



Mountainous tourism development planning in Amlash County with SWOT analytical model

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ABSTRACT

Mountainous areas are one of the tourists' favorite destinations throughout the world. The lack of appropriate planning of responsible organizations and tourists unawareness about mountainous villages touristic potentials and reluctance of private sector to invest on providing proper facilities and equipment for tourists in mountainous areas have been caused tourism no development in these regions. The current research has been implemented in one of the mountainous regions of Guilan province in order to answer these questions that what are the advantages and limitations of tourism development in mountainous regions of Amlash county and what strategies exist for mountainous tourism development? Whereas recognition of strengths, pitfalls, opportunities, and threats, and planning to resolve limitations and increase benefits and create economic and social changes in this region are the obvious goals of this research, this paper used survey method (descriptive-analytical), field studies and questionnaires completion by three samples of statistical community (tourists, rural families (people), local managers) and determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the form of economic, social, cultural, ecological, and institutional in SWOT method to codify quadruplet strategies to develop mountainous tourism in AMLASH County. Studies have been shown that regarding to existence of strengths and opportunity in this region, threats and weaknesses levels are also very high and this region is vulnerable against tourism development and redistribution and reallocation of resources and appropriate and logical planning in regional level is an essential issue.

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Introduction

Nowadays, tourism is a relatively complex activity that involves several sectors of society and the economy. In fact, it might cause unexpected damages in any area without planning and it will not conduce to sustainable development (Abdullahzadeh, M. 2005, 11). In planning and development of mountainous tourism in each region, it is important to have knowledge about its condition especially its capabilities and potentials that are possible through study and planning. The development of tourism coupled with planning and provide solutions as a strategy regarding to development of optimal type of tourism, locals participation in development, appropriate and step by step development and keep in resulted income of development in this region ensures economic, social, and cultural development, and at the same time restrain wasting of natural resources and prevent environmental irrecoverable damages (Amar, 2010, p. 2). Regarding to this fact that more than half of the total area of Amlash County is mountainous and because of its appropriate topographic position, sweet climate, and natural, cultural and historical attractions it has utmost importance for touristic and recreational manners and these potentials had been unused for mountainous region development. We hope that appropriate planning resulted in all-round development of this region in near future. According to above subjects and understanding of this fact that identification

and description of Amlash County mountainous area touristic potentials and limitations could have significant role in tourism proper planning and resolving of problems and limitations in this region, this article tries to answer these questions that: what are benefits and limitations of tourism development in Amlash County mountainous region? And what strategies exist for mountainous tourism development? meanwhile, it tries to consider quantitative and qualitative description and analysis of region strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats from participants and beneficiaries point of view towards mountainous tourism development, and finally, according to results of these point of views, by using of SWOT model for optimum and oriented utilization of strengths and opportunities and reduction of weaknesses and threats, some strategies have been presented in order to achieve mountainous tourism development the rahkarhai.

Research methodology

In this article, in order to achieve research objects, an analytical-descriptive method has been used. Tourist attractions, potentials, facilities and services and awareness about tourism status were evaluated by secondary data and information (library) and field studies. In order to collect needed information in field study methods, visits and observations conducted, photos of tourism capabilities prepared, and questionnaire completed and then SWOT analytical model used for

information analysis and presentation of appropriate solutions and strategies for tourism development in the region that at the first, a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the region identified according to studies of internal and external environment and then priorities identified by means of public, tourists and officials feedbacks and paying attention to each of these issues and then evaluation and analysis of them, and finally solutions provided in line with the mountainous tourism development.

It should be noted that studied statistical community was divided into three groups that 162 persons of rural households, 30 persons of rural local managers, and 192 persons of tourists selected as samples by Morgan standard sampling method.

SWOT¹ analytical model

SWOT model is one of strategic tools for accordance of in-organization strengths and weaknesses with out-organization opportunities and threats. This model is a tool for exploitation in the preliminary stages of decision making and as an overturrein applied strategic (Afrakhteh, 2008, 125). SWOT is a regular analysis to identify factors (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and developing a strategy for appropriate match between them. From perspective of this model, the proper strategy maximizes strengths and opportunities and minimizes weaknesses and threats. For this purpose, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in four general forms of WT, ST, WO and SO linked as follows and strategic options are chosen among them:

- * Competitive/invasive strategies (SO), that focus on internal strengths and external opportunities.
- * Diversification strategies (ST), is concentrated on internal strengths and external threats.
- * Revision strategies (WO), while emphasis on internal weaknesses, try to utilize external opportunities to eliminate weak points.
- * Defensive strategies (WT), which provided to deal with internal weaknesses and threats (Rezvani, 2008, 203)

Table 1. Extract matrix of possible strategies based on SWOT analysis

External factors	Opportunities	Threats
Internal factors		
Strengths	SO strategies How capacities can be used for utilizing existing opportunities?	ST strategies How capacities can be used to overcome on threats?
Weaknesses	WO strategies What activities can be done to overcome on weaknesses for utilizing opportunities?	WT strategies How we can decrease weaknesses to overcome on threats?

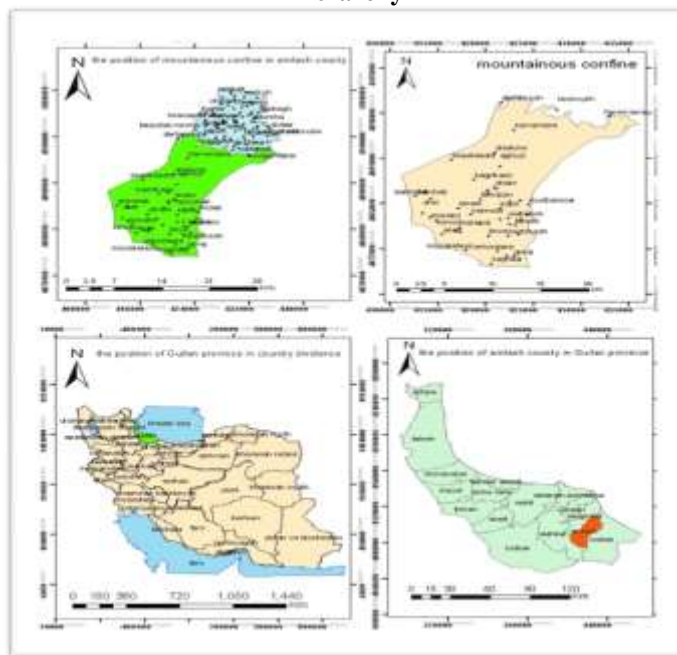
Source: Nastaran & Hoshmandfar, 2010, 65

Scope of study

Scope of study in this research is mountainous region of Amlash County that is located in southern part of this county consistsits major part. Vills of Kajid, Samam, and apart of southern Amlash and Shabkhus lot are in this region with total area of 285 km² and it is located between 36° and 49 minutes to 37° and 3 minutes of northernlatitude and between 50° and 1 minute to 50° and 16 minutes of eastern longitude. Amlash County mountainous region confined to Siyahkal from south, Roodsar from east, and Langeroodfromwest. According to 2006 Census, this region consists of 46 villages that 37 villages are

inhabited, and 9 villages are without habitation and has 1367 households and population of 4695 persons (Guilan province management and planning organization, 2006).

Figure 1. Geographical location of Amlash County mountainous region according to country divisions' hierarchy



Research findings

Internal effective factors on tourism of study region: purpose of this step is the evaluation of internal environment of study region in order to identify strengths and weaknesses, means those aspects that are favorable or preventive in achieving planning and development objectives (Rezaei, Rahmani, 2007, 50). Therefore, in this section they were break down as table 2 under title of strengths and weaknesses in framework of mountainous region development dimensions (economic, social-cultural, natural, skeletal and associative).

External effective factors on tourism of study region: purpose of this step is the evaluation of external environment of the study region in order to identify the opportunities and threats that regions are faced with them in relation with tourism development (Eftekhari et al, 2006, 10). Therefore, effective opportunities and threats of study region were breakdown as table 3 in framework of mountainous region development dimensions (economic, social-cultural, ecological and associative).

Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

After identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats by field studies and doing interviews, 13 internal strengths against 11 internal weaknesses and 7 external opportunities against 7 external threats identified and evaluated in mountainous region. Therefore, by a simple analysis it could be noted that in regarded to strengths and opportunities in the region, level threats and weaknesses are very high and this region is vulnerable in terms of tourism development and appropriate and logical planning is essential for this region. In order to classify priorities of this quadruplet factors, a questionnaire distributed among three group of households (people), village local managers (members of Islamic Council) and tourists. Measurement and ranking criteria of each of above factors is as follows: for each factor a domain between (1) to (5) was determined, that means very low importance, low importance, medium importance, high importance and very high

¹Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Threats(SWOT)

importance respectively for that factor in tourism development in level of study region. Then collected information and data in terms of achieved weights, weights mean rating analyzed and the calculated and in order to classification and ranking within various categories and groups, SWOT model employed. In this part, total weight for each factor came from sum of domains of 1 to 5 and mean rating was calculated by division of total weights on statistical society number in each participant group and then ranked based on mean rating of each factors. Therefore, according to presented opinions and evaluation of these opinions for prioritization, table 4 provided to show total given weights, ranking mean, and rank of each strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats from viewpoints of three respondent groups. According to table 4, each of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been evaluated and analyzed based on point of view of three participant groups in this research.

Rural households (people): SWOT analysis shows that from rural household (people) point of view, item of "High summits and heights for sports and leisure such as mountain climbing, walking, camping and the Ski in the region" with total weight of 661 and mean ranking of 4.08 and item of "Existence of Cultural heritage, handicraft and tourism bureau in the region" with total weight of 557 and mean ranking of 3.43 are considered as the most important internal strength and as the most unimportant internal strengths respectively. Also, item of "Governmental licensing and facilities for tourism services and equipment development in the region" with total weight of 644 and mean ranking of 3.97 and item of "Increasing of government and private sector attention to planning and investment in the tourism sector" with total weight of 563 and mean ranking of 3.47 are considered as the most important external opportunity and the most unimportant external opportunity respectively. About internal weaknesses, rural households believed that the item of "Lack of correct advertising and information about region nomination as one of regions with tourism potential" with total weight of 660 and mean ranking of 4.07 and item of "Lack of acquaintance of local villagers and their training about dealing with tourists" with total weight of 548 and mean ranking of 3.38 are considered as the most important internal weakness and the most unimportant internal weakness respectively. Also, from rural households point of view, item of "Loss of local culture and its changing (like language, local customs, clothing, etc.)" with total weight of 610 and mean ranking of 3.76 and item of "Loss of mountain environment (range lands, forest, gardens, farms, etc. ...)" with total weight of 513 and mean ranking of 3.16 are considered as the most important external threat and the most unimportant threat respectively in tourism development.

Village local managers (members of Islamic Council): SWOT analysis shows that from village local managers point of view, item of "High summits and heights for sports and leisure such as mountain climbing, walking, camping and the Ski in the region" with total weight of 161 and mean ranking of 5.36 and item of "Existence of Cultural heritage, handicraft and tourism bureau in the region" with total weight of 101 and mean ranking of 3.36 are considered as the most important internal strength and as the most unimportant internal strengths respectively. Also, item of "Governmental licensing and facilities for tourism services and equipment development" with total weight of 130 and mean ranking of 4.33 and item of "Increasing of government and private sector attention to planning and investment in the tourism sector" with total weight of 109 and mean ranking of 3.63 are considered as the most important external opportunity

and the most unimportant external opportunity respectively. About internal weaknesses, village local managers believed that the item of "Lack of correct advertising and information about region nomination as one of regions with tourism potential" with total weight of 137 and mean 4.56 and item of "Lack of acquaintance of local villagers and their training about dealing with tourists" with total weight of 96 and mean ranking of 3.2 are considered as the most important internal weakness and the most unimportant internal weakness respectively. Item of "Loss of local culture and its changing (like language, local customs, clothing, etc.)" with total weight of 114 and mean ranking of 3.8 and item of "Loss of mountain environment (range lands, forest, gardens, farms, etc. ...)" with total weight of 95 and mean ranking of 3.16 are considered as the most important external threat and the most unimportant threat respectively in tourism development.

Tourists: SWOT analysis shows that from tourists' point of view, item of "Existence of beautiful and unique landscapes with green space and hazelnuts and walnuts gardens, and wheat and grain plantations in mountainous region" with total weight of 874 and mean ranking of 4.55 and item of "Weekly market for selling agricultural products, livestock, and handicrafts to region tourists" with total weight of 663 and mean ranking of 3.45 are considered as the most important internal strength and the most unimportant internal strength respectively. While from tourists point of view, item of "Holding of tourism promenades for mountain climbing, cycling and visiting religious, historical, and natural of places" and item of "Lack of proper services and facilities for tourists by rival recreational region" with total weight of 734 and mean ranking of 3.82 are considered as the most important external opportunity and as the most unimportant external opportunity respectively. Also, from tourists point of view, item of "Lack of correct advertising and information about region nomination as one of regions with tourism potential" with total weight of 854 and mean ranking of 4.44 and item of "Cultural conflict and the difference between tourists and people of mountainous villages" with total weight of 663 and mean ranking of 3.45 are considered as the most important internal weakness and the most unimportant internal weakness respectively. Also, tourists believed that item of "Increasing of land price and goods and services expenses" with total weight of 763 and mean ranking of 3.97 and item of "Lack of skilled and experienced forces adjacent to this region" with total weight of 648 and mean ranking of 3.37 are considered as the most important external threat and as the most unimportant external threat respectively in tourism development.

Point of views adding up and final prioritization of SWOT analysis

According to results of SWOT matrix, table 5 has been presented that shows prioritization and ranking of each item from point of view of three participant groups in this study. For final ranking and prioritization of internal and external effective factors on mountainous tourism development in Amlashcounty, comments of three participant groups, means local managers, village household (people) members, and tourists, have been used. The relative weight has not been calculated for final prioritization and it has been calculated according to total weights and sum of three mean ranking divided on 3 final achieved ranking. According to calculations, this concluded that item of "High summits and heights for sports and leisure such as mountain climbing, walking, camping and the Ski in the region" is considered as the most important strength and item of "Lack of correct advertising and information about region nomination as one of regions with tourism potential" is considered as the

most important weakness and item of "Governmental licensing and facilities for tourism services and equipment development in the region" is considered as the most important external opportunity and item of "Loss of local culture and its changing by increasing of tourists" is considered as the most important external threat.

Mountainous tourism development strategies presentation in Amlash County by SWOT model

Invasive strategies (SO): this strategy focus on internal strengths and external opportunities to maximize situations.

* Optimum and targeted use of governmental licensing and facilities for investment and implementation of tourism facilities development projects such as tele-cabin, camping, hotel, catering, etc. ... in order to exploit natural attractions

* Emphasis on touristic activities development for utilization of available and unused natural tourism attractions such as landscapes, green space, heights and spectacular road to achieve this region and agricultural tourism development in order to benefit from the farms and hazelnuts and walnuts gardens.

* Using of proper atmospheric conditions (proper climate) for tourism promenades to do activities such as mountain climbing, cycling and visiting religious, historical, and natural places in appropriate base.

* Providing a synchronized framework between different related institutions to structuring effective implementation of projects and providing facilities and services for comprehensive development of tourism and keep it in a certain direction.

* Optimum and targeted exploitation and use of increasing greater motivation to travel and leisure among urban and suburban people in order to benefit from rural tourist attractions and to create employment and income in the region.

* Using of opportunity of increased attention of Government and private sector for investment and planning in the tourism sector in order to develop tourism activities based on spectacular regions, natural parks, ancient, historical, and religious places and distinguishing cultural characteristics.

* Support for holding cultural Festivals and religious ceremonies in order to introduce cultural patterns of the region to attract more tourists in competition with rival recreational areas.

Diversification strategies (ST): purpose of this strategy is ultimate utilization of environment strengths to face with threats and bottlenecks.

* Diversification of tourism facilities and services for exploitation of natural, cultural, historical and religious resources and attractions in the region for tourists satisfaction with informing them about local community (customs, dress, and behavior. ...) to preserve local culture.

* Emphasis on natural tourism and ecotourism due to the relative advantages of this type of tourism development in order to increase competitiveness with competing recreational areas.

* Gradual development of tourism activities with emphasis on natural, cultural, and historical attractions in the region in order to decrease problems related to land prices increasing and expensiveness of goods and services.

* Estimation of capacity and determining of optimal level of population density in various touristy places and tourist facilities concentration away from highly populated regions in the region in order to reduce extra pressure and density of these regions and attractions and preventing them from degradation and loss.

* Use of appropriate designed welfare systems for water supply, sewage and waste disposal for tourist region and facilities and the implementation of laws and regulations in order to reduce ecological and environmental injuries and pollution.

* Use of planned and controlled tourism activities development in order to preserve mountain natural environment (ecotourism) particularly spectacular places, plants, important natural biological systems and other regional potentials.

* Expansion of educational and training programs by development of educational units to educate professional to develop tourist natural, historical and religious activities harmonized with the region.

* Introduction and development of cultural and historical attractions and improvement of support standards of preservation and maintenance of cultural-traditional patterns and ceremonies and specific important historical and cultural places in order to minimize any destructive effect of tourism on cultural and historical heritage of the region.

Revision strategies (WO): this strategy emphasizes on minimizing weaknesses and maximizing opportunities.

* Reviewing advertising and marketing program techniques for introducing of region as one of regions with tourism potential, use of governmental support for providing of licensing and facilities in order to develop tourism services and facilities in the region.

* Reforming and strengthening regional infrastructures such as local road and internal transport system, and installation of guide signs in tourist paths to use spectacular roads with available wonderful landscapes of road to access the region.

* Development and expansion of residential, health and welfare facilities and determination of location choice criteria and project standards and tourist facilities development with a high capability to use available tourist opportunities and potential in the region.

* Educating and informing the people of the region about of the economic, social and cultural benefits of tourism through holding seminars, conferences, and meetings in order to contribute to planning and investment in tourism activities to attract more tourists to the region.

* Reviewing type of planning and governmental support in the region for development and equipping various tourist infrastructures and facilities, increasing of motivation to travel and leisure between urban and suburban people is used.

* To encourage public and private sector for investment and sponsorship to create environmental and physical appropriate infrastructures in order to increase required facilities and services for attracting tourists to the region.

* Coordinate reviewing and development of serving facilities such as restaurants and food stores in new form and traditional to meet tourists different needs and optimum and targeted use of resources and tourism positive benefits.

Defensive strategies (WT): these strategies emphasize on minimizing internal weaknesses and external threats.

* Preparation and implementation of advertising program to present real image of natural and human attractions, cultural distinguishing characteristics, architecture and customs of region and attending in tourism fairs, festivals and seminars with emphasis on protection of patterns, cultural heritage and historical areas.

* Establishment of appropriate infrastructure (transportation, residential, welfare, health facilities, etc.) in mountainous region to create competitive environment.

* Creating recreational and sports equipments and facilities, and climbing development facilities to affluent tourists.

* Codifying specific laws and regulations for optimum use of tourism attractions and products and prevention from pollution sources in this region.

Table 2. Matrix of internal effective factors on study region tourism

	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Economic	1-Weekly market for selling agricultural products, livestock, and handicrafts to region tourists. 2-Study region potential fortourism development and planning to use natural and human resources and nomination of region as an important tourism pole.	1- Lack of governmental planning and investment in the region. 2- Reluctance of people to sell agricultural grounds to private sector investors.
Social And Cultural	1- Existence of local customs and culture and also historical and religious places in the region. 2- Existance of a sense of hospitality among region people and their tendency to provide services for tourists. 3- Celebration of cultural festival and "Elm vachini" ceremony in study region.	1- Cultural conflict and the difference between tourists and people of mountainous villages. 2- Lack of correct advertising and information about region nomination as one of regions with tourism potential. 3- Lack of proper residential, welfare and health facilities in the region. 4- Inappropriate reception facilities such as restaurant and food store.
Natural And Skeletal	1- Existence of beautiful and unique landscapes with green space and hazelnuts and walnuts gardens, and wheat and grain plantations in mountainous region. 2- High summits and heights for sports and leisure such as mountain climbing, walking, camping and the Ski in the region. 3- Existence of available caves in the region. 4- Existence of sample villages with tourism potential in the region. 5-Existence of springs and rivers in the region. 6-Existence of appropriate climate in warm seasons of the year in the region. 7- Existence of natural sites Wild Park and in the region.	1- Short life of snow in mountainous region. 2- Lack of proper way for access to the region. 3- Lack of recreational and sports equipment and facilities in the region. 4- Lack of appropriate environmental and skeletal infrastructure in the region (telephone, plumbing, sewage, road, public vehicles, etc. ..).
Associative	1- Existence of Cultural heritage,handicraft and tourism bureau in the region to introduce tourism attractions, supporting ofhandicrafts, andprotection of ancient, historical and religious heritage.	1- Lack of acquaintance of local villagers and their training about dealing with tourists.

Source: Authors study, 2011

Table 3. Matrix of internal effective factors on study region tourism

	Opportunities(O)	Threats (T)
Economic	1- Increasingof government and private sector attention to planning and investment in the tourism sector.	1- Increasing of land price and goods and services expenses in the region.
Social And Cultural	1- Increasing of motivation for travel & leisure among urban and suburb people. 2- Lack of proper services and facilities for tourists by rivalrecreational region.	1- Loss of local culture and its changing (like language, local customs, clothing, etc.) by increasing of tourists. 2- Increasing of recreational facilities and services in rival tourism regions (Sajiran, Sefid Ab, blordekan etc..). 3- Increasing of population in the region due to tourism growth.
Natural And Physical	1- Spectacular path toaccess this region. 2- Holding of tourism promenades for mountain climbing, cycling and visiting religious, historical, and natural of places.	1- Loss of mountain environment (range lands,forest, gardens, farms, etc. ...). 2- Water resources, soil and climate pollution in the region.
Associative	1- Existing of various governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations in Amlash county and providing facilities and services for this region. 2- Governmental licensing and facilities fortourism services and equipment development in the region.	1- Lack of skilled and experienced forces adjacent to this region.

Source: Authors study, 2011

Table 4: SWOT analytical matrix (prioritization of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) from the viewpoints of three participant groups

SWOT analysis	Rural household (people)			Village local managers			Tourists		
	Total weights	Ranking mean	Rank	Total weights	Ranking mean	Rank	Total weights	Ranking mean	Rank
Strengths									
1-Existence of beautiful and unique landscapes with green space and hazelnuts and walnuts gardens, and	656	4.04	2	133	4.43	3	874	4.55	1
2- Weekly market for selling agricultural products, livestock, and handicrafts to region tourists.	584	3.60	10	105	3.50	12	663	3.45	13
3- Existence of local customs and culture and	624	3.85	6	116	3.86	9	755	3.92	8
4- Existence of sample villages with tourism potential in	605	3.73	8	121	4.04	7	767	3.99	6
5- High summits and heights for sports and leisure such as	661	4.08	1	161	5.36	1	844	4.39	3
6- Existence of available caves in the region.	600	3.70	9	123	4.10	6	740	3.85	9
7- Existence of springs and rivers in the region.	637	3.93	4	124	4.13	4	855	4.45	2
8- Existence of Cultural heritage, handicraft and tourism bureau in the region to introduce tourism	557	3.43	13	101	3.36	13	704	3.66	12
9- Celebration of cultural festival and "Elm vachini" ceremony in study region.	656	3.48	12	120	4	8	729	3.79	10
10- Existence of natural sites Wild Park and in the region.	583	3.59	11	124	4.13	5	791	4.11	5
11- Study region potential for tourism development and planning to use natural and human resources and	641	3.95	3	109	3.63	11	758	3.94	7
12- Existence of appropriate climate in warm seasons of the year in the region.	632	3.90	5	134	4.46	2	836	4.35	4
13- Existence of a sense of hospitality among region people	613	3.78	7	115	3.83	10	721	3.75	11
Weaknesses									
1- Lack of governmental planning and investment in the region.	572	3.53	7	120	4	4	744	3.87	8
2- Reluctance of people to sell agricultural grounds to	613	3.78	2	123	4.1	3	709	3.69	10
3- Lack of proper way for access to the region.	594	3.66	4	132	4.4	2	767	3.99	4
4- Lack of proper residential, welfare and health facilities	589	3.63	5	119	3.96	5	781	4.06	2
5- Lack of acquaintance of local villagers and their training	548	3.38	11	96	3.2	11	761	3.96	5
6- Lack of recreational and sports equipment and facilities in the region.	605	3.73	3	115	3.83	6	779	4.05	3
7- Cultural conflict and the difference between tourists and	560	3.45	10	112	3.73	8	663	3.45	11
8- Lack of appropriate environmental and physical	566	3.49	9	115	3.83	7	743	3.86	9
9- Inappropriate reception facilities such as restaurant and food store.	583	3.59	6	101	3.36	10	746	3.88	7
10- Lack of correct advertising and information about region nomination as one of regions with tourism potential.	660	4.07	1	137	4.56	1	854	4.44	1
11- Short life of snow in mountainous region.	571	3.52	8	112	3.73	9	752	3.91	6
Opportunities									
1-Governmental licensing and facilities for tourism services	644	3.97	1	130	4.33	1	839	4.36	2
2- Increasing of government and private sector attention	563	3.47	7	109	3.63	7	785	4.08	5
3- Increasing of motivation for travel & leisure among urban and suburb people.	591	3.64	6	111	3.70	6	787	4.09	4
4- Lack of proper services and facilities for	598	3.69	5	130	4.33	2	734	3.82	7
	635	3.91	2	126	4.20	4	747	3.89	6

tourists by rival recreational regions.	927	3.85	4	128	4.26	3	832	4.33	3
5- Existing of various governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations in Amlash county and	625	3.87	3	117	3.90	5	840	4.37	1
6- Spectacular path to access this region.									
7- Holding of tourism promenades for mountain climbing, cycling and visiting religious, historical, and natural places.									
Threats									
1-Increasing of land price and goods and services expenses in the region.	576	3.55	2	99	3.30	6	763	3.97	1
2- Loss of local culture and its changing (like language, local customs, clothing, etc.) by increasing of tourists.	610	3.76	1	114	3.8	1	693	3.60	4
3- Loss of mountain environment (range lands, forest, gardens, farms, etc. ...).	513	3.16	7	95	3.16	7	666	3.46	5
4- Increasing of recreational facilities and services in rival tourism regions (Sajiran, Sefid Ab, blordekan etc..).	548	3.38	4	113	3.76	2	743	3.86	2
5- Water resources, soil and climate pollution in the region.	528	3.29	5	101	3.36	5	656	3.41	6
6- Increasing of population in the region due to tourism growth.	574	3.54	3	104	3.46	3	732	3.81	3
7- Lack of skilled and experienced forces adjacent to this region.	525	3.24	6	93	3.10	4	648	3.37	7

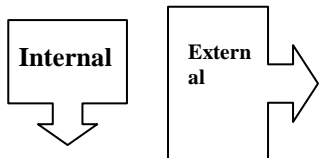
Source: questionnaire, 2011

Table 5. Effective factors final prioritization (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) in mountainous tourism development from point of view of 3 participants group

Strengths prioritization	Weaknesses prioritization	Opportunity prioritization	Threats prioritization
S1=High summits and heights for sports and leisure such as mountain climbing, walking, camping and the Ski in the region.	W1=Lack of correct advertising and information about region nomination as one of regions with tourism potential.	O1=Governmental licensing and facilities for tourism services and equipment development in the region.	T1=Loss of local culture and its changing (like language, local customs, clothing, etc.) by increasing of tourists.
S2=Existence of beautiful and unique landscapes with green space and hazelnuts and walnuts gardens, and wheat and grain plantations in mountainous region.	W2=Lack of proper way for access to the region.	O2=Spectacular path to access this region.	T2=Increasing of recreational facilities and services in rival tourism regions (Sajiran, Sefid Ab, blordekan etc..).
S3=Existence of appropriate climate in warm seasons of the year in the region.	W3=Lack of proper residential, welfare and health facilities in the region.	O3=Holding of tourism promenades for mountain climbing, cycling and visiting religious, historical, and natural places.	T3=Increasing of land price and goods and services expenses in the region.
S4=Existence of springs and rivers in the region.	W4=Lack of recreational and sports equipment and facilities in the region.	O4=Existing of various governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations in Amlash county and providing facilities and services for this region.	T4=Increasing of population in the region due to tourism growth.
S5=Existence of natural sites Wild Park and in the region.	W5=Reluctance of people to sell agricultural grounds to private sector investors.	O5=Lack of proper services and facilities for tourists by rival recreational regions.	T5=Water resources, soil and climate pollution in the region.
S6=Existence of sample villages with tourism potential in the region.	W6=Lack of governmental planning and investment in the region.	O6=Increasing of motivation for travel & leisure among urban and suburb people.	T6=Loss of mountain environment (range lands, forest, gardens, farms, etc. ...).
S7=Existence of available caves in the region.	W7=Lack of appropriate environmental and physical infrastructure in the region (telephone, plumbing, sewage, road, public vehicles, etc. ...).	O7=Increasing of government and private sector attention to planning and investment in the tourism sector.	T7=Lack of skilled and experienced forces adjacent to this region.
S8=Existence of local customs and culture and also historical and religious places in the region.	W8=Short life of snow in mountainous region.		
S9=Study region potential for	W9=Inappropriate reception		

tourism development and planning to use natural and human resources and nomination of region as an important tourism pole.	facilities such as restaurant and food store.			
S10=Existence of a sense of hospitality among region people and their tendency to provide services for tourists.	W10=Cultural conflict and the difference between tourists and people of mountainous villages.			
S11=Celebration of cultural festival and "Elm vachini" ceremony in study region.	W11=Lack of acquaintance of local villagers and their training about dealing with tourists.			
S12=Weekly market for selling agricultural products, livestock, and handicrafts to region tourists.				
S13=Existence of Cultural heritage, handicraft and tourism bureau in the region to introduce tourism attractions, supporting of handicrafts, and protection of ancient, historical and religious heritage.				

Table 6. Strategies of Amlash County mountainous tourism planning and development based on internal and external factors

<p>SWOT analysis</p> 	<p>Opportunities (O)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Governmental licensing and facilities for tourism services and equipment development in the region. 2- Increasing of government and private sector attention to planning and investment in the tourism sector. 3- Increasing of motivation for travel & leisure among urban and suburb people. 4- Lack of proper services and facilities for tourists by rival recreational regions. 5- Existing of various governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations in Amlash county and providing facilities and services for this region. 6- Spectacular path to access this region. 7- Holding of tourism promenades for mountain climbing, cycling and visiting religious, historical, and natural places. 	<p>Threats (T)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Increasing of land price and goods and services expenses in the region. 2- Loss of local culture and its changing (like language, local customs, clothing, etc.) by increasing of tourists. 3- Loss of mountain environment (range lands, forest, gardens, farms, etc. ...). 4- Increasing of recreational facilities and services in rival tourism regions (Sajiran, Sefid Ab, blordekan etc..). 5- Water resources, soil and climate pollution in the region. 6- Increasing of population in the region due to tourism growth. 7- Lack of skilled and experienced forces adjacent to this region.
<p>Strengths (S)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Existence of beautiful and unique landscapes with green space and hazelnuts and walnuts gardens, and wheat and grain plantations in mountainous region. 2- Weekly market for selling agricultural products, livestock, and handicrafts to region tourists. 3- Existence of local customs and culture and also historical and religious places in the region. 4- Existence of sample villages with tourism potential in the region. 5- High summits and heights for sports and leisure such as mountain climbing, walking, camping and the Ski in the region. 6- Existence of available caves in the region. 7- Existence of springs and rivers in the region. 8- Existence of Cultural heritage, handicraft and tourism bureau in the region to introduce tourism attractions, supporting of handicrafts, and protection of 	<p>Invasive strategies (SO)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Optimum and targeted use of governmental licensing and facilities for investment and implementation of tourism facilities development projects such as tele-cabin, camping, hotel, catering, etc. ... in order to exploit natural attractions 2. Emphasis on touristic activities development for utilization of available and unused natural tourism attractions such as landscapes, green space, heights and spectacular road to achieve this region and agricultural tourism development in order to benefit from the farms and hazelnuts and walnuts gardens. 3. Using of proper atmospheric conditions (proper climate) for tourism promenades to do activities such as mountain climbing, cycling and visiting religious, historical, and natural places in appropriate base. 4. Providing a synchronized framework between different related institutions to structuring effective implementation of projects and providing facilities and services for comprehensive development of tourism and keep it in a certain direction. 5. Optimum and targeted exploitation and use of increasing greater motivation to travel and leisure 	<p>Diversification strategies (ST)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversification of tourism facilities and services for exploitation of natural, cultural, historical and religious resources and attractions in the region for tourists satisfaction with informing them about local community (customs, dress, and behavior. ..) to preserve local culture. 2. Emphasis on natural tourism and ecotourism due to the relative advantages of this type of tourism development in order to increase competitiveness with competing recreational areas. 3. Gradual development of tourism activities with emphasis on natural, cultural, and historical attractions in the region in order to decrease problems related to land prices increasing and expensiveness of goods and services. 4. Estimation of capacity and determining of optimal level of population density in various touristy places and tourist facilities concentration away from highly populated regions in the region in order to reduce extra pressure and density of these regions and attractions and preventing them from degradation and loss. 5. Use of appropriate designed welfare systems for water supply, sewage and waste dispel for tourist region and facilities and the implementation of laws and regulations in order to reduce ecological and environmental injuries and pollution.

<p>ancient, historical and religious heritage.</p> <p>9- Celebration of cultural festival and "Elm vachini" ceremony in study region.</p> <p>10- Existence of natural sites Wild Park and in the region.</p> <p>11- Study region potential for tourism development and planning to use natural and human resources and nomination of region as an important tourism pole.</p> <p>12- Existence of appropriate climate in warm seasons of the year in the region.</p> <p>13- Existence of a sense of hospitality among region people and their tendency to provide services for tourists.</p>	<p>among urban and suburban people in order to benefit from rural tourist attractions and to create employment and income in the region.</p> <p>6.Using of opportunity of increased attention of Government and private sector for investment and planning in the tourism sector in order to develop tourism activities based on spectacular regions, natural parks, ancient, historical, and religious places and distinguishing cultural characteristics.</p> <p>7.Support for holding cultural Festivals and religious ceremonies in order to introduce cultural patterns of the region to attract more tourists in competition with rival recreational areas.</p>	<p>6.Use of planned and controlled tourism activities development in order to preserve mountain natural environment (ecotourism) particularly spectacular places, plants, important natural biological systems and other regional potentials.</p> <p>7.Expansion of educational and training programs by development of educational units to educate professional to develop tourist natural, historical and religious activities harmonized with the region.</p> <p>8.Introduction and development of cultural and historical attractions and improvement of support standards of preservation and maintenance of cultural-traditional patterns and ceremonies and specific important historical and cultural places in order to minimize any destructive effect of tourism on cultural and historical heritage of the region.</p>
<p>Weaknesses (W)</p> <p>1- Lack of governmental planning and investment in the region.</p> <p>2- Reluctance of people to sell agricultural grounds to private sector investors.</p> <p>3- Lack of proper way for access to the region.</p> <p>4- Lack of proper residential, welfare and health facilities in the region.</p> <p>5- Lack of acquaintance of local villagers and their training about dealing with tourists.</p> <p>6- Lack of recreational and sports equipment and facilities in the region.</p> <p>7- Cultural conflict and the difference between tourists and people of mountainous villages.</p> <p>8- Lack of appropriate environmental and physical infrastructure in the region (telephone, plumbing, sewage, road, public vehicles, etc. ...).</p> <p>9- Inappropriate reception facilities such as restaurant and food store.</p> <p>10- Lack of correct advertising and information about region nomination as one of regions with tourism potential.</p> <p>11- Short life of snow in mountainous region.</p>	<p>Revision strategies (WO)</p> <p>1.Reviewing advertising and marketing program techniques for introducing of region as one of regions with tourism potential, use of governmental support for providing of licensing and facilities in order to develop tourism services and facilities in the region.</p> <p>2.Reforming and strengthening regional infrastructures such as local road and internal transport system, and installation of guide signs in tourist paths to use spectacular roads with available wonderful landscapes of road to access the region.</p> <p>3.Development and expansion of residential, health and welfare facilities and determination of location choice criteria and project standards and tourist facilities development with a high capability to use available tourist opportunities and potential in the region.</p> <p>4.Educating and informing the people of the region about of the economic, social and cultural benefits of tourism through holding seminars, conferences, and meetings in order to contribute to planning and investment in tourism activities to attract more tourists to the region.</p> <p>5.Reviewing type of planning and governmental support in the region for development and equipping various tourist infrastructures and facilities, increasing of motivation to travel and leisure between urban and suburban people is used.</p> <p>6.To encourage public and private sector for investment and sponsorship to create environmental and physical appropriate infrastructures in order to increase required facilities and services for attracting tourists to the region.</p> <p>7.Coordinate reviewing and development of serving facilities such as restaurants and food stores in new form and traditional to meet tourists different needs and optimum and targeted use of resources and tourism positive benefits.</p>	<p>Defensive strategies (WT)</p> <p>1.Preparation and implementation of advertising program to present real image of natural and human attractions, cultural distinguishing characteristics, architecture and customs of region and attending in tourism fairs, festivals and seminars with emphasis on protection of patterns, cultural heritage and historical areas.</p> <p>2.Establishment of appropriate infrastructure (transportation, residential, welfare, health facilities, etc.) in mountainous region to create competitive environment.</p> <p>3.Creating recreational and sports equipments and facilities, and climbing development facilities to affluent tourists.</p> <p>4.Codifying specific laws and regulations for optimum use of tourism attractions and products and prevention from pollution sources in this region.</p> <p>5.Codifying rural earth rules and regulations and comprehensive control of land buying and selling of in order to monitoring resources.</p> <p>6.Preparation and encouraging governmental sector to investment and planning to develop appropriate environmental and physical infrastructure.</p> <p>7.Educate and inform people on how to deal with tourists in the region to prevent conflict between locals and tourists.</p> <p>8.Select of appropriate solution like artificial snow production with special facilities for development of winter sports such as Ski in the region for competition with rival recreational regions.</p>

* Codifying rural earth rules and regulations and comprehensive control of land buying and selling of in order to monitoring resources.

* Preparation and encouraging governmental sector to investment and planning to develop appropriate environmental and physical infrastructure.

* Educate and inform people on how to deal with tourists in the region to prevent conflict between locals and tourists.

* Select of appropriate solution like artificial snow production with special facilities for development of winter sports such as Ski in the region for competition with rival recreational regions.

Conclusions

Results of studies show that in study region, 13 strengths against 11 weakness and 7 external opportunities against 7 external threats have been identified. Therefore 20 strengths and opportunities identified as advantages and 18 weaknesses and threats presented as limitation of mentioned region for mountainous tourism development. Regarding to field studies in study region it was identified that this region has capabilities and limitations in terms of natural, social and cultural, economical and institutional and planning for tourism development has not been conducted and region advantages are less than its limitations, and vulnerability levels of this region in terms of tourism development is very high that requires precise and coherent strategies to resolve these vulnerabilities in all areas. Regarding to tourism identified capabilities and limitations in study region by use of SWOT technique, 4 strategies (invasive, diversification, revision, and defensive) codified and it was identified that like tourism development strategies, tourism facilities and services, sustainable marketing strategies, laws and regulations related to tourism, creation of incentives to attract private sector investment and local people participation, educational and environmental programs development needs must be defined and resolved until this region reach to sustainable development in terms of tourism.

Implication of the Study

Development Programs: These programs are designed based on the criterion of time horizons as short, medium and long term. In the development plans, it is important to consider the Levels of planning at the national scales, where the project is located in an intermediated area .

Short-term: short-term programs are programs that are run from 1 to 3 years. These plans can overcome the shortcomings of tourism sector which are composed mainly of small and medium projects in the time span of 1 to 3 years.

Forming information offices at the entrance and exodus of city and the region under study by the council and city governor and Tourism Organization and coordination for better guidance of travelers and tourists.

Constructing the rural home (residential units) alongs cenic rural homes with appropriate infrastructure to reduce some of the inadequacies and deficiencies of domestic and affordable accommodation.

Developing and implementing an integrated tourist resort with various facilities of accommodation, catering, entertainment, sport and relaxation in mountainous regions such as Chakdasht and Khasibdasht .

The development of adventure tourism such as hunting, mountaineering, hiking, caving, and certain types of appeals... with a variety of attractions in area and public participation in planning in order to create jobs and income for local people.

Establishing daily and weekly fair market of local products, handicrafts, agricultural products... in the days of the entry of tourists to the area in the center of the village.

The construction of small hotels, guesthouses, camping and mountain lodges in the area with fewer resources and less time.

Plans of building the tourist villages in the mountainous region of Imam, Kejid, and Khasibi plain with the simple accommodation and leisure facilities, sports, and entertainment facilities.

The of developing of the basic tourist facilities including toilets, ash bin, water piping along the major tourist areas.

development, improvement and restoration of archaeological sites, old houses and other cultural attractions in the region in order to diversify crops.

Providing promotional programs to encourage tourists to stay in mountains area at night, hiking and other activities

Improving and making travel agency in the city center in order to attract tourists and providing the tourism tours in the area.

Development and improvement of access roads to the area such as the centerpiece of AMLASH-Blurdekan- Khasibdasht, and the centerpiece of Amlash -RahimAbad-Garmabdasht-Kejid through secure roads, installation of sign age and lighting systems installed.

Medium-term programs: medium-term plans are designed to run them at about 3 to 5 years. Unlike short-term plans, medium-term plans offer the developing of the model of tourism demand in the future and in proportion to changes in demand .

Making and developing the tourism areas in the region (such as the Khasibdasht) with all the facilities and services required in the tourism sector.

Building the track riding, motorcycling, and mountain chairlifts in the mountain area of Chakdasht due to the necessary fields to create these types of facilities.

Developing Caving tourism in the area to develop scientific-cultural and sporting tourism with providing facilities.

Preparing of suitable environmental program for marketing, conserving and enhancing the ability of natural systems and ecological zone in the area.

constructing of suitable sport venues and other convenient facilities for tourists in the Malakut village , the center of Smam.

Developing the historical, natural, and artistic museums as the scenic attractions in the area such buviye village, imam and

Developing and strengthening leisure and summer attractions and integrating them with sport, Entertainment, and cultural tourism with the aim of prolonging the length of stay.

Development of facilities and programs to train staff working in restaurants, coffee houses, traditional inns, hotels and other residential units in mountainous areas.

Long-term plans: Long-term plans are plans which can be enforced through 5 to 10 year time horizon. They are proposed for improving medium-term plans.

Developing and implementing winter tourism facilities with an emphasis on sports such as skiing, hiking in the mountainous region of Natshkuh and Chakdasht.

Developing and managing the rural tourism based on the principles of sustainable development and people's participation in planning in order to protect the economic - social and environmental interests.

Planning services and tourism infrastructure facilities (transport and related services, electricity, water, telecommunications, waste disposal management and public health and safety) in the area

The Project of developing and constructing of amusement and forest parks, and summer resort in the area with the proportion to the environmental capacity.

Developing and building a tourist town in the mountain region of Malakut and Musa with performing summer tourism and a resort in summer and winter tourism in winter.

Developing programs to encourage investment in the industry of mountain tourism by inviting private investors living in Iran and abroad in the field of entertainment- residential facilities in the area.

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