



## Spatial Analysis of the Indicators of Rural Eco-resorts (Case Study: Sari County, Iran)

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### Abstract

**Purpose-** The development of eco-resorts is important for the accommodation of domestic and foreign tourists; therefore, their quality of indicators should be improved regardless of its economic approach. The purpose of this study is to spatially analyze the status of rural eco-resorts in Sari. In doing so, the present study seeks to answer these key questions: 1) What is the current status of rural eco-resorts indicators? 2) What is the level of the studied villages in terms of eco-resorts indicators?

**Design/methodology/approach-** The current study is of descriptive-analytical and applied type in terms of approach and aim, respectively. Documentary and field study methods were used to obtain the required data. The statistical population of this study consisted of two groups. The first group included experts in tourism who were selected through the census method (N=15). The second group included tourists who had stayed in these eco-resorts. According to the Cochran's formula, with an error value of 0.07, 181 questionnaires were completed randomly. In order to analyze the data, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and variance), inferential (one-sample t-test) and VIKOR method were used.

**Findings-** Findings of the study showed that based on the significance level of the one-sample test, there is a significant relationship and difference between 7 indicators of the research. Late Letkan & Late Leteka, Tapurestan and Miansheh ranked first to third, and eco-resorts in Mah Joon (Q = 0.785), Senam and Saray Khan (Q = 0.828) had the lowest ranks. Therefore, it can be said that the resorts, which are at an acceptable level in terms of the studied indicators, have appropriate facilities and services in eco-resorts.

**Key words:** Eco-resorts, Rural areas, VIKOR method, Sari County.

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## 1. Introduction

Today, the category of eco-resorts (ecotourism resorts) is not a new topic from tourists' perspectives. The fact that people have long been curious to explore unknown and new places is proven in the history of human life. Initially, the goal of the explorer human was to reach unseen and pristine places on earth, but now tourists have different motivations to travel on this planet; They go on trips for the sake of recreation, tourism, pilgrimage and leisure (Maleki, Parvizian, & Ahmadi, 2017). As ecotourism is a new type of tourism and is not a source of consumption, it has been proposed and studied as a tool for sustainable development since 1990 by non-governmental organizations, development experts and academic centers (Rostampisheh et al., 2019). Ecotourism is suitable for people with adventurous characteristics and interest in learning. It focuses on natural, cultural and historical places that are less considered (Lenao & Basupi, 2016). Therefore, its significance for tourists has caused this branch of tourism to account for approximately 27% of international trips, and if it is properly managed, it can even lead to local employment, local development opportunities and the preservation of the natural environment (Roshanali & Riahi, 2017). It has been argued that ecotourism should be comprehensively conceptualized in local environments to significantly assess the relationship between the natural environment and local communities and to meet sustainable consequences based on local community needs and environmental goals.

In fact, this is consistent with the UNs sustainable development goals, especially with regard to the protection of forests, water and climate change, as well as the improvement of the living conditions of local people (Yaghoubi et al., 2018). Therefore, in order to be able to assess the condition of eco-resorts, we need the use of indicators, which can be explained. Therefore, the issue of improving the quality of eco-resorts indicators through the development of appropriate services, facilities and infrastructure and its management in order to meet the needs of tourists is necessary (as cited in Sojasi Gheidari & Sadeghloo, 2016). Therefore, in planning rural areas with an emphasis on eco-resorts, objectives such as protection of the natural environment and quality of services should be

considered, because these items, on the one hand, keep the rural population, and on the other hand, attract tourists to ecological destinations (Lenao & Basupi, 2016). The development of eco-resorts is important for the accommodation of domestic and foreign tourists. To this end, regardless of their economic approach and their income generation, various factors affecting the formation and development of these resorts must be considered. And the management of positive and negative effects of this form of development projects needs to be pondered (Tavaklan & Davari, 2017).

Today, in Iran, due to the existence of various tourist attractions, including natural, cultural, historical and ritual along with climatic and ethnic diversity, ecotourism has become one of the developed and common types of tourism. The development of ecotourism and the improvement of the quality of its indicators can lead to the strengthening and prosperity of the economy, local and rural employment, nature protection and indigenous lifestyle. The county of Sari also has potential opportunities and actual conditions for the development of ecotourism due to the diversity of dialects, lifestyle along with historical background. Therefore, the decision makers in this field should take steps to strengthen and create the necessary infrastructure for eco-tourism prosperity. To this end, the purpose of this study is to spatially analyze the status of rural eco-resorts in Sari. In other words, the present study seeks to answer these key questions: 1) What is the current status of rural eco-resorts indicators? 2) What is the level of the studied villages in terms of eco-resorts indicators?

## 2. Research Theoretical Literature

The last three decades have seen the expansion of laws, policies, paradigms, frameworks and strategies related to environmental protection around the world. As environmental concerns increased, many operators around the world began to understand the importance of their sustainability in their operations, and this was the beginning of a sustainable hospitality industry (Yusof & Jamaluddin, 2013). In this regard, Millison et al. (2007) stated that the green hospitality industry in the mid-1990s led to the expansion of and green resorts and hotels with the support of few pioneers in this field (Yılmaz et al., 2019). In ecotourism, the main motivation for traveling to nature is to observe the natural attractions of a region including

the physical features and the culture of natives, and the ecotourists leave there without disturbing and destroying them after observing the attractions (Mirzadeh Koohshahi and Dehghani, 2016). Nevertheless, it is noted that "ecotourism as a branch of tourism is a tool for environmental protection and sustainable development" (Tsaour et al., 2006). The goal of ecotourism development is

to protect natural areas through monetization, environmental protection, education and the participation of local people; this is based on the idea that the environment is a local resource which provides economic value by attracting tourists (Das & Chatterjee, 2015). Table 1 provides several definitions of ecotourism.

**Table 1. Key definitions and characteristics of eco-resorts**

(Source: Yaghoubi et al., 2019)

Author	Definitions	Key Features	Key indicators
Weaver (2001)	Ecotourism is known as a sustainable way to develop areas with multiple tourism resources	- For resource sustainability	Water, forests, rivers, weather
Fung & Wong (2007)	Tourism that has sustainable natural resources is called ecotourism	- For resource sustainability	River, pleasant climate, pristine nature
Bunruamkaew & Murayama (2012)	In responding to the needs of sustainable development, ecotourism as a tourism method was formed in the 1990s to reduce the disadvantages of conventional (mass) tourism	- To meet basic needs	Job creation, income generation, cultural and social interactions, pristine nature
Jeong et al (2014)	Ecotourism is an important issue and is known as a form of sustainable tourism and is expected to help protect the environment and economic development.	- A strategy for environmental protection - A strategy for economic development	Environmental protection, economic development
Cobbinah, (2017)	As a sustainable development strategy ecotourism is based on five principles: A spur to protect the environment; encouraging community participation (cooperation and collaboration of local people); Empowerment of vulnerable groups (for example, women); Provide economic benefits and preserve local culture	- A strategy for sustainable development - A strategy for interactions and participation of civil society A strategy for empowering the local community	Environmental protection, cooperation of local people, empowerment, preservation local culture

Therefore, based on the interpretations of Table 3, it can be stated that eco-resorts (eco-lodges) are resorts built in natural and rural environments in line with the possible level of environmental criteria and in a way compatible with the local architecture and natural appearance of the region to accommodate and service tourists. They are historical and old houses in the villages which are converted to resorts after a restoration. While interacting with the local community, these places provide the best condition for ecotourists to stay with a desirable and defined quality in natural and rural environments (Hawkins, 2014). Eco-resorts cause a chain of economic and cultural activities to be directly and indirectly involved and create excellent opportunities for small and family enterprises (Bozarjemehri, 2017). As

important service elements in ecotourism, Eco-resorts play an important role in tourism development and emerge in pristine areas and rural or nomadic areas. They include traditional cottages or lodges, guest houses, eco-camps, rural ecotourism, organic farms, ecological homes, and traditional hotels. These residences have certain principles and criteria from the cultural, economic, managerial, environmental and social perspectives, which should be considered in their construction and management (Jafari, 2000). Since 1994, in the first international symposium of eco-lodge associations, a new type of accommodation called "indigenous accommodation or eco-lodge" was officially introduced to the world of tourism; In this type, the structure of the residence was intertwined with its identity (Anabestani et al.,

2017). In other words, the main purpose of creating and developing eco-resorts with indigenous identity and structure is to achieve sustainable rural development by organizing and providing services for tourists and nature lovers. Eco-resorts are not just about accommodation; they offer a variety of activities such as supplying local foods and drinks, making, teaching and selling local handicrafts, performing traditional drama and music, holding local events and tours, and doing ecotourism activities. The physical location of the residence is part of a tourist attraction due to its architectural style, organic materials, interior design and furniture, as well as its local eco-museum. However, "the most important principle observed in ecotourism accommodation is the participation of the local community in tourism activities" (Hawkins, 2004). For example, tourism projects in Borobudur and its suburbs in Indonesia are the result of cooperation between villagers, local NGOs and tour guides, which has led to the promotion of tourism services to tourists and ultimately rural development (Fatimah,

2015). Ecotourists are considered as an economically practical option for visiting natural origins and habitats in addition to protecting cultural heritage. So far, in various studies, several classifications of items and classification of eco-resorts indicators have been researched. Ecotourism assessment indicators are often classified into groups, such as economic, social, environmental and physical groups; therefore, a review of previous research findings shows that in any of them the relationship and significance between these indicators have not yet been addressed. In this regard, understanding the relationship and the importance of these indicators provide important data for decision makers and ecotourism development planners. Therefore, in order to achieve the purpose and answer the research questions using a comprehensive review of the research literature, indicators for measuring eco-resorts were extracted, and these indicators were classified into environmental, physical, economic and social categories (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Classification of indicators for status quo of eco-resorts in rural areas**

(Source: Authors, 2019)

indicator	sub-indicator	Source:	indicator	sub-indicator	Source:
Green service	Green welfare facilities and services	Alwani and Dehdashti (1994) Vossoughi & Shamsi Marini (2015); Giannakis (2014)	local management and participation	local investment and management	Sojasi Gheidari & Sadeghloo (2016); Atazadeh & Mahmoudi Zarandi (2017); Johns & Mattsson (2005)
	Use local staff			participation and empowering the local community	
Sustainable design and protection	Use local food (provide local food and drink) with local and healthy ingredients	Maleki, Parvizban & Ahmadi (2017); Anabestani et al. (2017); Brandth & Haugen (2012)	Ecological environmental structure	Tour guiding by members related to the resorts	Jaafar & Maideen (2012), Jeong et al. (2014)
	Local products and handicrafts			Local people's attitude toward tourists	
	Allocating suitable space for guests			Interaction with the local community	
	Sustainable design and tourism green spaces in the region			Being located in pristine rural environments	
	Maintaining rural appearance and form and preserving historical monuments and remnants			Use of organic materials	
	Follow of the principles of local architecture			Local interior and exterior design	
	Protection of the natural environment			Traditional and indigenous furniture and equipment (wooden bed, quilt, mattress and bed ....)	
				Use of renewable energy (solar energy in heating and cooling)	
				Adapting the architecture of the residence with the climate and environment	
				Waste and wastewater management and recycling	
				Creating complementary spaces needed by tourists (pavilion, parking)	

indicator	sub-indicator	Source:	indicator	sub-indicator	Source:
Pristine geographical location	Being in a pristine natural position Existence natural attractions near the residence Located next to human, historical and cultural attractions Access to the site in terms of location and signs	Sojasi Gheidari & Sadeghloo (2016) Atazadeh & Mahmoudi Zarandi (2017)	Others	Save water (use low-consumption faucet) Energy efficiency (lighting as much as guests want) Reduce environmental pollution Heating and cooling air conditioning system Use local organizations (associations ...) Performing dramas and folk music	Tavaklan & Davari (2017), Bozarjemehri (2017), Andriotis (2002) Chen et al. (2016)
Appropriate infrastructure	Public services (accessability , roads, electricity, gas, etc.) Radio communication services (mobile, internet) Security and law enforcement services Health care services (drinking water, toilet, bath, first aid kit, etc.) Traditional and indigenous furniture and equipment	Tavalaee (2006) Roshanali & Riahi (2017) Rostampisheh et al. (2018)			

So far, numerous studies have directly and indirectly addressed the issue of ecotourism resorts. The background of the research shows that most of the studies conducted in the field of rural eco-resorts have examined its effects and consequences, whereas the present study, on the

one hand, identifies the indicators of eco-resorts and examines their status in these residences, and on the other hand, it offers the spatial analysis of these indicators, which has not been paid much attention in other studies (see Table 3).

**Table 3: A summary of the research conducted on the subject**

(Source: Authors, 2019)

Author	Findings summary
Vosoughi (2016)	The findings showed that despite the differences in some items and indicators, this site has been able to achieve relative success as a green accommodation.
Salehi et al. (2018)	The results showed that the attitude of the local community towards the development of ecotourism is positive. They are also aware of the social cultural economic and environmental effects and consequences and, accordingly, support ecotourism development projects.
Yaghoubi (2018)	The results of this study showed that the development of eco-resorts has improved the indicators of psychological and social empowerment, but in economic and political indicators, the level of impact has not been acceptable.
Stronza & Gordillo (2008)	The results of this study showed that the local community achieved economic benefits, residents' self-esteem has been strengthened and community organization has improved, but over time, while it decreased reciprocity, and social conflict.
Jaafar & Maedin (2012)	The results of this study showed that the product development and activities of small and medium ecotourism houses are strongly related to environmental attractions, so it positively contributes to the economic sustainability of these eco-resorts
Kapiki (2012)	The results of this study showed that planning can cause saving energy and reducing waste production, increasing hoteliers' satisfaction via reducing operating costs and also increasing guests' satisfaction with the features and benefits of these hotels.
Xing (2013)	The results of this study showed that energy saving, non-disposable use of green hotels can create the ground for environmentally friendly activities.
Rebecca et al. (2015)	The results of this study showed that eco-lodges are effective in protecting natural resources and tourism development through increasing the awareness of local communities and changing tourists and the government officials' attitudes towards the natural environment.
Lenao & Basupi (2016)	The results of this study showed that the development of ecotourism in Botswana has led to the empowerment of women in rural areas.

### 3. Research Methodology

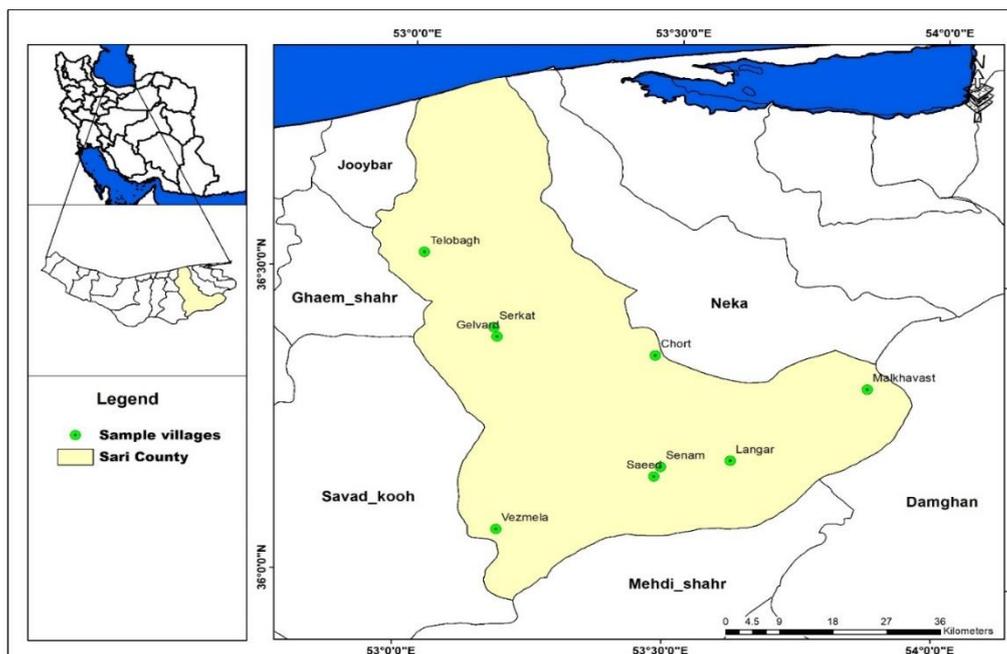
The current study is of descriptive-analytical and applied type in terms of approach and aim, respectively. Data collection is a combination of field and documentary methods; therefore, first, studies were conducted based on historical documents, statistical sources, information layers, etc. To complete the research, field visits (observation and questionnaire) were used. Then, eco-resorts were identified with the assistance of the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Mazandaran Province. Eventually, 11 eco-resorts were distinguished in the county; two of them were inactive and newly established, and the rest were active. Finally, 7 indicators and sub-indicators including green services, sustainable design and protection, pristine

geographical location, appropriate infrastructure, local management and partnership, ecological environmental structure and others were considered. The statistical population of this study consisted of two groups. The first group included experts in tourism who were selected through the census method (N=15). The second group included tourists who had settled in these eco-resorts in which a total of 2600 tourists were estimated according to the statistics announced by the owners of these resorts from Farvadin1397 to Bahman 1398 (March 2018 - January 2020). Based on Cochran's formula 181 questionnaires were completed randomly with the error rate of 0.07. [Table 4](#) shows the number of samples in the eco-resorts of Sari County

**Table 4. Number of examples of eco-lodges in Sari County**

(Source: General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Handicrafts of Mazandaran Province and research findings, 2019)

Row	Name of the resort	Village	Rural district	District	Number of eco-tourists (persons)	Accommodation activity status	Number of questionnaires
1	Cheshmehsot	Malkhavast	Poshtekooch	Chahardangeh	360	active	25
2	Saray Khan	Gelvard	Tangeh soleyman	Kelijan rostagh	330	active	23
3	Senam	Senam	Chahardangeh	Chahardangeh	150	active	10
4	Mah Joon	Serkat	Kelijan rostagh	Kelijan rostagh	350	active	24
5	Late Letka	Vezmela	Banaft	Dodangeh	130	active	9
6	Miyansheh	Chort	Garmab	Chahardangeh	350	active	24
7	Sareh Khatoon	Langar	Chahardangeh	Chahardangeh	300	active	21
8	Galesh Manzel	Telobagh	Asfiyoord Shoorab	Central	360	active	26
9	Late Letka Tepoorestan	Vermela	Banaft	Dodangeh	270	active	19
10	Gol Mohammadi	Saeed Abad	Chahardangeh	Chahardangeh	-	Newly established	-
11	Jamal-o-din Kola	Jamal-o-din Kola	Chahardangeh	Chahardangeh	-	Inactive	-
total		-	---	---	2600	-	181



**Figure 1. Villages with eco-resorts in Sari County**

(Source: Authors, 2019)

Cronbach's alpha results showed that indicators have the desired reliability in the following: the green service indicator with 5 sub-indicators and coefficient of 0.567, sustainable design and protection indicator with 4 sub-indicators and coefficient of 0.645, pristine geographical location indicator with 4 sub-indicators and coefficient of 0.624, suitable infrastructure structures indicator with 6 sub-indicators and a coefficient of 0.589, local management and partnership indicator with 5 sub-indicators and a coefficient of 0.621, an ecological environmental structure indicator with 8 sub-indicators and a coefficient of 0.652 and others with 5 sub-indicators and a coefficient of 0.597. After identifying the indicators of eco-resorts using the background and theoretical foundations of the research, the opinions of tourism experts (7 indicators in the form of 37 sub-indicators) were used to classify them. To analyze the

data, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and Variance) and inferential statistics (single sample t) and to rank eco-resorts, Vikor model was used.

#### 4. Research findings

Descriptive findings on the characteristics of tourism experts showed that most of them were between 31-40 and 41-50 years old, and 80% of the respondents were men. Education level of most of them was bachelor degree (46.7%) and around 40% of them were employed in the Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts and had a job experience of 6-10 years. Of the group of tourists, about 47% of the respondents were in the age group of 31-40 years and 74% of tourists had an associate degree, whereas 86.2% were men and 85.6% were married. The majority of respondents were also self-employed (75.1%) (see Table 5).

**Table 5. Descriptive characteristics of experts and tourists in rural eco-resorts**

(Source: Research finding, 2019)

Descriptive characteristics of experts				Descriptive characteristics of tourists			
indicator		Frequency	Percent	indicator	Frequency	Percent	
Age	21-30	1	7/6	Age	Less than 20	27	9/14
	31-40	5	3/33		21-30	50	6/27
	41-50	5	3/33		31-40	85	47
	More than 50	4	7/26		41 and above	19	5/10
Gender	Male	12	80	Gender	Male	156	2/86
	Female	3	20		Female	25	8/13

Descriptive characteristics of experts				Descriptive characteristics of tourists			
indicator		Frequency	Percent	indicator		Frequency	Percent
Education	Bachelor degree	7	7/46	Education	Primary and high school	37	5/20
	Master degree	4	7/26		Associate degree	134	0/74
	Doctoral	4	7/26		Bachelor degree and above	10	5/5
Marital status	Single	1	7/6	Marital status	Single	26	4/14
	Married	14	3/93		Married	155	6/85
Job	Rural managers	5	3/33	Job	Self-employment	136	1/75
	University professors	4	7/26		Governmental	45	9/24
	Cultural heritage Dep.	6	40	Number of households	2 persons	16	8/8
Experience	1-5 years	5	3/33		3-4 persons	138	2/76
	6-10	6	40		5-7 persons	25	8/13
	11-15	3	20		More than 7	2	1/1
	25-21	1	7/6				

Table 6 shows the measurement of the perspective of experts and tourists in terms of mean, standard deviation and variance. Findings showed that from the experts' point of view, the average of green services indicator is equal to 4.69. Sustainable design and protection and pristine geographical location is 4.68, rough infrastructure is 4.72, and local and institutional management is 4.77, The ecological structure of the ecology is 4.79, while the indicator of others is 4.76. In addition, in terms of ranking, others indicator with a variance of 0.023 and local and institutional management indicator with a variance of 0.028 were ranked first and second among all. From the tourists' point of view, the average of green services indicator is 4.52. Sustainable design and protection and rough

infrastructure is 4.54, pristine geographical location is 4.20, local and institutional management is 4.09, ecological environmental structure is 3.82, while the other indicator is 3.55. In terms of ranking, the infrastructure indicator with a variance of 0.064 and green services with a variance of 0.065 are ranked first and second, and others indicators are ranked after them. A comparison between the views of experts and tourists shows that there is a difference of opinion between them; therefore, tourists paid careful attention to the details in the eco-resorts and express their opinions based on the services they received, and this shows that the tourists' view of the evaluated indicators is more real and objective than the experts' opinions.

**Table 6: Descriptive features of eco-resorts indicators from the perspective of experts and tourists**  
(Source: Research finding, 2019)

indicator	Experts' view				indicator	Tourists' view			
	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Rating		Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Rating
Green service	69/4	212/0	045/0	6	Green service	52/4	255/0	065/0	2
Sustainable design and protection	68/4	220/0	049/0	7	Sustainable design and protection	54/4	315/0	100/0	4
Pristine geographical location	68/4	99/1	040/0	4	Pristine geographical location	20/4	437/0	191/0	7
Infrastructure	72/4	197/0	039/0	3	Infrastructure	54/4	253/0	064/0	1
local management and Institutional	77/4	166/0	028/0	2	local management and Institutional	09/4	329/0	108/0	5

indicator	Experts' view				indicator	Tourists' view			
	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Rating		Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Rating
Ecological environmental structure	79/4	209/0	044/0	5	Ecological environmental structure	82/3	272/0	074/0	3
Others	76/4	151/0	023/0	1	Others	55/3	381/0	146/0	6

Moreover, a one-sample t-test was used to evaluate the status of eco-resort indicators in rural areas of Sari County. According to Table 7, the numerical mean analysis obtained from the calculation of the indicators of eco-resorts from the perspective of experts and tourists has been obtained using questionnaire data. Findings of one-sample t-test showed that with the confidence level of 0.99 and

error level less than 0.01, there is a significant difference between the mean of ecotourism indicators and the assumed mean (3); therefore, the mean obtained in all indicators in the study is higher than the assumed mean (3). In other words, the mean in all components has been evaluated above the numerical desirability of the test (3).

**Table 7. Status of eco-resort indicators from the view of experts and tourists using one-sample t-test**  
(Source: Research finding, 2019)

Numerical desirability of test capacity = 3 (from the experts' view)							
Criterion	Mean	T-test statistic	Degree of freedom	Significance level	The difference from the optimal limit	95% confidence interval	
						Below	Above
Green service	69/4	932/30	14	000/0	69/1	57/1	81/1
Sustainable design and protection	68/4	510/29	14	000/0	68/1	56/1	80/1
Pristine geographical location	68/4	64/32	14	000/0	68/1	57/1	79/1
Infrastructure	72/4	79/33	14	000/0	72/1	61/1	82/1
local management and Institutional	77/4	18/41	14	000/0	77/1	68/1	86/1
Ecological environmental structure	79/4	11/33	14	000/0	79/1	67/1	90/1
Others	76/4	10/45	14	000/0	46/1	68/1	85/1
Numerical desirability of test capacity = 3 (from the tourists' view)							
Criterion	Mean	T-test statistic	Degree of freedom	Significance level	The difference from the optimal limit	95% confidence interval	
						Below	Above
Green service	52/4	19/80	180	000/0	52/1	48/1	56/1
Sustainable design and protection	54/4	06/66	180	000/0	54/1	50/1	59/1
Pristine geographical location	20/4	11/37	180	000/0	20/1	14/1	26/1
Infrastructure	54/4	08/82	180	000/0	54/1	50/1	58/1
local management and Institutional	09/4	95/44	180	000/0	09/1	05/1	14/1
Ecological environmental structure	82/3	81/40	180	000/0	827/0	787/0	867/0
Others	55/3	65/19	180	000/0	558/0	502/0	614/0

#### 4.1. Spatial analysis of eco-resort indicators in the study area

To determine the rank of each village based on the indicator of eco-resorts in Sari County, the VIKOR

method was used. First, the raw data matrix was formed in the form of m options (9 active eco-resorts located in rural areas of Sari County) and n attributes (7 indicators). Then the matrix was normalized from the following relation:

$$f_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij}}{\sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^n x_{ij}^2}}, i = 1, 2, \dots, m; j = 1, 2, \dots, n$$

Where  $x_{ij}$  is the initial value,  $f_{ij}$  is the normalized value of option  $i$  and criterion  $j$ . The result of the normalized data is the normal matrix. In the next step, the best and worst values were determined for

all criteria functions (Chen & Wang, 2009). Thus, if the criterion function represents the advantage (positive), the best and worst values are calculated based on the following relation:

$$f_i^* = \max_j f_{ij}, f_i^- = \min_j f_{ij}$$

So if the criterion function represents the disadvantage (negative), the best and worst values are calculated based on the following relation:

$$f_i^* = \min_j f_{ij}, f_i^- = \max_j f_{ij}$$

In this way, the best and worst values can be determined for the criteria. In the next step, the weight was determined for each of the indicators. To express the relative importance of indicators / criteria, their relative weight must be determined. For this purpose, there are various methods such as Linmap, AHP, ANP, Shannon entropy, Eigenvector, rank exponent method that can be used for different purposes

(Hajinejad et al., 2015. To prioritize the indicators of eco-resorts in the study area and also to determine the weight of each criterion, first a questionnaire was developed and 15 experts in this field were then asked to complete it and finally their importance was determined in terms of the weight of variables. Thus, the rank exponent function has been used to determine the weight of the indicators (see Table 8).

**Table 8. The best and worst value along with the weight of eco-resorts indicators**  
(Source: Research finding, 2019)

	Green service	Sustainable design and protection	Pristine geographical location	Infrastructure	local management and Institutional	Ecological environment al structure	Others
W	11/0	15/0	17/0	18/0	13/0	15/0	11/0
f*	037/0	051/0	059/0	061/0	044/0	050/0	038/0
f-	035/0	048/0	055/0	058/0	042/0	049/0	035/0

In the next step, the distance of each option from the positive ideal solution was calculated and then its aggregation was calculated based on the following equations:

$$S_j = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{w_i(f_{ij}^* - f_{ij})}{f_j^* - f_j^-}$$

$$R_j = \max_i [w_i(f_{ij}^* - f_{ij}) / (f_j^* - f_j^-)]$$

Where  $S_j$  is the distance from option  $i$  to the ideal solution (best combination) and  $R_j$  is the distance of option  $i$  from the negative ideal solution (worst combination). High ranking will be based on  $S_j$  and

poor ranking will be based on  $R_j$  values. In other words,  $R_j$  and  $S_j$  represent 1L and i1L of the  $L_p$  parameters, respectively. Finally, the value of  $Q_i$  is calculated as follows:

$$Q_i = v \left[ \frac{S_i - S^*}{S^- - S^*} \right] + (1 - v) \left[ \frac{R_i - R^*}{R^- - R^*} \right]$$

In this regard:

$$S^* = \min_j S_j, S^- = \max_j S_j$$

$$R^* = \min_j R_j, R^- = \max_j R_j$$

And V is the weight of the strategy (majority of criteria) or maximum group desirability. It shows the distance from the positive ideal solution for option. In other words, it indicates the distance from the negative ideal solution for option i. If 0.5 v, the Qi index has the maximum agreement and when 0.5 v, this index indicates the maximum negative attribute. In general, v = 0.5 denotes equal group agreement. Based on the Qi values of the options calculated in the sixth step, the options can

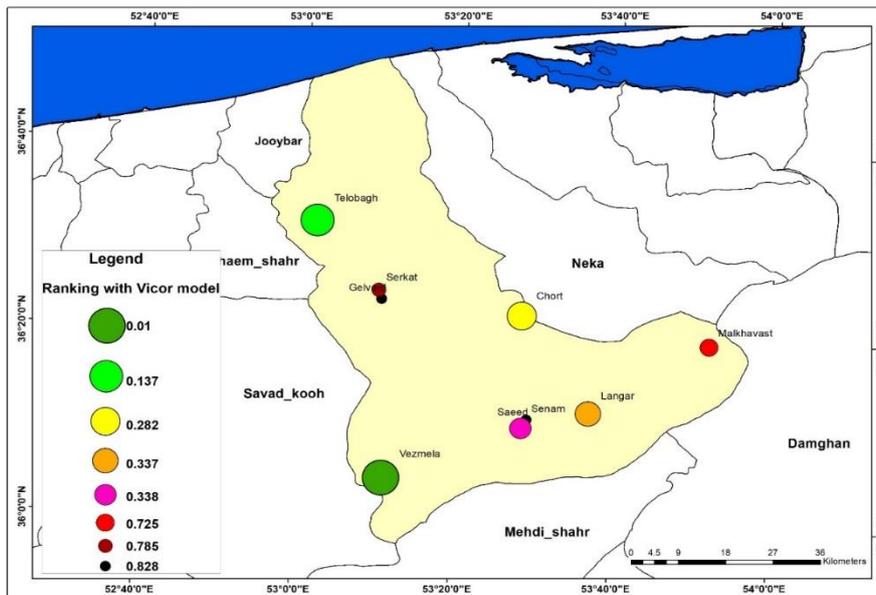
be ranked. Options with higher Qi values are given lower ranking, and lower Qi values mean higher rankings. Therefore, according to the calculations, the eco-resorts of Late Letka and Late Latka Tapuristan and Miansheh were ranked first and third according to the indicators. In addition, the resorts of Mah Joon (Q = 0.785), Senam and Saray Khan (Q = 0.828) had the lowest rank (see Table 9).

**Table 9. Ranking of eco-resorts in villages based on the distance to the ideal solution**  
(Source: Research finding, 2019)

Eco-resorts	Village	S	R	Q	Rating
Cheshmehsort	Malkhavast	512/0	180/0	725/0	6
Saray Khan	Gelvard	695/0	15/0	828/0	7
Senam	Senam	635/0	169/0	828/0	8
Mah Joon	Serkat	706/0	150/0	785/0	9
Late Letka	Vezmela	352/0	110/0	0	1
Miyansheh	Chort	512/0	118/0	282/0	3
Sareh Khatoon	Langar	513/0	125/0	337/0	4
Galesh Manzel	Saeed	481/0	132/0	338/0	5
Late Letka Tepoorestan	Vezmela	411/0	13/0	137/0	2

In Figure 2, the spatial level of villages with eco-resorts is evaluated. This map shows that Late Letka eco-resorts in Vezmala village were ranked

first and Saray Khan in Golord and Senam in Senam villages were ranked lowest in terms of eco-resorts.



**Figure 2. Spatial analysis of eco-resorts based on research indicators in Sari**

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The history of eco-resorts in the world dates back to 1994, which was built in pristine natural environments, rural textures and historical contexts of cities. They were in the highest possible level of environmental consideration and in a way compatible with local architecture and regional appearance and maximum interaction with local community. They provide the context and the accommodation of tourists with acceptable and defined quality. In fact, the main purpose of creating and developing this type of accommodation, which has a local identity and structure, has been the sustainable development of tourism, and this emphasizes the quality of life of the host community, tourist satisfaction and environmental protection, human and social resources. Also, eco-resorts are examples of small businesses with less pressure on the natural and human environment and reduction of economic leakage which are key activities in achieving sustainable development. Therefore, in recent years, eco-resorts, as sustainable infrastructure and superstructure, have combined accommodation and ecotourism activities and have taken a very effective step towards achieving the goals of sustainable development in such resorts, where almost in all of them families provide services. They tend to introduce the traditional way of life in that particular place, and the guests use the local food there and make their trip in a natural environment. Reviewing the theoretical foundations and research background shows that ecotourism is the acquisition of experience related to the understanding of existential values, which can strengthen natural environments and be compatible with environmental policies. Therefore, taking notice of ecotourism to meet the demand of tourists in the global context causes tourism capabilities and development strategies to be measured in different regions. Hence, this kind of tourism will be formed by creating the flow of tourism, job creation and increasing income for local residents of vulnerable areas.

Iran, a country with diverse climatic conditions, tourist attractions and local customs, has the ability to provide opportunities out of the threats with the help of recognizing and evaluating the position of tourism and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of rural tourism. By doing this, it will cause sustainable rural development and benefit the present and future generations from a

sustainable livelihood. Instructions for the construction and operation of eco-resorts were prepared by the Deputy Minister of Tourism of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization and also with the help of the General Directorate of the National Committee for Eco Tourism in December 2014. In this regard, the description of the specifications and criteria for construction, operation and grading of ecotourism resorts was provided. The purpose of developing these criteria is to organize eco-resorts, preserve and protect traditional and indigenous culture, increase tourism products and create a new types of tourist destinations and attractions. Having registered eco-resorts and a variety of tourist attractions, Sari County is one of the places that have caught attention of domestic and foreign tourists. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the status of eco-resorts in Sari County. The results showed that from the perspective of the two groups, namely experts and tourists, the average status of the studied indicators is higher than the theoretical average (3), and this indicates that the studied indicators are in good conditions. Also, all indicators are almost the same from both groups' perspectives. However, the main point is that the view of tourists is more real and tangible. From the experts' point of view, the average of green services indicator was 4.69. The sustainable design and protection and pristine geographical location was 4.68, and rough infrastructure was 4.72, local and institutional management was 4.77. The ecological structure of the ecology is 4.79 and the indicator of others is 4.76. Moreover, from their point of view, other indicators with the variance of 0.023 and local and institutional management with the variance of 0.028 rank first and second, and from tourists' point of view, infrastructure indicator with variance of 0.064 and green services with variance of (0.065) took the first and second ranks. The results of VIKOR method showed that Late Latkan and Late Letka Taporestan and Miansheh resorts were ranked first and third in terms of the studied indicator; the reasons for this are that they have the indicators of eco-resorts such as the existence of pristine natural space, having access to appropriate infrastructure and indigenous services in this area; however, the resorts of Mah Joon ( $Q = 0.785$ ) Senam and Saray Khan ( $828 / 0Q =$ ) had the lowest ranks, which can be attributed to geographical isolation from urban centers, lack of managers' attention to the development of eco-

resorts and lack of financial support. However, the results of this study can be compared with the studies of Alwani & Dehdashti (1994), Vosoughi (2016), Maleki et al. (2017), Salehi et al. (2018), Jaafar & Maedin (2012) and Lenao & Basopi (2016). In their findings for indicators such as natural environment protection, the preservation of physical attributes of the village and historical monuments, reduction in environmental pollution, the improvement of the heating and cooling system, energy saving, and the improvement of green resorts were emphasized, which is in line with the present study. Therefore, the findings of field studies and objective observations are well

consistent with the realities of eco-resorts. Thus, the indicators of the present study can be considered as a suitable model for other eco-resorts in the country. These indicators can also help ecotourism development planners review the results of policies and programs and also present new programs. At the regional and local level, tourism planners and officials in charge of promoting ecotourism resorts need to pay more attention to the eco-resorts at a lower level and also strengthen these indicators in eco-resorts.

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## بررسی و تحلیل فضایی وضعیت شاخص‌های اقامتگاه‌های بوم‌گردی روستایی (مطالعه موردی: شهرستان ساری)

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### چکیده مبسوط

#### ۱. مقدمه

امروزه مقوله اقامتگاه‌های بومگردی، موضوعی جدید برای ذهن گردشگران محسوب نمی‌شود، بومگردی برای افراد با خصوصیات ماجراجو و علاقمند به یادگیری مناسب بوده و بر مکان‌های طبیعی، فرهنگی و تاریخی که کمتر مورد توجه هستند، متمرکز است. لذا اهمیت آن از نظر گردشگران باعث شده است که این شاخه از گردشگری تقریباً ۲۷ درصد سفرهای بین‌المللی را در برگیرد و چنانچه به صورت مناسب مدیریت شود، می‌تواند به اشتغال محلی، فرصت‌های توسعه بومی و حفظ محیط‌طبیعی منجر گردد. بنابراین برای این که بتوان وضعیت اقامتگاه‌های بوم‌گردی را مورد سنجش و ارزیابی قرار داد؛ نیازمند استفاده از شاخص‌هایی است، که قابل تبیین باشد. به همین جهت، مسئله ارتقاء کیفیت شاخص‌های اقامتگاه‌های بومگردی از طریق توسعه خدمات، تسهیلات و زیرساخت‌های مناسب و مدیریت آن به منظور پاسخگویی به نیازهای گردشگران، ضرورت دارد. شهرستان ساری نیز به واسطه تنوع در گویش‌ها، سبک و الگوی زندگی در کنار سابقه تاریخی، فرصت‌های بالقوه و شرایط بالفعلی برای توسعه بوم‌گردی دارد، به همین دلیل مسئولان این حوزه باید در زمینه تقویت و ایجاد زیرساخت‌های لازم برای رونق بوم‌گردی گام‌های اساسی بردارند.

بر این اساس، هدف اصلی پژوهش، بررسی و تحلیل فضایی وضعیت شاخص‌های اقامتگاه‌های بوم‌گردی روستایی در شهرستان ساری است، لذا سوال‌های پژوهش حاضر به این شکل مطرح شده است، ۱- وضعیت موجود شاخص‌های اقامتگاه‌های بوم‌گردی روستایی در چه شرایطی است؟ ۲- وضعیت روستاهای مورد مطالعه از لحاظ شاخص‌های اقامتگاه‌های بوم‌گردی در چه سطحی است؟

#### ۲. مبانی نظری تحقیق

بوم‌گردی به مثابه یک شاخه گردشگری، ابزاری برای حفاظت محیط زیست و توسعه‌ای تداوم‌پذیر است. هدف از توسعه بوم‌گردی، حفاظت از مناطق طبیعی، از طریق کسب درآمد، حفاظت از محیط، آموزش و مشارکت مردم محلی بوده و مبتنی بر این ایده است که محیط، یک منبع محلی است که ارزش اقتصادی از طریق جذب گردشگران فراهم می‌کند.

اقامتگاه‌های بوم‌گردی یا اکولوژ، اقامتگاه‌هایی هستند که در محیط‌های طبیعی و روستایی با رعایت سطح ممکن ضوابط زیست‌محیطی و به شکلی سازگار با معماری بومی و سیمای طبیعی منطقه برای اسکان و پذیرایی از گردشگران احداث شدند یا خانه‌های تاریخی و قدیمی موجود در روستاها هستند که پس از مرمت به اقامتگاه تغییر کاربری دادند و ضمن بیشترین تعامل با جامعه محلی، زمینه حضور و اقامت طبیعت‌گردان را با کیفیتی پسنندیده و تعریف شده در محیط‌های طبیعی و روستایی فراهم کردند.

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نظرات کارشناس می باشد. به طوری که گردشگران به جزئیات در اقامتگاه‌های بوم گردی توجه می‌کنند و بر اساس خدماتی که از اقامتگاه‌های بوم گردی دریافت کردند، نظرهای خود را بیان داشتند. بر اساس نتایج حاصل از مدل ویکور، اقامتگاه‌های بومگردی لته لتکان و لته لتکا تپورستان و میانسه رتبه‌های اول و سوم را از لحاظ شاخص‌های مورد بررسی به خود اختصاص دادند. همچنین اقامتگاه‌های ماه جون ( $Q=0.785$ ) سنم و سرای خان ( $Q=0.828$ ) پایین‌ترین رتبه را دارا بودند.

#### ۵. بحث و نتیجه‌گیری

هدف اصلی از ایجاد و توسعه اقامتگاه‌های بومگردی که دارای هویت و ساختاری بومی هستند، توسعه پایدار گردشگری بوده است و توسعه پایدار گردشگری نیز بر کیفیت زندگی جامعه میزبان، رضایت گردشگران و حفظ محیط زیست، منابع انسانی و اجتماعی تاکید دارد. همچنین، اقامتگاه‌های بوم گردی نمونه‌های از کسب و کارهای کوچک مقیاس با مالکیت محلی هستند که با فشار کمتر بر محیط طبیعی و انسانی و کاهش نشئت اقتصادی از فعالیت‌های اساسی در تحقق توسعه پایدار محسوب می‌شوند. شاخص‌های پژوهش حاضر را می‌توان الگویی مناسب برای سایر اقامتگاه‌های بوم گردی در کشور دانست. همچنین این شاخص‌ها می‌توانند برنامه‌ریزان توسعه بوم گردی را در بازبینی نتایج سیاست‌ها و برنامه‌ها و ارائه برنامه‌های جدید یاری کنند، در سطح منطقه‌ای و محلی باید برنامه‌ریزان و مسئولین گردشگری و متولی رواج اقامتگاه‌های بوم گردی؛ به اقامتگاه‌های بوم گردی که در سطح ضعیف‌تری قرار دارد توجه بیشتری کنند و درصدد تقویت این شاخص‌ها در اقامتگاه‌های بوم گردی باشند.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** اقامتگاه‌های بوم گردی، مناطق روستایی، مدل وایکور، شهرستان ساری.

#### تشکر و قدردانی

پژوهش حاضر حامی مالی نداشته و حاصل فعالیت علمی نویسنده است.

بوم‌گردها به قصد بازدید از خاستگاه‌ها و زیستگاه‌های طبیعی و با هدف حفاظت از میراث فرهنگی به مثابه گزینه سودمند اقتصادی تلقی می‌شوند. بنابراین در پژوهش‌های گوناگون، تاکنون تقسیم‌بندی متعددی از گونه و دسته‌بندی شاخص‌های اقامتگاه‌های بوم گردی انجام شده است. شاخص‌های ارزیابی بوم گردی اغلب در قالب گروه‌هایی چون اقتصادی، اجتماعی، زیست محیطی و کالبدی طبقه‌بندی می‌شوند. بنابراین بررسی نتایج پژوهش‌های گذشته نشان می‌دهد که در هیچ یک به روابط و میزان اهمیت این شاخص‌ها نسبت به یکدیگر توجهی نشده است، در صورتی که آگاهی از روابط و میزان اهمیت این شاخص‌ها، خود داده‌های با اهمیتی را برای تصمیم‌گیران و برنامه‌ریزان توسعه بوم گردی در بر خواهد داشت.

#### ۳. روش تحقیق

پژوهش حاضر براساس هدف، کاربردی و بر حسب روش؛ توصیفی-تحلیلی است. جمع‌آوری داده‌ها ترکیبی از روش‌های میدانی و کتابخانه‌ای است. ۱۱ اقامتگاه بوم گردی در قالب ۷ شاخص شامل خدمات سبز، طراحی پایدار و حفاظت، موقعیت جغرافیایی بکر، ساختارهای مناسب زیربنایی، مدیریت محلی و مشارکت، ساختار محیطی بوم‌گرا و سایر و ۳۷ زیرشاخص در نظر گرفته شد. جامعه آماری این پژوهش شامل ۱۵ کارشناسان حوزه گردشگری و بر اساس فرمول کوکران تعداد ۱۸۱ گردشگری هستند که در بازه زمانی فروردین ۱۳۹۷ تا بهمن ۱۳۹۸ در این اقامتگاه‌های بومگردی اسکان داشته‌اند. برای تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها از آمارهای توصیفی (میانگین، انحراف معیار و واریانس) و استنباطی (t تک نمونه‌ای) و مدل وایکور برای رتبه‌بندی اقامتگاه‌های بومگردی استفاده شد.

#### ۴. یافته‌های تحقیق

بررسی وضعیت شاخص‌های اقامتگاه‌های بوم گردی در مناطق روستایی شهرستان ساری با استفاده از آزمون t تک نمونه‌ای نشان داد که مقادیر میانگین بدست آمده در تمام شاخص‌های مورد نظر تحقیق، بالاتر از میزان مطلوبیت عددی مورد آزمون (۳) بوده است. مقایسه میانگین دیدگاه کارشناسان و گردشگران نشان داد که نگاه گردشگران به شاخص‌های مورد ارزیابی، ملموس‌تر و عینی‌تر از



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