

Assessing Ecotourism Potential in Protected Areas to Contribute to Sustainable Rural Development (Case Study: Arasbaran Protected Area- Mishehpareh Dehestan)

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Extended Abstract

1. INTRODUCTION

Development of tourism activities is one of the important topics in sustainable development and it has been introduced as a dynamic and growing industry. So, providing a suitable platform for identifying tourist attractions and planning for development them is an essential issue. Also, recognition of these attractions and natural talents in each region in order to make proper planning, leads to the formation of prone base of sustainable development and economic profit. In special natural and protected areas, assessment of tourism potential can be beneficial in order to reduce the damages and costs and minimize the negative impacts. Moreover, to achieve rural tourism in protected areas, applying rural cooperation approach can be helpful. Ecological potential assessment is assessment of inventory and potential of land by specific and pre-planned criteria. Ecological potential assessment studies are used as a basis for land use decision making and planning in all the world. For this purpose, determination of tourism areas in different classes according to natural ability, is important. Locating and planning based on natural condition can bring positive economic and social effects, and in the case of proper operation, it will have little negative environmental impact. For the development of tourism activities, selecting areas consistent with the ecological characteristic, on the one hand, reduces its negative effects on the environment and on the other hand, leads to boom tourism activity.

Misheh Parih village with cold and semi-arid climate is one of the villages of center part of the Kaleibar city in East Azarbaijan province. This village is in the Caspian catchment and the Aras river watershed and bordered by Khodaafryn city,

Varzeghan and Peyghanchay villages. Part of the largest mountain range of East Azarbaijan (Kharabakh Mountain) is in this area. Unique position of this village for tourism development is because of being in the Arasbaran conservation area and close to the border of Azerbaijan country and Aras commercial and free zone.

2. METHODOLOGY

Firstly in this study, review of research, methods of evaluating and interpreting the contents recorded by other researchers have been discussed by library studies. More for potential assessment of this village to determine the most appropriate place to development tourism, multi criteria evaluation method analytic hierarchy process AHP was chosen based on the purposes of the analysis. One of the reasons for using this model compared to other models is in the ability of this model in quantification the qualitative indicators which is the most important reason for using this model in the present study. Since in this technique it is taken for granted that the study area is spatially homogeneous, these methods do not have the space dimension. Hence, a framework for multi criteria decision analysis based on GIS is necessary for using GIS capabilities in the acquisition, storage, retrieval, processing and analyzing data, integrated with the technical capabilities of multi criteria decision model. Combining GIS and AHP is a decision support method with powerful visualization and mapping capabilities, which in turn will facilitate proper use of land through creating a map. In this study, weighting and prioritization criteria were performed by using expert opinions. Then quantitative information of criteria entered into the GIS by using Marynony help software and for each criteria a spatial layer

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was prepared. Selecting proper criteria, especially in optimal locating for different activities and organizing the structure of geographical spaces, creates the chance of comparing the alternatives and choosing the best of them. The important criteria to choose the best place to develop tourism in the area under study were identified and weighed through hierarchical analysis technique. Table 1 shows the final weight of the criteria. Totally, 10 criteria were selected and constructed as maps, as important criteria in potential rural tourism potential assessment based on research, data and expertise. Layers weight include: (Height: 0.0188), (slope: 0.0438), (aspect: 0.0171), (current land use: 0.691), (vegetation density: 0.2995), (distance from river: 0.1703), (distance from Water Fountains: .0658), (close to the road: 0.0392), (close to the ancient site: 0.1482), (close to some villages: 0.1281). The four layers was considered as the limit and were deducted from the final output. Classification of layers in GIS by consideration of protected areas were divided into four categories. The valuation of areas in four category include Tourist prone areas (good), semi-prone areas for tourism (medium), areas with high tourism potential (voltage) and tourist areas without power (inappropriate) has been done. Criteria were evaluated according to SAATI method between 1 to 9. Then in the final step each of the layers were combined based on their weight, and the final tourism development potential map obtained in the region. In the studied area, important criteria for selecting a suitable place for tourism development were identified and weighted by using the AHP technique. After that restrictive layers include important habitats, ranging from the ancient site, the privacy safe of the river safe, the privacy safe Road were deducted from the final map.

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3. DISCUSSION

Based on the Results Forested areas with dense vegetation 50-75 percent that is near the village centers, especially Osklu because of having more facilities and good access roads, has the highest potential for tourism development. Also due to the view point of safety in determining the potency of tourism development, privacy habitats and archaeological sites and forest areas with density of 75-100, have the lowest potential for rural tourism development. According to the comparison criteria and weights, vegetation, closeness to rivers, archaeological sites and central villages have the highest ratio of weight, and height and aspect have the lowest weighted coefficient. This coefficients indicate the importance of them.

4. CONCLUSION

Development of tourism activities is one of the important topics in sustainable development and it has been introduced as a dynamic and growing industry. So, providing a suitable platform for identifying tourist attractions and planning for their development is an essential issue. Also, recognition of these attractions and natural talents in each region in order to make proper planning, leads to the formation of prone base of sustainable development and economic profit. Totally, 21.63 percent of the land of the region has good potential, 18.5 percent is mediocre, and 44.94 percent lacks the potential tourism development. Therefore, according to the good potential of the region, tourism development programs can be offered in this area in order to achieve sustainable development by a principle detailed plan.

Key words: Tourism, Planning, Potential assessment, Protection, Arasbaran.

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