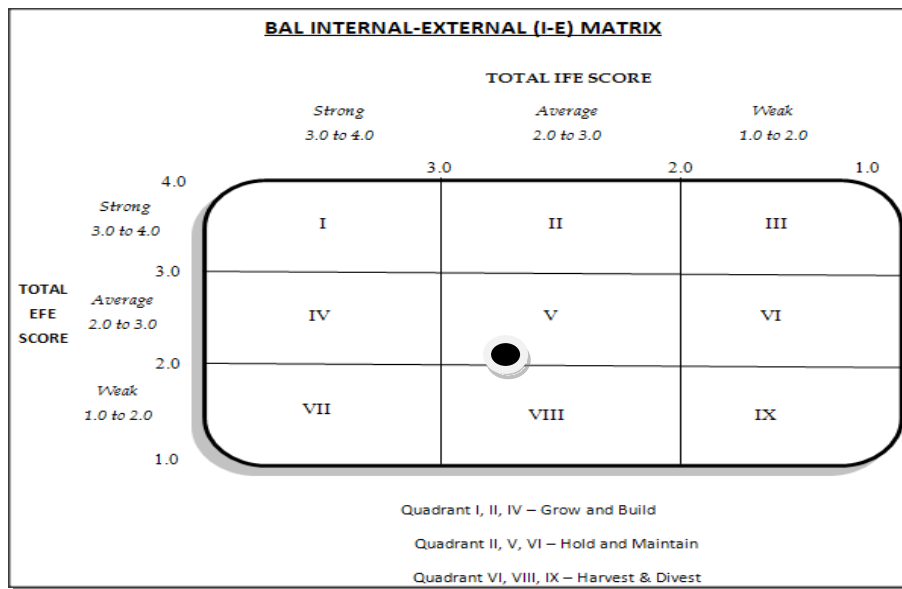


Figure 3: Results of internal matrix
(Source: Research findings, 2016)

The results of internal matrix showed that the factors of the study are in second area and cell V. The situation of the study area shows that in terms of tourism, Chahardangeh District is in a middle position. After specifying the tourism state of Chahardangeh District for developing more important strategies, it is better to use four-square matrix, as the situation of the study area suggests the greater

importance of each strategy compared to other strategies. In the four square matrix shown below, if the situation of the study area (obtained from the symmetry of total sum of internal and external factors) is within each of the strategies, it suggests the importance of the strategy compared to other strategies (Figure 4).

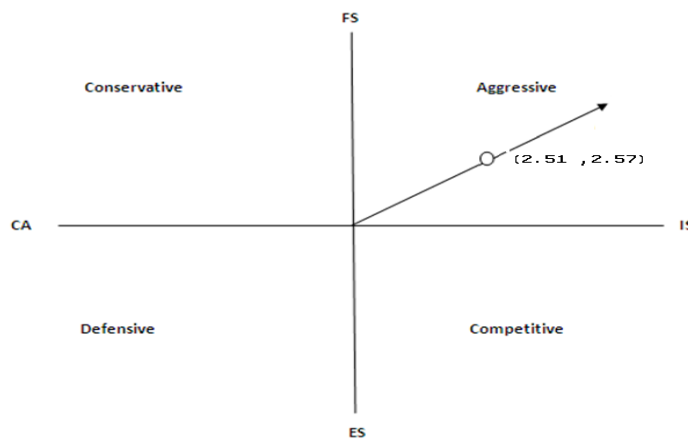


Figure 4: Four square matrix of strategies (Final score of IFE matrix)
(Source: Research findings, 2016)

4.4. Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM)

At this point, Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) was utilized. Using this matrix, the relative attractiveness of strategies was determined. In this model, through the

multiplication of the final score by the attractiveness score (this score is based on an expert opinion of 0 to 4 for each factor), the final score determined the attractiveness of

each strategy. In this way, the tourism development strategies of the Chahardangeh district were prioritized. The following table shows the priorities of the strategies.

Table 8: the priority of the strategies

(Source: Research findings, 2016)

	score	strategy	score	strategy	score	strategy	score	strategy	score	strategy	score	strategy
First priority	2.00	ST 1	2.07	ST 4	2.13	SO 5	2.24	SO 5	2.45	SO 4	2.61	ST 3
Second priority	1.60	WT 4	1.61	ST 3	1.62	ST 2	1.67	WO 2	1.71	WT 1	1.94	SO 3
Third priority	1.17	WT 2	1.18	WT 3	1.54	WO 4	1.57	WO 3	1.35	WO 5	1.36	WO 1

4.5. Guidelines and Tourist Strategies for the Area and Chahardangeh District

A) Aggressive Strategies (SO):

In an aggressive strategy, foreign opportunities are exploited in such a way that the strategy focuses on internal strengths and external opportunities. Usually, in order to achieve such a situation, at first WO, ST or WT strategies should be used. The following guidelines can be used to meet some of the requirements of Miansheh, Pele Azni, and Badab Sort lakes.

- encourage and support the private sector by clarifying the government policies and local plans, tax collection methods, and paying loans etc., so that it makes more investment in Alandan, Miansheh, and Badab Sort lakes;
- put more emphasis on the development of ecotourism and sport tourism;
- make optimal use of the ecological capabilities of the lakes and their surroundings, such as beautiful and unique landscapes, and make optimal and targeted use of the greater incentives for taking trips to enjoy the attractions and tourist products, and create employment and income for its inhabitants.

B) Diversification strategies or strategy of opportunities (ST):

In fact, diversification strategy focuses on the internal strengths and external threats. Furthermore, the qualities of the region demonstrates the threats and their aims are to improve the existing qualities and reduce the threats by developing tourism projects and communications. The following guidelines illustrates the way the requirements of

Miansheh, Pele Azni, and Badab Sort Lakes can be met and the threats can be eliminated.

- prevent the destruction of forests, meadows and vegetation around the lakes by teaching tourists not to damage the landscape of the region;
- prevent digging wells, and stop soil erosion, and take protective measures to safeguard the attractions;
- diversify the facilities, activities and tourist services in order to satisfy tourists and thereby increase the number of tourists;
- determine the optimum carrying capacity and population density in order to reduce the pressure and overcrowding in this area and avoid the loss and destruction;
- develop and equip the tourist routes (widen and repair the roads, and pave all the roads) and put up signs noting laws and regulations in the area and produce manuals to train and inform the tourists;
- utilize the organizational capacity, rules and regulations in order to reduce the risks, and the environmental and ecological pollutions in the lakes of the area and Badab Sort;
- ensure the security of the lakes and springs in order to avoid social violations and other offenses.

C) Revision or interactive strategy (WO):

One of the ways WO strategies can be used is to use other opportunities to take advantage of

opportunities, and the other way is to provide the necessary conditions to make use of opportunities. In this regard, we can mention the following points.

- While reviewing the type and manner of planning and management of the lakes, it is necessary to make logical use of the institutions, supportive laws and regulations for upgrading and equipping the infrastructure, facilities and equipment.
- review the distribution of facilities, services and tourist facilities (such as hotels, shopping centers, malls, pergolas, etc.)
- take advantage of popular participation in the development, procurement and implementation of projects and equipping of Alandan and Badab Sort tourist attractions.
- Due to the availability of tourist facilities and services in the region, it is necessary that specialists and various institutions take serious measures in order to revive and develop these areas.
- review and develop the relevant institutions and organizations in the study area to educate people and tourists to make optimal and targeted use of the benefits and positive effects of tourism (road construction, clean roads, etc.)

D) Defensive Strategies (WT):

Comparing the main internal and external factors is the most difficult part of developing strategies for threats, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses, and requires accurate and good judgment. However, there is nothing as the best set of comparable factors.

These strategies, while emphasizing the vulnerability of the study area, present the following guidelines:

- hold seminars and meetings about the development of investment in the tourism industry by the city council with other related institutions and entrepreneurs, and invite domestic and foreign investors;
- provide facilities and privileges for investment in the construction of residential complexes, recreational facilities such as amusement parks along with the attractions mentioned above, etc.
- publicize the capabilities and tourism potentials of the lakes and Badab Sort for tourists and nature lovers, etc. through the

national media, tourism sites, tourism booklets, internet, etc.

-teach people how to interact with tourists in the study area to avoid conflicts between tourists and the locals. Tourist should also be taught about the local culture and customs, special places and other subjects.

-adopt special rules and regulations for optimal use of the attractions and tourist products and prevent the destruction, pollution and loss of these ecological assets around the lakes.

-encourage people to participate in development of tourism infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and to generate income through tourism, and encourage the participation of private sector in areas where people cannot participate or invest.

In order to encourage people to travel to Sari and Chahardangeh, in particular, to natural lakes of Miansheh, Pele Azni, and Badab Sort spring, the development of tourism in this area should be performed using tourism research and marketing strategies, and taking into account various aspects and attractions.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

According to surveys and field studies, in order to provide guidelines for development of tourism in target areas such as the Lake of Alandan, Badab Sort, and Churet, we can present the results in both qualitative and quantitative modes, in the form of answers to some research questions.

What are the most important strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities and threats affecting the development of tourism sector in Chahardangeh District in Sari County?

Most internal and external factors affecting the development of tourism potentials in Chahardangeh District, with regard to ecotourism qualities in this district, mainly focused on environmental indices affecting tourism development. In an answer to this question, we can say that the strengths of the Chahardangeh District, mainly its natural attractions, represents the favorable nature of Chahardangeh District for development of ecotourism in Iran.

Weaknesses of tourism development in Chahardangeh District suggest that although the natural conditions of the area have made it

suitable for tourism development, in terms of managerial and institutional indices, tourism development weaknesses of Chahardangeh District are more significant than other indices. In exploring tourism opportunities in Chahardangeh District, compared to other indices, natural indices are far more important. In assessing the threats, the importance of environmental and natural indices compared to other indices were perceived.

Tourism conditions in Chahardangeh District is in the middle position, i.e., the area is in a situation that has a lot of strengths and also major weaknesses for tourism development. Despite numerous opportunities for tourism development, unfortunately, the area has failed to take advantage of these potentials for tourism development. Besides, numerous threats, particularly natural ones, can affect the tourism sector in Chahardangeh District.

How is the condition of tourism in Chahardangeh District?

Tourism in Chahardangeh District is in an average state which means the area is in a situation that has a lot of strengths and also major weaknesses in tourism development. Despite numerous opportunities for tourism development, unfortunately, people have failed to take advantage of these potentials for tourism development. Besides, with regard to natural and environmental conditions, numerous threats can affect the tourism sector in Chahardangeh District.

What are the appropriate strategies for tourism development in Chahardangeh District?

It was suggested that much emphasis should be placed on the role of planning and publicity. Training courses, revision of advertisement and awareness raising, activities related to publicity and advertisement such as tourism conferences, various tourism programs, tourism management and planning, employing expert manpower and publicizing the attractions at various levels are some of the advertisement related activities and programs.

Another conclusion drawn from the discussion of strategies is that most strategies developed in planning and advertisement strategies are formulated in the form of WO (revision strategies) and WT (defensive strategies). This suggests that the above strategies are also

aimed at addressing the weaknesses and preventing threats, and trying to make maximum use of the opportunities for tourism development in the Chahardangeh District.

Comparing the study results with other similar studies, we came to the conclusion that although the research methodology was similar to other researches, the strengths of the work was its holistic view of various aspects of ecotourism, and research on an important part of Iran, about which no serious research was carried out so far.

The proposed solutions are:

1. Shortage of data and basic information in all fields of tourism, especially in rural tourism and ecotourism is significant. Therefore, it is proposed to implement targeted plans to identify underutilized areas related to tourism development in this district.

2. Studies showed that Chahardangeh District is not in a desirable condition in tourism infrastructure. Undoubtedly, proportional to the environment, the tourism development in this area should be accompanied by improving the infrastructure and essential equipment to attract more tourists.

3. To make plans for advertisement and tourism marketing, and improving targeted tours to the region.

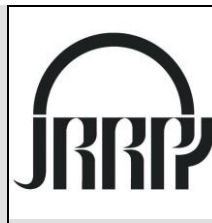
4. Among the strengths in the study area, environmental and ecological factors such as beautiful and unique landscapes, forests, mountains, lakes, springs, etc., together with green spaces were considered to be the main advantages of the region for the development of tourism. In order to make optimal use of these factors, more emphasis should be placed on the development of ecotourism and biotourism, sports tourism, health tourism, rural tourism, tourist villages, green tourism, agritourism, etc.

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بررسی راهبردهای توسعه طبیعت گردی در بخش چهاردانگه شهرستان ساری

سعید کامیابی*^۱ - محمدعلی رجایی ریزی^۲

۱- دانشیار اقلیم شناسی، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد سمنان، سمنان، ایران.

۲- استادیار جغرافیا و برنامه‌ریزی شهری، دانشگاه هنر اصفهان، اصفهان، ایران.

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چکیده مبسوط

۱. مقدمه

تا کنون بیش از ۳۰۰ منطقه طبیعت‌گردی در کشور شناسایی شده و مازندران با حدود ۳ هزار جاذبه گردشگری طبیعی همچون غارها، تالابها، چشمه‌های آب‌معدنی، آبشارهای زیبا، جنگل، کوه و دریا، از استان‌های برتر در جذب گردشگر است که سالانه بیش از ۱۵ میلیون گردشگر داخلی و خارجی به آن وارد می‌شوند. بهره برداری از این موقعیت ضرورت ایجاد فضای مساعدی در قالب برنامه ریزی جامع و فراگیر را ضروری می‌سازد. لذا به منظور بهبود و استفاده از توانمندی‌های محیطی و توریستی در منطقه نمونه گردشگری دریاچه الندان و باداب سورت که به لحاظ ساختاری، اکولوژیکی و فضایی برای گذران اوقات فراغت و لذت بردن از طبیعت مورد توجه گردشگران و مسافران می‌باشد، ضرورت ارائه راهبردهای مناسب به جهت توسعه گردشگری منطقه مورد مطالعه با توجه به شرایط و ویژگی‌های زیست‌محیطی و جاذبه‌ها و فراورده‌های اکولوژیکی (طبیعی و انسانی) به طور فزاینده‌ای احساس می‌شود. در این پژوهش با نظر گرفتن نکات فوق و فهم این مطلب که شناخت پتانسیل‌ها و محدودیت‌های گردشگری بخش چهار دانگه ساری می‌تواند تاثیر سازنده‌ای در برنامه‌ریزی مناسب برای توسعه توریسم منطقه و رفع مشکلات و مسائل آن داشته باشد، تلاش بر این شده است که تا ضمن پاسخگویی به این پرسش که آیا راهکارهایی جهت توسعه گردشگری که منجر به توسعه گردشگری منطقه و ملی بشود وجود دارد؟ به بررسی و تحلیل نقاط قوت، ضعف، فرصت‌ها و تهدیدها جهت توسعه

گردشگری دریاچه الندان و باداب سورت پرداخته و در نهایت امر با توجه به این دیدگاه‌ها و نظرات، راهبردهایی مناسب برای توسعه توریسم با استفاده از تکنیک سوات (SWOT) به جهت بهره‌گیری بهینه و هدفمند از نقاط قوت و فرصت‌ها و تقویت یا از بین بردن نقاط ضعف و تهدیدها در جهت دستیابی به توسعه گردشگری باداب سورت، دریاچه پله ازنی و دریاچه میانسه ارائه شود.

۲. مبانی نظری

اکوتوریسم سفر مسئولانه به طبیعت است، که محیط زیست را حفظ و رفاه مردم محلی را افزایش می‌دهد. جذابیت‌های گردشگری متناسب با میزان جذابیت‌های خود می‌توانند گردشگران را به سوی خود جلب کنند. در واقع ساختار گردشگری یک مکان در برگیرنده عواملی است که می‌تواند انگیزه بیشتری را برای تقاضای گردشگری در آن مکان فراهم آورد، عوامل طبیعی همچون ساخت توپوگرافیک، شرایط اقلیمی، وضعیت منابع آب، پوشش گیاهی و حیات وحش از مهمترین عواملی است که به چشم‌اندازهای طبیعی، شکل مجزا و مختص به خود می‌بخشد. کوه و کوهستان، دره، دشت، غار، رودخانه، چشمه، آبشار، دریا و ساحل، دریاچه و تالاب، پوشش گیاهی و حیات وحش در زمره جاذبه‌های طبیعی تفرجگاهی محسوب می‌شوند. در دهه‌های اخیر توجه به توان‌های محیطی و اکولوژیکی سبب گشته تا طبیعت‌گردی (اکوتوریسم) بیش از سایر اشکال گردشگری نمود عینی پیدا کند و جزء سازگارترین نوع توریسم در جهان به‌شمار آید. براساس برآورد سازمان توریسم جهانی این نوع توریسم بین ۱۰ تا ۳۰ درصد رشد داشته است. در این بین

* نویسنده مسؤول: Email: saeidkamyabi@gmail.com

ولی عددهای بدست آمده خیلی نزدیک مرز دیگر استراتژی ها می باشد که در صورت عدم تحقق برنامه ریزی مناسب جایگاه و راهبرد دستخوش تغییر خواهد شد.

۵. نتیجه گیری

با توجه به بررسی ها و مطالعات میدانی انجام شده، به منظور ارائه راهکارهای توسعه توریسم مناطق هدف گردشگری همچون دریاچه الندان و باداب سورت، و دریاچه چورت با این توصیف می توان نتایج بدست آمده را در دو جنبه کیفی و کمی در قالب جواب به پرسش های تحقیق ارائه داد. بیشتر عوامل درونی و بیرونی موثر بر توسعه توان های بالقوه گردشگری بخش چهار دانگه با توجه به قابلیت های گردشگری طبیعت در این بخش، بیشتر بر روی شاخص زیست محیطی و طبیعی موثر بر توسعه گردشگری متمرکز بوده است. نقاط ضعف توسعه گردشگری بخش چهار دانگه، بیشتر نشان دهنده این مسئله است که به لحاظ شاخص مدیریتی و نهادی ضعف های توسعه گردشگری بخش چهار دانگه نسبت به سایر شاخص ها قابل ملاحظه تر می باشد. در بررسی فرصت های گردشگری بخش چهار دانگه نیز شاخص طبیعی نسبت به سایر شاخص ها از اهمیت بیشتری برخوردار می باشد. در بررسی نقاط تهدید نیز مجدداً اهمیت شاخص زیست محیطی و طبیعی نسبت به سایر شاخص مشخص گردید.

از تعیین راهبردها می توان نتیجه گرفت این است که بیشتر راهبردهایی که در زمینه برنامه ریزی و تبلیغات تدوین گردیده در قالب راهبردهای WO (راهبردهای بازنگری) و WT (راهبردهای تدافعی) می باشد. این مسئله بیان کننده این مطلب است که راهبردهای تعیین شده هم در جهت برطرف کردن ضعف ها و جلوگیری از تهدیدها و در تلاش برای حداکثر استفاده از فرصت های توسعه گردشگری بخش چهار دانگه می باشد

کلمات کلیدی: راهبرد مناسب، طبیعت گردی، بخش چهاردانگه، باداب سورت، دریاچه پله ازنی، دریاچه میانسه.

تشکر و قدرانی

این پژوهش حاضی حامی مالی نداشته و حاصل فعالیت علمی نویسندگان است.

کشور ایران با برخورداری از طبیعت چهار فصل، یکی از بی بدیل ترین کشورهای در سطح جهانی در حوزه صنعت توریسم محسوب می شود. بطوری که ایران به لحاظ جاذبه های جهانگردی جزو ۱۰ کشور در جهان می باشد. تا کنون بیش از ۳۰۰ منطقه طبیعت گردی در کشور شناسایی شده و مازندران با حدود ۳ هزار جاذبه گردشگری طبیعی همچون غارها، تالاب ها، چشمه های آب معدنی، آبشارهای زیبا، جنگل، کوه و دریا، از استانهای برتر در جذب گردشگر است که سالانه بیش از ۱۵ میلیون گردشگر داخلی و خارجی به آن وارد می شوند، بهره برداری از این موقعیت ضرورت ایجاد فضای مساعدی در قالب برنامه ریزی جامع و فراگیر را ضروری می سازد.

۳. روش تحقیق

پژوهش حاضر از لحاظ هدف توسعه ای - کاربردی و از لحاظ پارادایم در گروه پژوهش های کیفی قرار دارد که در تبیین از تحلیل محتوای کیفی (رهیافت استقرایی) بهره گرفته است. مشارکت کنندگان این پژوهش تعدادی از کارشناسان، مردم محلی و گردشگران منطقه بخش چهار دانگه ساری می باشند. جهت دستیابی به اهداف پژوهش مورد نظر ابتدا از روش ترکیبی (روش های توصیفی، تحلیلی) استفاده شده است که در این مرحله با توجه به اطلاعات ثانوی موجود به بررسی جاذبه ها، امکانات و خدمات گردشگری و وضعیت توریسم و آثار آن در توسعه منطقه مطالعه شده پرداخته شده سپس در مراحل بعدی این پژوهش جهت تجزیه و تحلیل اطلاعات و ارائه راهبرد و استراتژی توسعه توریسم از مدل تحلیلی سوات استفاده شده است. برای گسترش و توسعه یک استراتژی در قالب روش سوات یک ماتریس از عوامل می توان ایجاد کرد که به ماتریس سوات یا ماتریس ارزیابی معروف است. در این روش، هدف ارزیابی فرصت ها و تهدیدهای محیطی از یک طرف و نقاط ضعف و قوت از سوی دیگر مورد توجه می باشد.

۴. یافته های تحقیق

جمع امتیاز عوامل درونی عدد ۲،۵۱ و جمع امتیاز عوامل بیرونی عدد ۲،۵۷ بدست می آید. این بدان معناست که مدیریت فعالیتهای طبیعت گردی از نظر عوامل درونی و بیرونی در حالت مطلوب و متوسط رو به بالا است و در حالت تهاجمی قرار دارد

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