



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Evaluation of Ecotourism Capabilities of Golestan Province

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research is to survey and understand capabilities, advantages, opportunities, disadvantages, and threatens of ecotourism in different areas in Golestan province. This province places in north of Iran located in eastern south of Caspian Sea and has a lot of capabilities and different geographical perspectives and natural potential for developing and attracting permanent ecotourism. For analyzing and evaluating, SPSS 19, Excel and SWOT software have been used in this research. The result of this research shows that Golestan province not only has natural, cultural and historical attractions but also has a lot of abilities in the field of ecotourism development and tourist attraction. But without having suitable foundations, amenities, welfare, residence, poor management, and advertisement in the field of ecotourism, and capitalism in this province, this researcher suggested for accomplishing permanent development of ecotourism in this province for improving spadework operation such as preparation, and composition overall program for management.

Key words: Ecotourism, SOWT Model, Strategy, Permanent Development.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays tourism is the biggest and most variable industry in the world [1]. With the 200 million practitioners the 80% of the total employment is dedicated to this industry and it is one of the important sources to attaining income in 80% of countries [2]. Tourism due to the high ability in creation and promotion of national, territorial, urban and rural development always applauded. In recent years increase in urbanization and attention to the leisure time causes tourism industry to become one of the biggest and variable industry and also as an achievable goal in the eternal development process and tourism products are not only productive profit but also recognized as a device in social and cultural evolution and create a harmony and balance in areas. Tourism industry created about 200 million jobs throughout the world and most of this growth which is about 10 to 30 percent is occurred in ecotourism

Tourism industry from the social dimension to the attention of vast social and geographical connection could be increase the national awareness in the way of life, beliefs, costumes and tradition of different groups and causes more and more unities in kinfolks [3]. Ecotourism has a direct connection with natural factors such as: locale topography, network hydrology, weather features and biological traits. This tourism is a type of tourism in areas and natural landscapes [4]. Ecotourism is a tourism in natural areas which are intact and its function is to protect biological environment and also beneficial for local people and different cultures. In international surface Ecotourism is a concept which its roots are in protection of natural resources and eternal development goals.

Iran is the one of the ten country in the world which consist of the most environmental and geographical variety and is consider as an important cache in biological variety in globe. In recent years good steps are taken in tourism and ecotourism attraction but they're not sufficient, in the year 1993 about 131 million dollar of Iran's income dedicated to this industry and this figure in 2000 become 850 million dollar (Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, 2004). Iran has the fifth rank of natural attractions in the world and nowadays ecotourism considers as the most important part in tourism industry. Remarkable economic output and income guaranteed more profound progress.

Evaluation and recognition of each of the progress able and investable abilities and ecotourism attractions in Iran shows that ecotourism in Iran is an exclusive economic source but it is unbound and it can attracts tourists, promote local communities economic with the creation of employment and income

and balance distribution in different areas. Because of this we can consider ecotourism as a pivot of Iran tourism which has a logical justification in economic and scientific view. Iran is capable to obtain tourism income in ecotourism segment. Motivation in ecotourism is to observe, enjoy and applaud of natural phenomenon and historical and cultural assets which are related to it. Moreover, ecotourism is a trip to natural parts, the guaranty not to change the cultural values beneficial for local population, ecosystem production and to increase in the development of natural resources to achieve eternal goals and due to this ecologic, biologic, economic and social eternal indices is inevitable [5].

Golestan province which is located in east south of the Caspian sea and with the possession of the north which has several geographical landscapes and potential abilities is able to attracts ecotourism. Because of ecotourism attractions and potentialities such as: Golestan public park, ancient flat leaf forests, high summits and mountains, abundant national and international wetlands, biological variety, natural jungle parks, Gorgan Gulf and Ashu Rade touristic island, beautiful sea coasts, varied hemisphere weather, permanent and seasonal rivers, pleasant places for recreation in different seasons of year and connection with the mid Asia [6]. Cause Iran's geographical scientific to entitle the nature of Golestan province as Iran in small scale. Unfortunately some of these abilities and potentialities are not used accurately and principally. Due to this general recognition, design and safe management to achieve ecotourism eternal plan is necessary and inevitable. This would hinder biological crisis which follows human existence and ecotourism threads. The purpose of this research is to study, recognize the abilities and advantages, uses opportunities and decreases the threads and weaknesses, to make schedule and use guidelines to exploit of resources. This research is a study of abilities and potentialities evaluation in ecotourism progress in Golestan province which is located in east south of Caspian Sea in Iran. This research with the attention of weaknesses, strengths, occasions and ecotourism threads in different parts of Golestan province offers appropriate guidelines in different economic, social, scientific, legal and biological to improve ecotourism condition and with the accurate guidelines causes day by day growth of ecotourism industry in Golestan province in Iran.

ECOTOURISM

Word ecotourism for the first time used and entered in tourism literature in the 1980 and this valid and brief word nearly accepted by all people. The first comprehensive, abbreviated and valid definition was offered by ecotourism international council in 1990 (responsible trip to the natural areas to protect the biological environment and improve the economics of the local communities).

The other definition was declare by Mart Honny in 1999 (ecotourism is a trip to the delicate, amazing and safe areas to protect them). ecotourism is an instructive trip for the tourist and its income is used in protection of the area and directly effects on the economic and political progress of that locale and it is also a respect to different cultures and human rights. In the year 1996 a definition was presented and accepted by the earth protection union (IUCN) (ecotourism is the responsible trip and visit to the natural areas for respecting and using the nature with the attention to every new historical and cultural traits which is helpful in its protection and it has the least negative effects and it would be beneficial in economic and social views.

And in the book of tourism management by scientific center of Jihad University publication a concept was express for ecotourism (ecotourism is a responsible trip to the natural areas which causes to protect biological environment and improve the quality of local people life). Ecotourism which called ecological too, is a type of tourism which attracts the exclusive social and ecological attention. in the law which was passed in 1991 the Islamic enjoy and visit the nature and its attraction (Planning and Budget Council parliament presented (tourism is each kind of trip whether sporadic or republican that last more than 24 hour and don't be for job purposes can count as tourism [6]. Ecotourism is also defined as travels that are taken to organization [7]. Iran's tourism organization defined eternal tourism in the year 1995 as the ecotourism which acquit the needs of current ecotourism and preserve and improve the opportunities for future people. Kasler defined ecotourism as a type of tourism which is related to the natural environment and ancient resources such as: birds, wide life, beautiful sceneries corals, caves, fossils and the wetlands and places with the species which are about to ruin.. Seballus Laskorian defined ecotourism as: is a travel to the ruined places or natural uncontaminated areas with the purpose of study and observe the beauties, animals and plants and cultural signs of these places (same source of study). Ecotourism is also called ecological is a type of tourism which pay attention to the exclusive social and ecological attractions. Ecotourism which is made by the two words of ecology and tourism is mean: a kind of tourism which is related to natural, amazing, untouched and protected areas and it helps the biological protection and it is also respectful for the natural resources and local community values [8].

In the decade of 1950 united nation organization named tourism as an industry. Currently it changed as an economic promotion for countries and all governments are trying to win the race that is held for

increasing tourism attractions because this industry provides us several types of job, with the direct and indirect production of 200 million jobs consist of 10% of total universal employments. Due to this statistics WTO predicts the public growth of tourism industry from 4.3 to 6.7. And it should mention that the majority of this growth which is about 10 to 30 percent related to ecotourism. Because of the consistent importance of ecotourism united nation organization named the year 2002 as a global year of ecotourism. The analysis if Iran natural geography and each of its tourism attractions with the attention to Iran's characteristics such as: vastness, continental and biological variety shows that Iran's ecotourism is an exclusive economic source but it is unbound. Iran's ecotourism position in the first stage is because of its topographical condition of adjacent with the high pressure of torrid area. It is expected that countries in this pressure area consist of dry and semi dry hemisphere and biological scenery due to this continental phenomenon. The tectonically factors cause Iran to become one of the highest plateau in the world and it consist of varied moderate, hot and cold hemisphere. Some factors such as: mountainous area with the high attractive summits with more than 4000 meter height, climbable walls varied the attractions. Iran's geographical position as a mountainous country consist of pleasant country weather, spectacular caves, Damavand most beautiful summit to climb and the possibility of winter sports in different areas (Skiing in Dizin, Abali, Kuhrang) can count as natural attractions for tourism. And some other ecotourism attractions in Iran are: spectacular scenes and untouched geographical elements, inequalities, plains, valleys, deserts, varied plant and animal species and the biggest lake of the world in north of Iran (Khazar).

ECOTOURISM DOMAIN IN IRAN

Iran has lots of natural, cultural, historical and classical attractions in the comparison to other countries and generally we can express the types of Iran's ecotourism as below:

People Recognition Tourism (in Ecotourism View)

In ecotourism the only part which attracts attention is the result of conformity between human beings with their natural environment and their gain this importance due to mixing with their natural station. Several prominent geographers believe that Iran's civilization is the product of conformity with the multi-natural feature of Iran. Due to this the most significant international part of people recognition tourism is migration tourism and nothing was done in this sketch. The usage of this kind of tourism is limited to visiting from some important villages such as Masouleh in Gilan, Abyane and Kandovan.

Hillside climbing

Is a type of tourism which defines as sport tourism and adventure tourism? According to some global groups it is synonyms to nature roaming with such subcategories: visit the wild life, landscapes, and historical monuments in several areas.

Desert Roaming

More than one of five areas of Iran is desert; according to their expanse Lut and Kavir are consider as four immense deserts in the world. Iran's deserts have a spectacular attraction in comparison to other world deserts. Ski on sandy hills and observe the desert landscapes are consider as the most beautiful landscapes.

Water and Coast Sports

Iran possesses about two thousand kilometer coast border in north and south and it is the winter and summer recourse of several fans. The compound of shore, mountains and forest causes the shores as the most significant part to visit in Iran. Most of tourism investment in recent years dedicated to Kish and Ghesm Island in Persian Gulf.

Nature Therapy

Using hot water springs as a source to cure some diseases was done from hundreds of years. Irans hot water springs are located at the hillside Alborz Mountain and consider as one of the most principal ecotourism sources. one of the most common way in nature therapy in our society is to use country retires such as: Kelar Dasht, Height of Dohezar, Javaher Deh, Zarin Gol, Serin, Shahkuh and Siyamarz Kuh.

Winter Sports

There is the possibility of skiing throughout the Zagros mountain chain and most parts of Alborz chain specially the center and west part of it. Currently there is existed only 16 ski land in Iran but it can be increased with reasonable supervision to attract external ecotourism.

Cave and Mountain Climbing

High mountainous summits especially central part of Zagros and Damavand summit (highest part of west hemisphere of Iran) and existence of one hundred large caves in them possess the ecotourism investment attractions.

Prey and Hunt

More than hundred preserves exist in Iran which contains most of provinces. Hunting is done by license in national stage and prey in most of lakes and seas are national, currently hunt tours are the most promotable exploitation from ecotourism resources in each country, and because of the special natural position of Iran it possesses high importance.

OVERVIEW OF GOLESTAN PROVINCE

Golestan province with 20438 square kilometer is located in the east south of Caspian Sea which consists 1.3 of Iran's space. According to its expanse it is consider as the 19th among all provinces. it located between 53 degree and 56 minute till 22minute of east length and 36 degree and 30 minute till 38 degree and 8 minute north width. This province limited to Turkmenistan republic from the north, to Semnan province from the south, to Khorasan province from the east and to Caspian Sea and Mazandaran province from the west. According to ministerial and civic division in 2005 Golestan province consist of 11 townships, 21 towns,21 parts,50 villages,994 residential places and 75 nonresidential places. Most of its major Connections whit central Asia is through the paths in Golestan province. According to the settlement and population survey in 2008 the population was estimated about 1651329. the medium annual growth is about 1.96%.northern parts and the coast of Caspian Sea are placed lower than free seas and when we proceed to east and east south the height is increasing and slope is decreased from height to flat and Caspian Sea. According to the tracks which are find from digging the Kiyaram cave shows that this place is related to one hundred before Christ. According to ancient exploration of Torang Tappe (hill) it shows a Civilization record was about 5000year ago. This province after Hakhamaneshiyan dynasty is like a state with regular combinations and known as Hirkana. Golestan province is separated from Mazandaran province in the year 1997.the name of this province took from its most renowned ecotourism attractions (Golestan National Park).This province has the most variety of ethnic and language and it can be divided into two major parts: Turks and Farces.

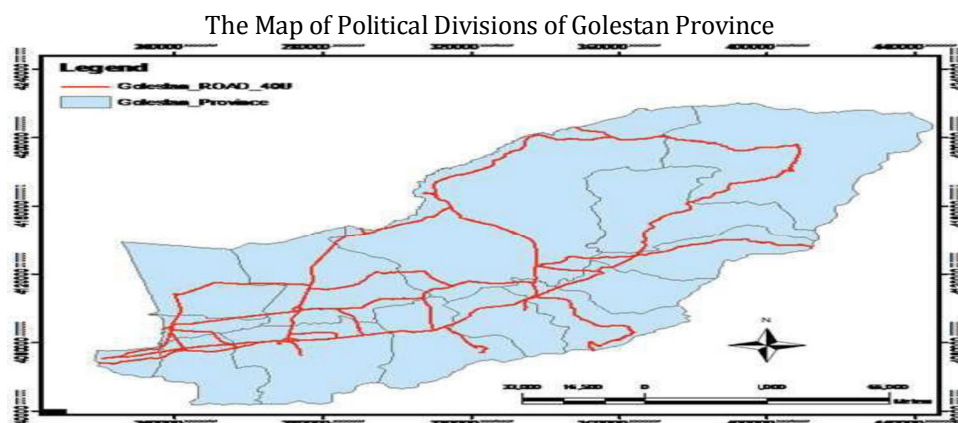


Figure 1: The Map of Political Divisions of Golestan Province Source: Statistics and Information Organization (GIS)

Table 1: The Number of Cities, Counties, Villages and Rural Districts in Golestan Province

New township	New city	Non-habitant village	Habitant village	village	Rural district t	town ship	county	City
Daland	Bandar Qaz	75	999	1074	45	16	16	7
Maraveh-	Aq Qala-	75	997	1072	45	18	19	9
Inche Boron	Kalaleh							
Fazal Abad-sorkhankalateh Anbar Oloom	Azad Shahr-Ramian	75	994	1069	50	21	21	11
Sismin Shahr-	-	75	989	1064	50	23	21	11
Negin Shahr	-	75	987	1061	50	24	21	11
-	-	44	977	1021	50	24	21	11
-	-	44	977	1021	50	24	21	11
Jelin	Maraveh Tappeh	44	1009	1053	53	25	23	12

Research Questions:

- What are the external environmental threats to ecotourism?
- What are the external environment opportunities to ecotourism?
- What are the internal environmental strengths in Golestan province ecotourism?
- What are the innovational strategies in the position of Golestan province ecotourism?
- What are the varied ecotourism strategies in St Position of this province?
- What are the revision strategies of ecotourism in Wo position?
- What are the defensive strategies of Golestan province in Wt position?

RESEARCH METHOD

In a ecotourism research of a special area researchers use exploration method(by the use of questionnaire)and descriptive method for recognition of ecotourism capacities and representation of attractions and abilities of the area then use the data which they needed from the questionnaire to appoint strengths, weaknesses, occasions and threats, due to this they use strategic model SWOT for the analysis of internal factors(strength and weakness)and external factors(threats and occasions)then they can offer the plan and management pattern for ecotourism progress.

Attributive Method

Attributive method is used in all scientific researches, in this method the use of evidence and documents are necessary. In this research it is use to make us aware of theoretic indices, statistics ,information from the books and scientific articles, maps, internet resources and research designs. And also they use existent information in universities, different communities and organizations and with the direct access of statistics centers such as Iran's statistics center, plan organization, cultural tourism and craft organization and natural media to obtain necessary information.

Nomination of Statistical Society's Sample Volume

The device of data analysis in this epistle is: EXCEL-SPSS19 and from this formula Chokeran tries to nominate the sample volume and to this formula 374 questionnaires are calculated. In this research statistical society is chosen from the managers, college students, planners, mountain climbers and athletes who are related to the tourism and it is consider about 374 people in this sample volume of Golestan province.

Analysis and Dissection Matrix SWOT

In tourism management analysis we can use different model.in the all descriptive models, SWOT is the most practical. And it is one of the significant devices that uses by tourism managers through which they can compare the information that are related to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats spots to represent four types of strategies. Analysis of weaknesses and strength in internal milieu and analysis of opportunities and threats in external milieu uses to make decisions which shape the quantity model of SWOT. And simplify the achievement of the short-time and long-time goals and they are the most important parts of this Matrix because it needs accurate judgments.

Table 2: SWOT Matrix (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats)

Weak Points (W)	Strength Points (S)	Internal Factors External Factors
Revision Strategies (WO)	Offensive Strategies (SO)	Opportunities (O)
Defensive Strategies (WT)	Variety Strategies (ST)	Threats (T)

Reference: Fardar (2009)

- 1) The defensive guidelines or (minimum-minimum1): This is used to decrease system weaknesses for diminishing and neutralizing threats.
- 2) The adaptive guidelines or (minimum-maximum 2): tries to decrease weaknesses and maximum use of opportunities.
- 3) Advisability guidelines or (maximum-minimum): its basis is on using system strengths for facing threats it means to maximize strengths spots and to minimize threats.
- 4) Offensive guidelines or (maximum-maximum): it's a reflexive way by using strength spots to expand products and services.

RESULTS

Table 3: prioritizing the strength points in point of view of local managers and provincial officials of SWOT Analysis Matrix

No		Total weight	Weight average	rank
1	Existence of unique natural landscapes such as Lovve, Kabud Wal, Shir Abad, Agh Sou waterfalls and rainforests, heights of Deraz Nou, Jahan Nama, Golestan national Park , ... in the province	1450	4.34	1
2	Existence of Gorgan plain and different attracts of it like Torkeman Sahra plain, international pond like	1290	3.86	5
3	Existence of suitable access ways for mount and cliff climbing and walking.	1124	3.36	11
4	Existence of sports attractions (Nahar Khoran of Gorgan, Bandar Gaz and Torkeman coasts,	1386	4.14	2
5	Existence of strong motivation in native investors to invest in tourism sector specially echo tourism	1058	3.16	14
6	(i.e. hotelling and building residences, ...)			
7	High tendency and interest of local and native managers to cultural development and employment by developing echo tourism.	992	2.97	15
8	Having high spirit of partnership to create and development of tourism.	1068	3.19	13
9	Having a silent environment.	1172	3.50	10
10	Existence of mild climates and four seasons in the province.	1368	4.09	3
11	Existence of Gorgan gulf and different ports (Bandar Gaz and Torkeman) and south-east coasts of Caspian sea for developing of echo tourism.	1238	3.70	8
12	Existence of different nations residence in the province (Torkeman, Sistani, Turk, ...)	1072	3.20	12
13	Existence of unique ecological resources (i.e. Golestan National Park, protected regions of Jahan Nama , ...)	1298	3.88	4
14	Existence of appropriate communication network and Asian road in this province (airport and rail station) to fast and easy access for tourists.	1214	3.63	9

No		Total weight	Weight average	rank
15	Existence of common border with Turkmenistan in this province for developing tourism.	1240	3.71	7
16	Existence of heights and mountainous regions i.e. peaks of Shahvar, Shahkooh, Siah Marz Kooh, Ghale Maral, Kooh Abr, Deraz Nou, ...	1268	3.79	6
17	Existence of 100 km south coasts of Caspian sea in this province.	1292	3.86	5
18	Existence of hot springs for hydrotherapy (hot spring of Ziarat in Gorgan)	1268	3.79	6

Table 4: Prioritizing the Weak Points in Point of View of local Managers and Provincial Officials

No		Total weight	Weight average	Rank
1	Inappropriate infrastructures and communication networks i.e. access ways to waterfalls, mountains and plains , ...	1192	3.56	5
2	Inappropriate facilities and equipment of services and sanitary.	1274	3.81	1
3	Not having tendency by people to invest in tourism and echo tourism sector	1104	3.30	7
4	Weakness of local managers and weakness of planning in echo tourism sector in the province	1256	3.76	2
5	Inappropriate sports facilities (Motorcycling track, car driving track, boating , ...)	1246	3.73	3
6	High density in the province especially in the southern regions	982	2.94	0
7	Insufficient facilities and equipment for residence and tourism (camp,hotel)	1274	3.81	1
8	Conflict between tourism culture and people and resident natives in the province	1002	3.00	8
9	Loss of expert and trained individuals in tourism in Golestan province	1168	3.49	6
10	Inappropriate the environmental conditions i.e. high humidity , ...	908	2.71	10
11	Problems like issuing certificates and facilities to develop echo tourism	1204	3.60	4

Table4: Prioritizing the Opportunities in Point of View of local Managers and Provincial Officials of Analysis Matrix

No		Total weight	Weight average	Rank
1	Approving rules and supportive regulations of tourism industry and existence of special credit rows for developing echo tourism	1198	3.58	9
2	Welcoming of investors in the studied region (Golestan Province) to invest in echo tourism due to existence of acilities and environmental infrastructures	1264	3.78	6
3	Supporting of Government officials from developing of echo tourism with the approach of employing for developing the province	1274	3.81	5
4	Increasing applying of expert and experienced individuals in echo tourism in the province	1244	3.72	7
5	Being placed the province in the very pleasing geographical situation (Iran in a small scale)	1288	3.85	4
6	To increase the motivation of other provinces people to travel and enjoy in this region	1300	3.89	3
7	Developing of appropriate communicational network (railway, airport, road, sea way) to quick access for tourists	1312	3.92	2
8	Covering and developing of appropriate communication of electronic, radio, telecom (i.e. mobile, email, ...) for tourists	1228	3.67	8
9	To increase motivation of private sector to investing in the province	1264	3.78	6
10	Establishing new ports and re-building the old ports for quick access for tourists	1244	3,72	7
11	To increase the job opportunities and people's income due to echo tourism development in the province	1274	3.81	5
12	Possibility of developing the tourism infrastructures i.e. chairlifts and amusement park in different parts of the province (Nahar Khoran ,..)	1320	3.95	1

Table 5: Prioritizing the Threats in Point of View of Local Managers and Provincial Officials of Analysis Matrix

No	Threats	Total weight	Weight average	Rank
1	Not competing Golestan province to neighbor provinces in echo tourism (Mazandaran , ...) after developing of tourism infrastructures	1028	3.07	7
2	Losing the local culture and customs and traditions	1002	3.00	9
3	Not being executive of government's supporting plans with respect to echo tourism	1130	3.38	4
4	Increasing the price of Land and growth of speculations because of investors influx in this province	1180	3.53	2

5	Loss of expert and experienced individuals in the provincial offices to persuade and encourage and necessary guide to echo tourism investors	1122	3.35	5
6	Increasing social violations and discriminations by entering tourists to this province regarding before	1120	3.35	5
7	Destructing the plant covering (jungle & grassland) and increasing air, soil and water pollution in the province	1074	3.21	6
8	Destructing agricultural lands and desirable farms	1188	3.55	1
9	Destructing agricultural lands usage by speculators of land in cities and villages in the province	1138	3.40	3
10	Increasing cultural conflicts of local people with tourists	1006	3.01	8
11	Increasing changing the patterns of using the local and native people in food, cloth, building, ...	1026	3.07	7

Analysis Priority of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat

According to the tables(3-5) the existence of exclusive sceneries such as : Lovve, Kabudval, Shir Abad and Agh Su waterfalls, massive forests, Derazno heights, Jahan Nama and Golestan national park in Golestan province shows that this province with the score of 1450 and weight average of 4.34 are consider its most significant strength spots. And in the second level the existence of recreational attractions such as: Naharkhoran (Gorgan),coast of Turkman and Gaz ports, Gole Ramiyan, Jungle Parks of Daland, Ghorogh and Alang Dare in this province with the score of 1386 and weight average of 4.14 is in priority. And also the existence of moderate weather with the score of 1368 and weight average of 4.09 placed it at the third priority of strength spots. Abundant willingness of the vernacular managers for cultural progress through ecotourism development with the score of 992 and weight average of 2.97 is the least important motivation for local investors to invest on tourism specially ecotourism such as: building hotels and inns with the score of 1058 and the weight average of 3.16 has the least effect on strength spots. And in the part of weakness spots the inappropriateness of services and health facilities and insufficiency of welfare, tourism and residential facilities (camp, hotel) with the score of 1274 and weight average of 3.81 consider as the major weaknesses and the infirmity of the local managers in planning for ecotourism with the score of 1256 and weight average of 3.76 is in second priority and the inappropriateness of sport and recreation facilities (motorcycling, boating, skiing..)With the score of 1246 and weight average of 3.73 is in the subsequent priority. Moreover the unsuitable environmental conditions such as: high weather moisture with the score of 908 and weight average of 2.71 is the least important weakness and the high dense population in province especially southern areas with the score of 982 and weight average is the least effectual shortcoming. Investors opportunities in ecotourism progress in different parts of province(Nahar Khoran)with the score of 1320 and weight average of 3.95 is in first priority then the expanse of suitable network(train station, airport, marine and path ways)for the quick tourism access with the score of 1312 and weight average of 3.92 is in second priority. Motivation increase among people of other provinces in traveling to this area with the score of 1300 and the weight average of 3.89 is in third priority. the existence of supportive rules and regulations in this industry and the existence of special credit arrangements for ecotourism progress with the score of 1198 and weight average of 3.58 is as the least important opportunity and the expense of telephone and radio connections (cell phone, email) for tourists usage with the score of 1228 and weight average of 3.67 consider as the least effectual opportunities. Besides in the threats part: destruction of agricultural lands and fertile farms with the score of 1188 and weight average of 3.55 is the major threat and the increase in land prices due to the investors increase in this province with the score of 1180 and weight average of 3.53 is in second priority and changing the function of rural and urban lands (from agricultural to industrial) by the investors in this province with the score of 1138 and weight average of 3.40 is in third priority. The destruction in local culture and tradition with the score of 1002 and weight average of 3 consider as the least important threats and the increase of cultural conflicts between locale people and tourists with the score of 1006 and weight average of 3.01 is the least effectual threats.

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Prioritizing the internal factors			
	Priority of weak points	No	Priority of strength points
1	Inappropriate facilities and equipments of services and sanitary.	1	Existence of unique natural landscapes such as Lovve, Kabud Wal, Shir Abad, Agh Sou waterfalls and rainforests, heights of Deraz Nou, Jahan Nama, Golestan national Park, ... in the province
2	Insufficient facilities and equipments for residence and tourism (camp, hotel)	2	Existence of sports attractions (Nahar Khoran of Gorgan, Bandar Gaz and Turkeman coasts, Gol Ramian, jungle park of Daland, Ghorogh, Alang Darreh, ...
3	Weakness of local managers and weakness of planning in echo tourism sector in the province	3	Existence of mild climates and four seasons in the province
4	Inappropriate sports facilities (Motorcycling track, car driving track, boating, ...)	4	Existence of unique ecological resources (i.e. Golestan National Park, protected regions of Jahan Nama, ...)
5	Problems like issuing certificates and facilities to develop echo tourism from government	5	Existence of Gorgan plain and different attracts of it like Turkeman Sahra plain, international pond like Ala Gol, Alma Gol, Aji Gol and volcano muds of Inche and Gomishan.
6	Inappropriate infrastructures and communication networks i.e. access ways to waterfalls, mountains and plains, ...	6	Existence of 100 km south coasts of Caspian sea in this province.
7	Loss of expert and trained individuals in tourism in Golestan province	7	Existence of heights and mountainous regions i.e. peaks of Shahvar, Shahkooh, Siah Marz Kooh, Ghale Maral, Kooh Abr, Deraz Nou, ...
8	Not having tendency by people to invest in tourism and echo tourism sector	8	Existence of hot springs for hydrotherapy (hot spring of Ziarat in Gorgan)
9	Conflict between tourism culture and people and resident natives in the province	9	Existence of common border with Turkmenistan in this province for developing tourism.
10	High density in the province especially in the southern regions	10	Existence of Gorgan gulf and different ports (Bandar Gaz and Turkaman) and south-east coasts of Caspian sea for developing of echo tourism.
11	Inappropriate the environmental conditions i.e. high humidity,	11	Existence of appropriate communication network and Asian road in this province (airport and rail station) to fast and easy access for tourists
12		12	Having a silent environment
13		13	Existence of suitable access ways for mount and cliff climbing and walking
14		14	Existence of different nations residence in the province (Turkeman, Sistani, Turk, ...)
15		15	Having high spirit of partnership to create and development of tourism.
16		16	Existence of strong motivation in native investors to invest in tourism sector specially echo tourism (i.e. hotelling and building residences, ...)
17		17	High tendency and interest of local and native managers to cultural development and employment by developing echo tourism.

Table 6: Prioritizing the external factors

Prioritizing the external factors			
No.	Priority of threats	No.	Priority of opportunities
1	Destructing agricultural lands and desirable farms	1	Possibility of developing the tourism infrastructures i.e. chairlifts and amusement park in different parts of the province (Nahar Khoran ...)
2	Increasing the price of Land and growth of speculations because of investors influx in this province	2	Developing of appropriate communicational network (railway, airport, road, sea way) to quick access for
3	Destructing agricultural lands usage by speculators of land in cities and villages in the province	3	To increase the motivation of other provinces people to travel and enjoy in this region
4	Not being executive of government's supporting plans with respect to echo tourism	4	Being placed the province in the very pleasing geographical situation (Iran in a small scale)
5	Loss of expert and experienced individuals in the provincial offices to persuade and encourage and necessary guide to echo tourism investors	5	Supporting of Government officials from developing of echo tourism with the approach of employing for developing the province
6	Increasing social violations and discriminations by entering tourists to this province regarding before	6	To increase the job opportunities and people's income due to echo tourism development in the province
7	Destructing the plant covering (jungle & grassland) and increasing air, soil and water pollution in the province	7	To increase motivation of private sector to investing in the province
8	Increasing changing the patterns of using the local and native people in food, cloth, building , ...	8	Welcoming of investors in the studied region (Golestan Province) to invest in echo tourism due to existence of facilities and environmental
9	Not competing Golestan province to neighbor provinces in echo tourism (Mazandaran , ...) after developing of tourism infrastructures	9	Increasing applying of expert and experienced individuals in echo tourism in the province
10	Increasing cultural conflicts of local people with tourists	10	Establishing new ports and re-building the old ports for quick access for tourists
11	Losing the local culture and customs and traditions	11	Covering and developing of appropriate communication of electronic, radio, telecom (i.e. mobile, email, ...) for tourists

Prioritizing the external factors			
No.	Priority of threats	No.	Priority of opportunities
12		12	Approving rules and supportive regulations of tourism industry and existence of special credit rows for developing eco tourism

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Consequences which are achieved from this research show that between all internal effective factors which cause ecotourism progress in Golestan province, 17 factors are as strength spots and 11 factors evaluate as shortcomings and also between the external pivotal factors no ecotourism progress, 12 factors are as external opportunities and 11 factors count as external threats. Analysis of quantity aspects of each strength, weakness, threat and opportunity shows that between the known internal factors as: strength spots, existence of exclusive sceneries like Lovve, Kabudval, Shir Abad, Agh Su waterfalls and massive forests, Derazno height, Jahan Nama and Golestan national park...in Golestan province with the score of 1450 and weight average of 4.34 are consider as the most important strength spots. Abundant willingness of the vernacular managers for cultural progress through ecotourism development is the least important strength spot. And between the internal environmental factors (weakness spots) the inappropriateness of services and health facilities and insufficiency of welfare, tourism and residential facilities (camp, hotel) consider as the major shortcoming. Also the inappropriateness of environmental conditions like high weather moisture is the least effectual shortcomings. Among the external factors (opportunities) the possibility for tourism progress in different areas of province (Nahar Khoran) is in priority. Also the existence of supportive rules and regulations in this industry and the existence of special credit arrangements for ecotourism progress are as the least effectual opportunity .and among the external factors (external threats) destruction of agricultural lands and fertile farms 1188 and is the major threat and the cultural conflicts between local people and tourists are the least effectual threat.

Ecotourism is closely related to the environmental powers and natural sceneries and without them there wouldn't be any tourism stimulus. Iran is so rich by its natural, attractive, beautiful and unknown areas.in the past several tourists traveled to Iran just for visiting its natural and marvelous areas [9].

Iran is a country with potential capabilities for ecotourism progress for instance, the mountainous belt from the north and west and outspread mountains in other areas are consider as very significant attractions to attract mountain climber and the fond of winter sports tourists. Varied resources of plant coverage which create refuge for animals and beautiful scenery to pacify the human psyche and also become a suitable place for hunting. Visiting animals specially birds in migration season is the other potential attractions of natural environments. Variety of water environments such as: pools, rivers, Islands, lakes and cost seas are suitable places for fishing, hunting birds, swimming and boating.

Variety of plant species such as: trees, shrubs, bushes and lawns with varied colors in different seasons of year are like massive forests, shrubberies and lawns create ecotourism attractions. Natural parks, national parks, protected areas consider as tourism environments for camping, tenting and resting for group of people who likes nature. Land and cliffs without any plant coverage due to varied minerals and colors attract artists and fond.

Mountainous areas offer abundant opportunities for ecotourism. Waterfalls with natural attractions and beautiful sceneries for tourists who like to be in nature, caves with the exclusive features for its fond and several spas for the ones who are searching their health in these natural sources are capabilities of this area.

And some other ecotourism resources in this area are: hiking and driving in desert paths which has the least transportation traffic to reach green landscapes, villages farms and gardens, to repose in changed nature (by human beings) and maybe to resident in a rural cottage or to raise tent for resident near the rivers and to find calm place in village circumference to vacate all the pressures which impose on citizens in urban lives [10]. Central deserts of Iran are considered as one of the most important and biggest tourism attraction. Brilliant and shiny sky with the moon and stars light, sandy hills with the appealing sceneries, possibility of riding camels and to get familiar with the life of villagers and tribes in these areas are the capabilities in same the same region in other countries are exploit in providing incomes and new jobs. Hence Iran especially Golestan province consists of several natural and ecotourism capabilities and

potentialities and to provide strategies and comprehensive management plans are necessary for eternal progress of ecotourism.

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