



AENSI Journals

Journal of Applied Science and Agriculture

ISSN 1816-9112

Journal home page: www.aensiweb.com/jasa/index.html

Study Ecotourism Development of Deserts in Semnan province, Iran

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 28 February 2014

Received in revised form 19

April 2014

Accepted 23 April 2014

Available online 15 May 2014

Key words:

Tourism, Ecotourism, Sustainable Development, Desert, Semnan.

ABSTRACT

Today, details of tourist areas, wilderness areas, and wilderness entitled to be placed in a subdirectory of Ecotourism. In fact, development of desert Ecotourism provides benefits such as the following. Desert Ecotourism helps creating a sustainable employment for the local people, prepares the ground for macro planning and increases gross internal production as well as preserves valuable plant and animal species, cultural heritage and stabilizes local societies at the macro levels. The prosperity of desert Ecotourism not only results in economic output for broad spectrum of the country which has no productive, agricultural and industrial competitive capabilities, but also it revives some of the forgotten traditional customs, such as camel driving, and helps to improvement of quality of life of communities. The descriptive method of research - analysis based on field identification of wilderness guides and self-help literature studies have been conducted in the semnan province. This paper, however, focuses on providing the profiles of the natural attractions of Semnan province desert Ecotourism, as empirical cases from Iran are limited Desert belt charms with a rare and amazing sight. Semnan province has everything for every age group of tourists. The tourist can visit the state with the purpose of knowledge, enjoyment, relaxation, medical, wedding, adventure, sports, cultural, pilgrimage and now a days with the purpose of MICE and literacy tourism. The paper is an attempt to find out the satisfaction level of Foreign and Domestic Tourists who have visited Semnan. In this study we tried to plan to develop tourism in the deserts of Semnan Province using SWOT first, strengths and weaknesses of the problem comes with opportunities and threats, external review, analysis and the recommendations essential to exploit the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and reduce awareness of the problems, solutions to overcome them is presented. Can cause some programs and strategies to solve immediate problems, but according to the planned separation of these categories, especially those not Subject of urban planning can be a step towards reducing the problems in this area harvest.

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To Cite This Article: Saied Kamyabi, Ali Gholamzadehdoab, Ali Mokhtari., Study Ecotourism Development of Deserts in Semnan province, Iran. *J. Appl. Sci. & Agric.*, 9(5): 2253-2266, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is a sub-component of the field of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism's perceived potential as an effective tool for sustainable development is the main reason why developing countries are now embracing it and including it in their economic development and conservation strategies. Ecotourism, as an alternative tourism, involves visiting natural areas in order to learn, to study, or to carry out activities environmentally friendly, that is, a tourism based on the nature experience, which enables the economic and social development of local communities. It focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, its landscape, flora, fauna and their habitats, as well as cultural artifacts from the locality. A symbiotic and complex relationship between the environment and tourist activities is possible when this philosophy can be translated into appropriate policy, careful planning and tactful practicum. Carefully planned and operated ecotourism sites, especially if it is village-based and includes local participation, is able to provide direct benefits that might offset pressure from other less sustainable activities that make use of natural and cultural resources. Eco tourism, natural resources, cultural heritage, rural lifestyle and an integrated tourism is a type of local economic activities. Therefore, ecotourism in naturel and culturel areas was carried out with a number of elements in their natural landscape and cultural landscape (water, vista, topography, vegetation, clean air), as well as in the variety of recreational activities suitable for all kinds of environments. Therefore, ecotourism and its natural assets and raw materials to create, as well as directing people to travel is an attractive force(Tuğba Kiper,2011). Tourism is a highly

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complex activity and thus requires tools to assist in effective decision making to come to terms with the competing economic, social, and environmental demands of sustainable development (Farahunsi, 2011).

According to the investigations made in the year 2002, tourism industry has included 12 percents of the economy of world through gaining an income of 476 billion dollars. In this year, tourism industry has a rate of 7.4 percentages, and the numbers of tourists were more than 699 million persons. According to the prediction of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the number of tourists will be more than 1.6 billion up to the year 2020. Based on the statistics presented by this organization, more than 50 percentage of employment problem in the developing countries will be solved through development of this industry, in a way that according to the studies of World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the number of direct and indirect occupations resulting from tourism were 290 million occupations in the year 1996 with an income of 3.4 trillion dollars and the number of occupations of this section reached to 338 million occupations in 2005 with an income of 7.2 trillion dollars (UNWTO: 1995). Since 1960 the tourism business (measured in ITR, international tourism receipts) is strongly associated to the overall economy (statistic $r = 0.99$). When the economy thrives, tourism revenues blossom, when it softens ITR depress — the R^2 value of 0.98 says that up to 98% of the variation of ITR is explained by the variation of the economy measured in gross product terms (GWP, gross world product). The same statistics applied to the GWP per capita, taking therefore into consideration the variations of the world population, produce values not very different, only slightly lower : $r = 0.97$, and $R^2 = 0.94$. In 2011 tourism generated revenues of 1,030 billion current \$US909 billion constant \$US (2005=100) roughly the size of Republic of Korea's GDP (gross domestic product), or the sum of France's and United Kingdom's 2011 merchandise exports. The economic relevance of the industry is unquestionable .Chart No. 1

Chart No. 1. Tourism development in the world based on number of tourists visiting different areas within the years 1950 to 2005

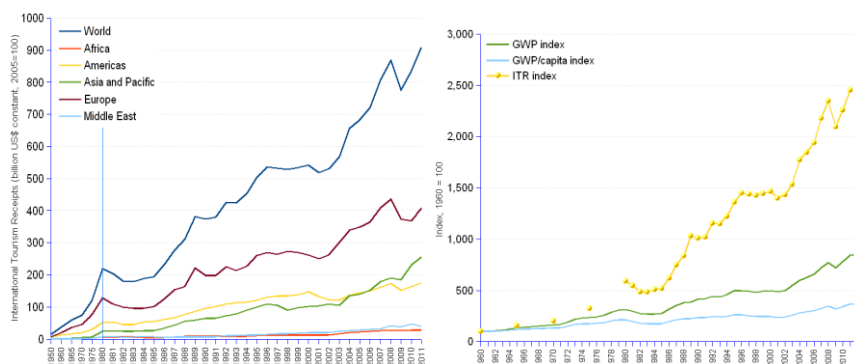


Chart No. 1: Tourism development in the world based on number of tourists visiting different areas within the years 1950 to 2011

Source: World Tourism Organization, Historical perspective of world tourism

In the circumstances which the Iran has the tenth rank of ancient and historical attractions and the fifth rank of natural attractions of the world based on the report of UNWTO, but its share is very little from tourism market and according to the statistics Iran has not been practically successful in attraction of foreign tourists and approximately Iranian tourism market is exclusive for domestic tourism.

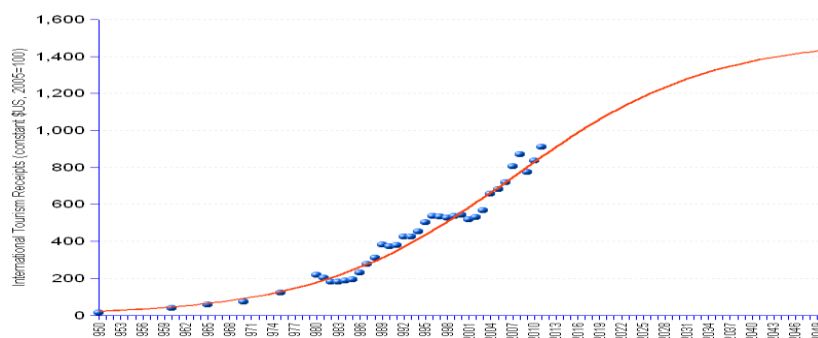


Chart No. 2: The chart shows in blue the historical values of ITR, from 1950 to 2011

The red line shows the S-curve logistic function forecast, fitted to the actual ITR, and extended into the future. By iteration, the following parameters have been computed:

Based on National Document of 20-Year Outlook Plan of Islamic Republic of Iran, the Iranian share from number of world tourists is only 0.09 percent in the year 2004. Although this document has predicted that this number would increase to 1.5 percent in the year 2025 (the final year of future 20-Year Outlook) through execution of the fourth to seventh plans of Islamic Republic of Iran, i.e. about 20 million tourists and the Iranian share from world tourism income would be increased from 0.07 percent in 2004 to (2 percent) in 2025. In such a manner that Iran will gain about 25 billion dollars per annum from foreign tourists in 2025. The perspective of Iranian tourism development within the four outlook plans of Islamic Republic of Iran is as per table No. 1, considering about 700 thousand persons as the basic number of tourists traveling to Iran in 2004.

Table 1: Diagram of Iranian Tourism Development within 20-Year Outlook Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Revenues	Growth rate	Tourists in final year of future 20-Year Outlook (Millions People)	Foreign Exchange Income in final year of future 20-Year Outlook (Milliards Dollar)
4th development plan (2005-2009)	30%	2.6	1.5
5th development plan (2010-2014)	20%	6.5	4.5
6th development plan (2015-2019)	15%	13	10
7th development plan (2020-2024)	10%	20	25

Source: 20-Year Outlook Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Outlook for 2025)

Table 2: Distribution of Ecotourism in the World

Foreign tourists	Nature tourists	Wildlife tourists
1988, US\$ 393 Millions	US\$157-236 Millions	US\$79-157 Millions
1994, US\$528.4 Millions	US\$211-317 Millions	US\$106-211 Millions

Source: National Document of Ecotourism Development & Management, national Committee of Ecotourism, Organization for Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts & Tourism, 2007

Table 3: Level of Economic Impact of Ecotourism in the World

Total direct foreign economic impact	Nature tourists	Wildlife tourists
1988, US\$ 338 Billions	US\$93-223 Billions	US\$47-155 Billions
1994, US\$ 416 Billions	US\$166-250 Billions	US\$83-166 Billions

Source: National Document of Ecotourism Development & Management, national Committee of Ecotourism, Organization for Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts & Tourism, 2007

Total direct foreign economic impact = the money which is spent by tourists in a foreign travel

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area:

Semnan province having six city (Semnan, Damghan, Shahrood ,Mahdishr & Myami Branch) with an area equivalent to 95,815 kilometers, 5.8% of the country's total area is allocated to the province as a sixth of the Iran country. From east to west of Tehran province is limited. Silk Road is located in the province of old highway that long since due to his natural position of the point of the East-West and North East. In south-central desert because it is located in the north of the Alborz Mountains. To identify natural features of the province, to examine the issues of geology, geomorphology, climatology and hydrology, it explains: Sirocco on the southern slopes of the Alborz cause long term and thus Iranian central desert is formed. Comparison of meteorological data and climate in the Alborz mountain sides, especially precipitation and temperature, they show significant differences between the climate and the conditions that created the phenomenon Chinook(kamyabi,2014). Located on the south of the Alborz range, Semnan is adjacent to the Kavir Desert of Iran. Mild weather of Semnan makes unbelievable landscapes for the city. This also attracts many for desert trekking or mountain climbing during the year.

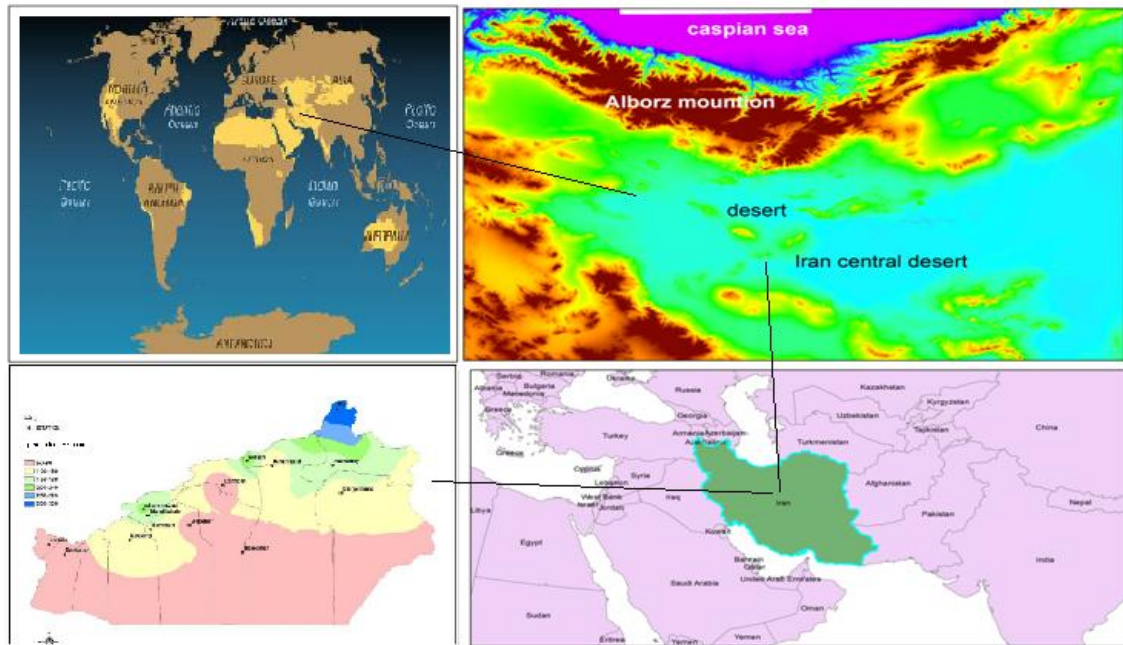


Fig. 1: Study area

Table 4: Climatology stations in study area

Station	Latitude	Longitude	Altitude (meter from subsea depth)	Station Type	Establishment year	Establisher Organization
SHahrood	34 13	54 33	1349	Synoptic	1965	(IRIMO)
Damghan	35 46	36 12	1000	Synoptic	1965	(IRIMO)
semnan	35 35	53 33	1170	Synoptic	1965	(IRIMO)
Garmsar	35 12	52 16	825.2	Synoptic	1965	(IRIMO)

Regarding to statistic limitations and more data application at some Meteorological stations, it has been selected a set of high quality meteorological stations (Table 3). In this process, it is been tried to use enough and appropriate station for better data such as indicator station. After evaluation of these stations' data, the best statistic period was determined between 1986 to 2004, and also we tried to reconstruct some ordered stations' statistics for next applications.

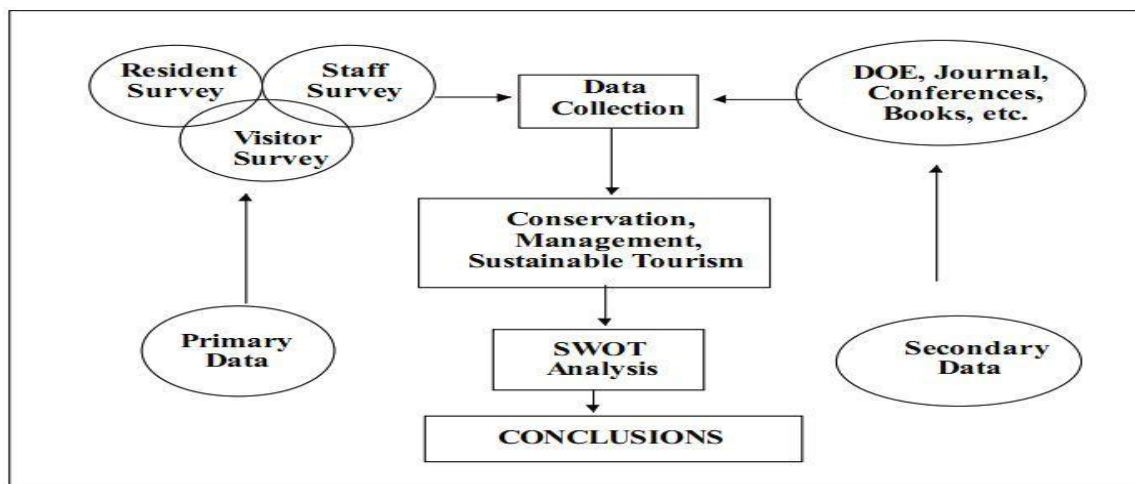


Fig. 2: Outline of the research methodology adopted

*Theoretical Research:**Desert as a Phenomenon:*

The term desert has many connotations. Many people think a desert is a barren wasteland of sand dunes with no water and no life. Deserts are regions where life is sparse but not nonexistent. Deserts can be caused by climate conditions, soil excesses or deficiencies, or human activities. An overabundance of one element, such as sodium, in the soil may retard plant growth so severely that the region becomes barren. Overgrazing of grassland or cutting of timber may cause water erosion to devastate an area, leaving a lifeless landscape. Cities have been called urban deserts. This volume is devoted to climatic desert biomes with unique assemblages of plants and animals adapted to arid conditions, sometimes hot, sometimes cold, depending on the location.(Quinn, 2008)

Deserts cover a third of the planet's land area, or about 50,000,000 km^{2,3} They are spread over two discontinuous zones on either side of the equator, generally in the inland regions of continents.

- In Africa: the Sahara, Kalahari and Namib Deserts.
- In the Middle East: the Arabian Desert.
- In Asia: the Gobi, Turkistan and Indian Thar Deserts.
- In the Americas:
 - North America: the Great Basin; the Sonoran, Mojave and Chihuahua Deserts and the Grand Canyon,
 - South America: the Patagonian, Atacama and coastal Peruvian Deserts,
 - In Australia: the Great Australian Desert,
 - In Europe: Tabernas, In the Almeria region of southern Spain.

Desert or semi-desert areas can be found in 53 countries or geographic regions. With exception of the Polar Regions, the world deserts lie within a band between 15° and 40° latitude north and south. (Benmecheri, 2007)

A desert is a region where very particular, sometimes extreme climatic conditions and environmental factors converge and together form the desert and its morphology. A desert's climate is a function of its altitude but also its latitude. The deserts of Asia receive polar influences and are quite cold in winter, when their temperatures can descend to -500 C. The African deserts nearest the equator are much hotter, with temperatures reaching up to +560 C.

- A desert is a particularly arid region of the planet where plant life is limited or virtually absent and fauna are rare.
- Precipitation is one of the basic parameters used to define deserts; deserts are generally, but not exclusively, considered to include areas receiving no more than 250 mm of rainfall per year.
- Temperature is another distinctive factor of deserts; average monthly temperatures are generally quite high, reaching up to 600 or 700 C in the hottest deserts. In colder deserts, average temperatures can fall as low as -300 C. In terms of this criterion, there are three main categories of desert: hot, transitional and cold.

The Potential Offered by Nature and Heritage in Desert Areas:

Desert ecotourism, especially for the inhabitants of European Countries who are deprived from this natural biome, is considered as one highly attractive tourism fields. Unique perspective of deserts, which has been ornamented by quick dunes, flora and fauna, unique vision and peace, difficulty and intensity of climatic conditions and consequently much temperature difference between day and night, historical memories and adaptations of human life in desert during elapse of time, has made the desert one of the unique attractions of the nature and has resulted that the tourists would be interested in visiting desert and experiencing its climate. Even some of adventurous tourists have commenced adventurous travels for themselves by accepting many difficulties for passing from broad deserts and endurance of hard conditions of desert. Nowadays, in some countries such as Tunis, the income of desert tourism is up to 3 billion dollars per annum.(Ngdir, 2006). The prosperity of desert tourism not only results in economic output for broad spectrum of the country which has no productive, agricultural and industrial competitive capabilities, but also it revives some of forgotten traditional customs, such as camel driving, and helps to improvement of life quality of local communities.

Potentials of Desert Offered by Nature:

Natural tourism resources in desert include various natural resources which have been made of mutual effect of topography, climate, water resources and plant type and density. These resources include:

1. Sun	2. Sky
3. Seasonal Wetlands	4. Desert Mountains
5. Desert Woodlands	6. Distinctive Tree
7. Desert Landscapes	8. Desert Sphere
9. Dunes	10. Caves
11. Xenomorphic Fauna (specially various kinds of mammals)	

Human Resources and Potentials of Desert Offered by Heritage:

Those manifestations of human life, which have been placed in desert and salt desert today and in ancient times along with traditional social actions, believe local customs and mores, historical and ancient monuments are from among human manifestations of desert which are demanded by tourists. We can point to the following subjects from among the most important tourism resources related to the human in desert:

1. Historical and ancient memories in desert (Caravansaries & Bridges)	2. Historical passages
3. Caves with paleo-anthropology value	4. Subterranean channel
5. Shrines and tombs	6. Ceremonies
7. Architectural attractions of human shelters	8. Manifestations of human & nature coexistence
9. Gardens and paradises	10. Water reservoirs
11. Handicrafts	12. Local clothing & foods
13. Local sports and plays	14. Small Bazaars
15. Tea shops	16. Method of people's traditional living
17. Production of plant and animal products of desert (Eshraghi:2010).	

Desert Ecotourism Activities:

The activities of desert Ecotourism are limited but they are specific for these natural areas. These activities are depended on tourism resources, desert climate and land accidents. The following list is part of possible tourism activities of deserts:

1. Sunbath	2. Sun therapy
3. Sand therapy	4. Walking at desert and salt desert
5. Bicycle deriving at desert	6. Motorcycle driving
7. Driving over dunes	8. Desert rally
9. Skiing on sand hills	1. Wind boat driving at desert
11- Camel driving	12. Visiting camel breeding centres
13. Flight with gliders and Para gliders	14. Desert visiting by balloon
15. Visiting desert perspectives	16. Visiting subterranean channels
17. Visiting water reservoirs	18. Observation of the stars
19. Visiting desert fauna at night	20- Visiting old trees
21. Walking at desert woodlands	22. Visiting waterfowls and waders
23. Using local restaurants	24. Purchasing handicrafts
25. Shopping from local small bazaars	26. Visiting monuments and shrines
27. Visiting coexistence manifestations of human and nature	28. Hunting
29. Village tourism	30- Mountain climbing (UNEP:2006).

The Positive Impacts of Desert Ecotourism:

If ecotourism is properly managed and planned, it will bring numerous economic resources for the government, private sector, and local groups and societies and could help improve living conditions of people and changing quality of lifestyle in rural environments. On the other side this will be a tool for protection of natural environment and historical works.

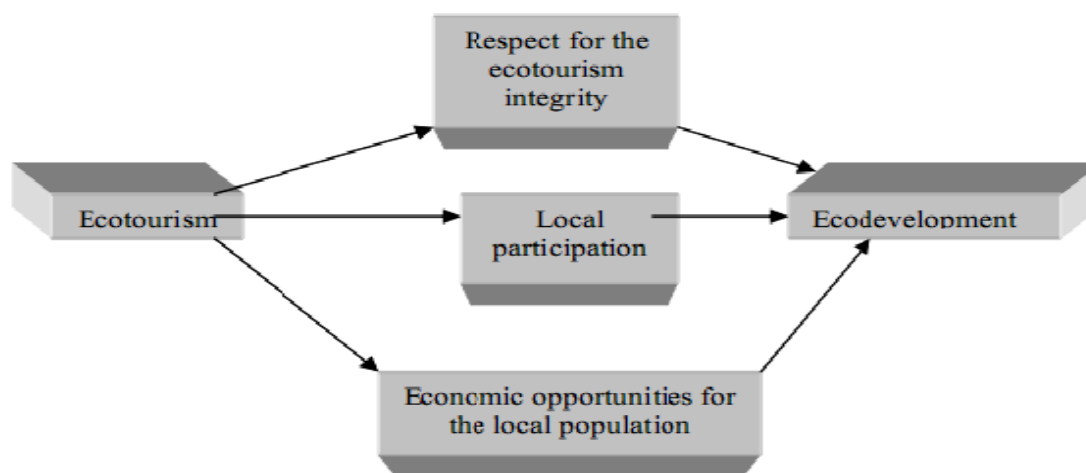


Fig. 1: The elements involved in the ecotourism development

Employment Creation:

New jobs are often cited as the biggest gain from tourism. Protected areas may hire new guides, guards, researchers or managers to meet increased ecotourism demands. In surrounding communities, residents may become employed as taxi drivers, tour guides, lodge owners or handicraft makers, or they may participate in other tourism enterprises.

In addition, other types of employment may be augmented indirectly through tourism. More bricklayers may be needed for construction. More vegetables may be needed at new restaurants. More cloth may be needed to make souvenirs. Many employment sources are enhanced as tourism grows. In some cases, community residents are good candidates for tourism jobs because they know the local environment well. Residents are ideal sources of information; for example, they can tell visitors why certain plants flower at particular times and what animals are attracted to them. As indigenous residents of the area, community members have much to offer in ecotourism jobs. However, care must be taken to protect the rights (sometimes referred to as intellectual property rights) of local peoples so that their knowledge is not exploited or appropriated unfairly by visitors or a tourism program (Drumm and Moore, 2005).

A Stronger Economy:

Tourists visiting nature sites boost economies at the local, regional and national levels. If tourism brings jobs to residents at the local level, they then have more money to spend locally, and economic activity within the area increases. Nature tourists arrive in the capital city of a country. They may stay for a few days or travel to the countryside. Along the way they use hotels, restaurants, shops, guide services and transportation systems. Typically, a multitude of businesses benefit directly from nature tourists. Although these businesses usually are set up to accommodate the broader groups of international and national tourists, nature tourists are an added market (Drumm and Moore, 2005).

Environmental Education:

Nature tourists provide an ideal audience for environmental education. During an exciting nature hike, visitors are eager to learn about the local habitats. They want to hear about animal behaviour and plant uses as well as the challenges of conserving these resources. Many want to know the economic, political and social issues that surround conservation. Nature guides are one critical source of environmental education. Visitor surveys show that good guides are a key factor in a trip's success (Drumm and Moore 2005).

Improved Conservation Efforts:

As a result of interest location, growing appreciation and pride conservation efforts often increase. Many residents are motivated to protect their areas and may change their patterns of resource use. Cultivation practices may be altered. Litter on roads may be cleaned up. Water may be better managed. Local populations often learn more about conservation and modify their daily habits because of tourism. Awareness often increases at the national level also, resulting in such improved conservation efforts as mandating and supporting protected areas. Even at the international level, ecotourism may engender an international constituency for improved conservation efforts and support for particular protected areas. International and local visitors to a protected area are likely to rally to its defence if a valuable area is being threatened (Drum and Moore, 2005).

The Negative Impacts of Desert Ecotourism:

Besides positive effects, negative effects of tourism must also be considered. Particularly in areas surrounding arrival points, attracting the neediest population to peripheral urban areas, spawning shantytowns, and generating unhealthy living conditions with all the attendant consequences lack of proper health care, drinking water, and waste management facilities. The consequences of intercultural contact can also be negative: too many tourist arrivals can be both a brutal for local population and "turn-off" for tourist preferring their travel in small groups, without encountering other tourists at the same sites, since their short stay do not allow them to stray too far from local airports. Local tourism actors, moreover, are prepared to accommodate only so many tourists; when their capacity is exceeded, the result can be poor service and tensions within the host community. Also, given the fragility of desert ecosystems, there is a threshold of tolerance beyond which tourism can produce significant negative impacts. Desertification is part of the context in these areas, and tourism should not have the effect of aggravating it. Soil degradation is synonymous with famine and poverty. To find other means of subsistence, populations living in regions threatened by desertification have been forced to move on, and such population movements are among the major consequences of desertification. Between 1997 and 2020, it is estimated that 60 million people will have left the desert areas of sub-Saharan Africa for the Maghreb and Europe. Africa, Asia, and Latin America are the regions most threatened by desertification (Benmecheri, 2007).

Environmental Degradation:

This is the problem most commonly associated with tourism in protected areas. Visitors may destroy the very resources they come to see. Degradation happens in many ways and in varying degrees. Much of tourism's damage to natural resources is visible: trampled vegetation, trail erosion and litter. (Drumm and Moore, 2005) In desert areas tourists pose other kinds of threats to protected areas. In addition to surface damage, they affect the intricate workings of nature, causing subtle changes and problems including the alteration of such animal behaviour as eating habits, migration and reproduction. Many changes are difficult to detect, but all are important indicators of the health of natural resources. (Drumm and Moore, 2005) For demographic reasons, the needs of sedentary populations living in semiarid rural environments are increasing steadily, exerting ever greater pressure on natural resources. This pressure takes the form in particular of overexploitation of land, and the excessive clearing and harvesting of plant cover. The results are diminished crop yield, depleted and polluted streams and groundwater, and leached soil (Benmecheri, 2007).

Tourism can accentuate this phenomenon if not limited by quotas set beneath the threshold of tolerance of desert areas:

- through the overcrowding of tourist sites;
- through the trampling of dunes and excessive 4 x 4 vehicle traffic;
- through the destruction of a rare vegetation;
- through the uprooting of aromatic and medicinal plants;
- through the excessive use of timber;
- through the impact on water resources.

Impact on Local Populations and Their Cultures:

The ways of desert life continue to survive, despite the fragile balance they require and threats to the social ties that underpin them. As the desert's principal resource, culture both tangible and intangible warrants particular attention (Benmecheri, 2007).

Tourism can significantly affect and ultimately destroy these ways of life:

- through a lack of respect for traditional ways of life;
- through highly competitive pricing and inequitable distribution of the economic benefits of tourism;
- through the looting of archaeological sites, the removal of artefacts required to properly understand them, and the degradation of rock-art carvings and paintings;
- through excessive visitor traffic and overcrowding, leading to the deterioration of sites;
- through an artificially folkloric treatment of culture and a society's intangible heritage.

A Successful Sample of Ecotourism Development of Deserts in China:

China is among the countries which has been able to encourage tourists visiting its desert attractions and also its historical and ancient monuments. For the purpose of gaining revenue from domestic and foreign tourists in part of its desert areas where quicksand fixation projects have been implemented and desert areas have been afforested, this country has constructed beautiful recreational and amusing centers and parks through establishment of welfare facilities. (Khosrowshahi, 2008). For example Xiangshawan desert

China has officially introduced 44 national geo-parks for the purpose of attraction of domestic and foreign ecotourism's based on geological heritage and with the purpose of protection from this heritage since 2000. Protection and development of this heritage has brought favorable social, economic and environmental advantages in China and has resulted a distinguish rank for this country in network of world geo-parks under the supervision of UNESCO. Having executed the plans of tourism development, the number of tourists and ecotourism's was 5.7 million persons in 1980, while it was over 89 million persons in 2001. It means that China has had a development percentage of 1700 in number of its tourists and ecotourism's within 20 years. The income gained from tourism in 1996 was 30.6 billion US dollars, while it was gained to 61.7 billion dollars in 2001 and it has the fifth rank among other countries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In most parts of the province its climate is hot and dry and most of its cities, especially large cities such climate. Climate classification, indicate the same. Semnan Province in Iran's central desert deserts desert is part of making it up on the slopes of the Alborz Mountain wind shelter (kamyabi & gholamzadeh, 2014). Due to the vast wilderness area can Semnan Desert round sports programs such as desert racing, desert racing, car racing, motorcycling, bicycling, horse, camel riding, sand skiing, kite riding, paragliding, athletics, hiking and sports field provided (Naraghi: 2013).

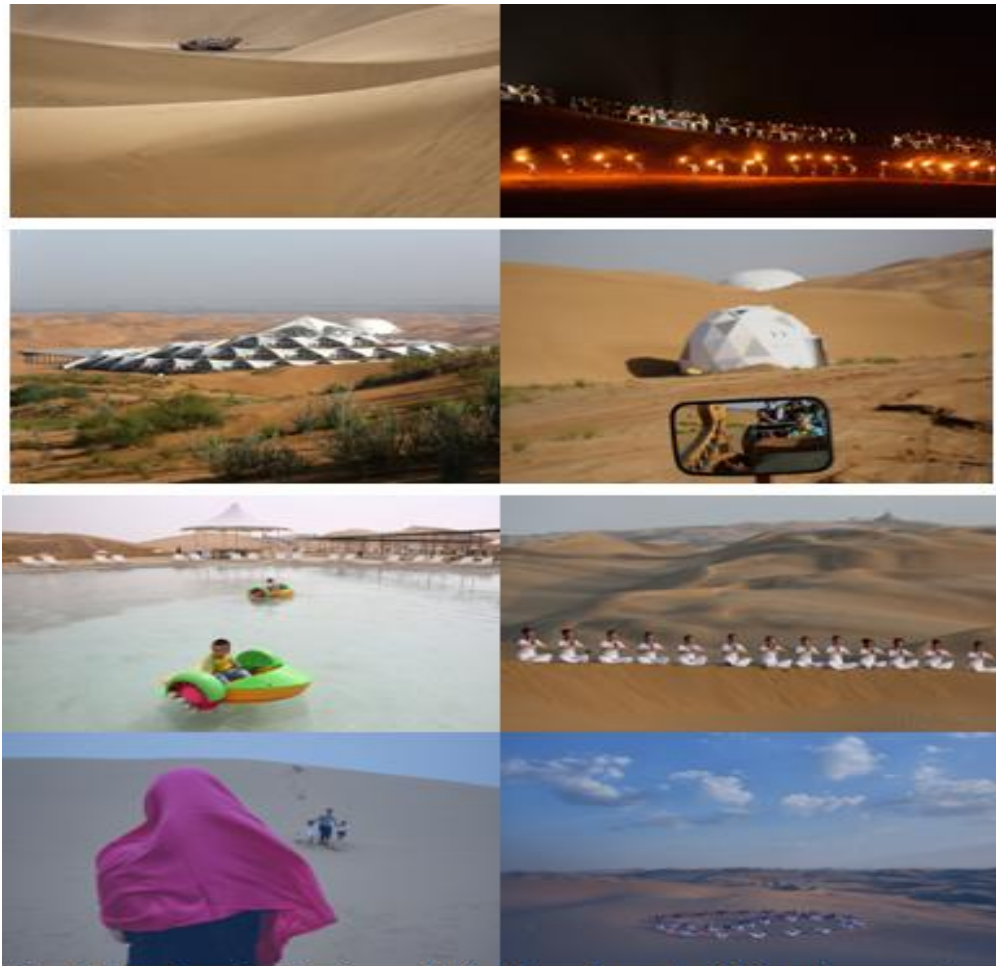


Fig. 2: Desert Ecotourism Development in Xiangshawan desert. (www.theatlantic.com: 2013)

Table 4: Annual weather temperature in study area

Station	Altitude (meter)	Averages			Absolute Temperature	
		Maximum	Minimum	Daily	Maximum	Minimum
Semnan	1130	23.4	12.8	17.3	44	-11
Garmsar	856	39.9	11	18.2	45	-11
Damghan	1170	40	11	18.2	43	-16.5
SHahrood	1365	33.3	9	15	42	-14

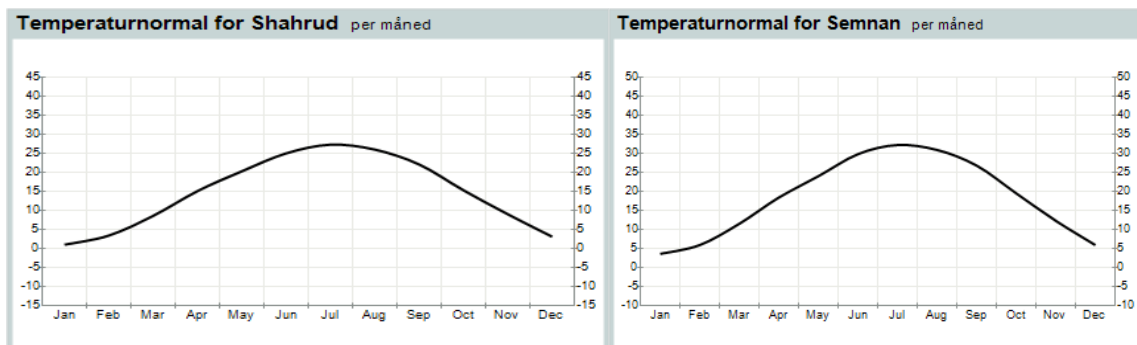


Fig. 6: diagram of case study in Temperature of the region

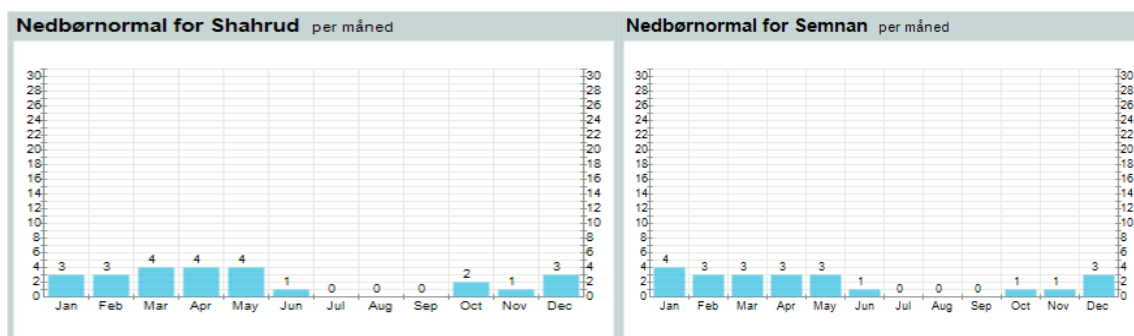


Fig. 7: diagram of case study in Rainfall of the region

Table 5: results to assign the climate types

Station	Average of annual precipitation (mm)	Average of annual temperature (°C)	Demarton	Kopen	Amberge	Amberge coefficients
semnan	141	17.8	cold	Bwh	Arid cold	13.4
Damghan	100	18	arid	Bwh	Arid cold	10.8
Garmsar	124.5	18.7	arid	Bwh	Arid cold	10.7
SHahrood	195	15	Semi arid	Bsk	Arid cold	15.6

Table 6: Climatic classification case study

station	Demarton	kopen	Amberge	Slope
Semnan	arid	Bwk	Semi arid cold	sothern
SHahrood	Semi arid	Bsk	Semi arid cold	sothern
Garmsar	arid	Bwh	arid cold	sothern
Tehran	Semi arid	Bsk	Semi arid cold	sothern

Table 7: Distribution of Ecotourism in the Semnan province

Manmade		The history of human culture		The natural		Total		city
Percent	Number of	Percent	Number of	Percent	Number of	Percent	Number of	
100	297	100	362	100	70	100	729	Total
26/6	79	38/3	139	10	7	30/8	225	semnan
35/1	104	23/2	84	39	27	29/4	215	sharood
21/5	64	19/6	71	39	27	22/2	162	damghan
16/8	50	18/9	68	12	9	17/6	127	Garamsar

Potentials of Sustainable Ecotourism Development in Semnan Deserts:

Semnan area, which is located in west side of central Iran, is considered as an important part of geological and structural unit of Iran where placed in centre of Iran in the form of a trigonometry. The deserts of Semnan area contain all things that would be required in an adventure tourism or desert Ecotourism in the beautiful and virgin nature. These deserts have been attractively formed from various and multicoloured configurations. Broad and white salt plains, golden dunes as well as light green, yellow and red hilly areas make a wonderful spectrum of worth seeing colours for desert tourists in daylight. It contains very beautiful perspectives from desert forms (such as various forms of wind erosion), virgin area of salt desert, subterranean channels, special flora and fauna, beautiful sky with plentiful stars and ... But following geographical isolation and non-continuous presence of human during the recent decades and consequently lack of their conservation, repair and rehabilitation, most of its symbols would be demolished or they are in process of demolishing and destruction. It is certain that these cultural, historical and social symbols have a remarkable share of tourist progresses with cultural motivation (Ngdir, 2006).

Tourist Attractions in Semnan:

The existing ecotourism resources in Iran, as mentioned before, consist various spectrums of separated attractions; however, in Semnan zone, it seems that the four factors of anthropology, desert trips, hunting, fishery and nature therapy attract more tourists than others. A short description is given of each:

Anthropology Tourism (Ecotourism Aspect):

Most anthropology tourism is a part of cultural tourism; however, despite the contents conformity, some anthropological attractions such as migration tourism, rural tourism...are in the heart of natural poles and estimations show that most clients that apply for migration and village tours or appear in deserted local areas are nature tourism. Therefore, particularly in macro planning and economic analysis, cases such as tourism of migration and village tourism should be separated from cultural tourism and put in ecotourism classification. Principally, anthropology tourism beyond ecotourism analysis is a vaster category and includes items such as architecture, language...which are generally focused by the cultural tourism authorities as well. However, in ecotourism, the only part of anthropology attraction is those which in first glance is the product of man's adaptability with his surrounding nature and could find identity as tourism attraction merely in combination with their natural origin(Eghbali,2011:63-76).

Village Tourism:

Approximately half of Iranian population lives in rural regions. Life style and economy of far off villages of Iran are unique and are considered as a part of indexes of ancient Iranian civilizations. Many villages are both tourism attraction and source for providing accommodation and welfare needs of tourists.

Tradition and Customs Tourism:

Many local customs and traditions have become tourism industries potentials in Semnan. Rose water ceremonies in Garmsar, Semnan and carpet washing ceremony of Garmsar and Amirih of Damghan are among them and many tourists like to participate in those ceremonies and visit the events(Eghbali,2011:63-76).

Agricultural Method:

Watermelon dry farm even in Rig Boland ranges has been an old agricultural practice in Semnan. During recent years, when the underground water surfaces have dropped, people of Semnan make embankment from limited surfaces and lower the distance of roots and the underground water beds. Some products such as watermelon are cultivated in pool-shapes. In some instances, a limited surface is embanked and brings the roots near to underground water levels. In such cases, water is collected in the pit and a relatively large pool is made which could be used as fish farm. These innovations and local thoughts are traditionally among attractions of this region(Eghbali,2011:63-76).

Desert Adventures Tourism:

With respect to the largeness of Semnan zone, desert tourism and desert sports such as car races, desert competitions, bike races, bicycle riding, horse riding, camel riding, sand dunes ski, kite, paraglide field running, jogging and field sports could be arranged, a few of them are as follows:

Kite and Paraglide:

The sand hills of deserts have suitable height and soft slope. The soft sand makes it possible to arrange kite and paraglide or glider programs. Salt lake with its vast and beautiful landscape, beautiful sand hills and variable sites in the region are the most beautiful landscapes that satisfy the flight fans and provide their ideals.

Sand Dunes Ski:

Sand dunes ski has special attraction in the desert and by special plans; they could be used in those hills.

Desert Tourism with Motorcycles:

Tourism in the desert with a motorcycle is one of the interest is activities for some tourists. Development facilities can be attracted the desert motorcycle tourists. In deserts of Semnan there are unique grounds for all train wheels sports.

Historical Attractions of Semnan:

Semnan is one of the province where interesting examples of magnificent Iranian arts could be found. The architecture masterpieces of this city have remained from Safavid and largely from Qajar period. This city has its own architecture due to its geographic conditions and natural position and each year, many tourists from farthest points of world travel to Semnan for this purpose. Some of the buildings are(Eghbali,2011:63-76).



Fig. 3: pic of Ecotourism's in desert of Semnan

Table 8: Matrix (SWOT) (main factors affecting regional tourism)

internal	External
<p>S- STRENGTH</p> <p>Semnan province has attractive Tourism products Unique attractions, mostly in the field of scientific research, such as desert salt dome</p> <p>High and Good Accommodation Possible development of sports tourism as a desert safari</p> <p>Good Transport Services & Close to Tehran and Mashhad, Sari, Semnan as three centers of tourist attraction that provides for the possibility to attract tourists to the State Planning</p> <p>Good conditions for observing the night sky Stars Semnan desert animal life is rare. Wilderness habitat of the latest Asian cheetah, zebra and other rare species such as the desert regions can also Jubair, sand cats, caracals, Hvrbrh and be seen. There are many archaeological sites in the deserts of semnan. Dozens of large and small inn, historic cobblestone Desert and the ancient city remains "Khbys" and these are some of the Silk Road</p>	<p>O - OPPORTUNITY</p> <p>New Tourism Products and Innovatio Promotion and Marketing Strategy Eco and Literacy Tourism Increasing incentives for private sector investment to make Accommodation and catering and recreational facilities</p> <p>Creation of employment and income for different types of labor (unskilled workers to skilled)</p> <p>Despite the good hospitality of the local people and community participation</p> <p>Adventure tourism</p>

Refrence:Author

Table 9: Matrix (SWOT) (main factors affecting regional tourism)

internal	External
W - WEAKNESSES	T - THREATS
Lack of safety and security of tourists Lack of Tourism Courses and training Inappropriate infrastructure and service facilities and amenities Lack of use of different languages in the tourist literature Seasonality of ecotourism and unequal distribution of tourism Insufficient system at the provincial level and lack of information and advertising policy, marketing, management and long-term systematic and coherent	Political Instability Undeveloped Infrastructure There are a number of military sites in the region Lack of Public Private Partnership Lack of sufficient knowledge and clear understanding of issues of environmental and wilderness guides among various social groups Lack of infrastructure facilities, and adequate utilities and international standards in the province and salinity

Reference: Author

Conclusion:

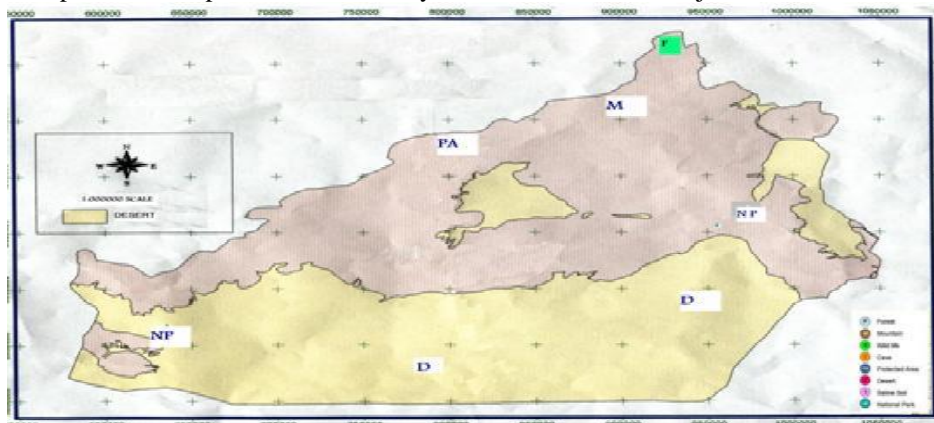
Semnan desert area includes all those things that a travel adventure or wilderness beautiful and untouched nature is required. Interestingly, this desert is formed of diverse shapes and colors. Broad and white salt plains, golden dunes to the green hills, yellow and red, a surprising range of colors in daylight create a spectacular wilderness travellers.

Landscapes of desert forms (including various forms of wind erosion), an area of pristine desert, subterranean flora and fauna, especially the beautiful starry skies, and in its place is

Having various links with the neighboring provinces of Tehran, Mazandaran, Golestan, Khorasan, and Isfahan, Semnan province has always been important. Because of the many tourist spots throughout the province, more and more visitors come to spend their spare times and occasions every year. Because of having the natural landscapes and historical background, Semnan Province can be turned into an important local and international tourist center. Being on the cross sectional point of several other provinces, proximity to the capital, good roads, convenience, and a variety of spots are among the most important factors in the development of tourism in this province. Special geographical conditions and climate as well as status of topography, geography, and geomorphology signify the unique potentials of Semnan Province in ecotourism. However, tourism and natural tourism specially (ecotourism) have not developed. If the potentials of tourism are rightfully exploited, there would be a possibility to enhance the poor villages which are the traditional protectors of their surroundings, besides having various regional and national advantages.

Furthermore, ecotourism can bear positive and negative effects on the nature and the environment, which indicates the necessity for planning and supervising to remove the negative consequences and strengthen the positive effects on the environment. For many reasons, Semnan desert zone have several technical and economic justification in ecotourism development and by making suitable ground, tourism could be improved in this region:

1. In general, desert zones, particularly Semnan, have much natural and cultural variety.
2. In most desert zones, including Semnan, due to climate, the agricultural, cattle breeding and industrial activities are limited and therefore, tourism could be a source of jobs and income.
3. The Semnan area has unique geographic and geology phenomena rarely found in other regions
4. Natural attractions in the province, especially in desert Geopark has the potential to become
5. In sum, due to unique geomorphologic, suitable substructures in the zone (asphalt roads and airport), ecotourism development in this part of Iran has many technical and economic justifications.

**Fig. 4:** Position desert of Semnan.

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