

# Assessment and Feasibility of Tourism Development in the Kanibarazan Wetland of Mahabad, Iran

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**ABSTRACT:** Tourism has been approved as in powerful tool in development model, and its activities are known as invisible export and industry, on the other side comprehensive and sustainable requires knowledge of economic, social, cultural and political issues with in the communities. Also tourism development requires extensive participation of local people in tourism development planning where in today world local communities being involved in environment protection in fact for protection of wetland type of public participation are considered. Of course public participation could be effective only while lagoons don't expose to any threat. So Mahabad city with many attractions in the field of nature tourism including its wetlands could attract lot of tourists through the true scientific management and ensure its sustainability in long-term. Present article reviews tourism and its effects on Mahabad Kanibrazan wetland. Research type in this study is descriptive & analytical. Data gathering tolls in this research are field and library studies and finally for data analysis SWOT model has been used. Research findings show if obstacles like lack of accommodations, health services, amenities, improper recreational facilities and so on being removed not only it would be possible to use potential of the Kanibarazan wetland for the purpose of job creating and making money, but also steps will be taken in order to create a tourism center with in the region.

**Keywords:** KaniBarazan wetland, Tourism Development, Environment, SWOT, Mahabad

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## INTRODUCTION

Increasing population and consequences of industrial life has increased need of human being to resorts with natural effects in order to relive their mental fatigue and soul which are caused by machinery life (Zarghi et al., 2009). Exploiting these areas which have natural attractions creates tourism industry that in turn would be effective in improving economic status of the area (Azadmanjiri, 2006). Today tourism is one of the most promising practices which also named as in industry (Hezar Jaribi and Najafi, 2010) and also called as in invisible export (Aabrahymy Mynq and Irvani, 2005) and (Zomorodian, 2005). It can be called as a clean industry since unlike most manufacturing industries, underlying friendship and understanding between nations and bring peace to the people without polluting the environment (Mohseni, 2009). Currently about 10 percent of liquidity volume of world economy comes from this industry and 12 percent of total world expenditures being supplied through tourist revenues (Manshy zadh, 2005). It also has created job for 200 million people and has provided service to 700 million tourists worldwide. It also expected that by 2020 this amount will rise to about twice of that rate (Ping, 2011). One of the tourism industry branches called Ecotourism which is one of the fast growing trends with in the worldwide tourism industry that has been able to attract many tourists (Jamieson, 2003; Bentley et al., 2010). This industry has non-destructive and profitable activities in recent years and has been greatly anticipated for its protection of environment and creating of sustainable development platform (Mokhtari, 2010; Tsaur

et al., 2006, Fennel, 1999). Thus based on World Bank four decades of researches, tourism considered being powerful instrument in development model and its role as in effective development factor over development has been confirmed (Hawkins, 2006).

Iran because of being cultural and historical center is among the first ten countries in the world and its land features has many attractions (Nojavan et al., 2009), because of its geographical condition and different areas from (climatic, topographical and hydrological) and natural attractions (hydrotherapy, mud therapy, caving, and so on) tourism and hiking should not be ignored (Dah Chshmh and Zangyabady, 2008). Lagoons are one of these features that can be noted, these ecosystems include population of special herbs and animals which has created unique environment scenes (Mansouri and Mjnvnyan, 1985). Lagoons are ecosystems with unique adoptability which have exceptional ecological characteristics which are easily recognizable from other natural environments. Wetland can be called the world's most beautiful aspects of life which certainly life initially developed from there, they are sort of environment that persist with utmost strength against variety of man-made pressures to continue to protect life on themselves (Astani and Ranjbarzarabi, 2011). Since wetlands destruction can extend to far than wetland area, it reflects can directly affect economic, environmental and social aspects of the area (Ketchum, 1973). In the meantime, one of the places that can be within the next few years in the North West of Iran, and the Mahabad city, and the importance significant, it is "Kanibarazrn wetland. Because of proximity of human communities with nature it is faced

with danger so that illegal hunting and harvesting of aquatic plants including (Phargmit) and (Japanese sedge) is still ongoing. Development of villages and communities around it, along removal of plants and animal species considered serious threat to the existence of this wetland. Therefore the importance of its tourism also will be exposed to danger. Now the issue is could we consider better future to retain and attract tourism in the area through the careful management? Moreover recognize its potentials as in most important bird watching site in Iran, and measure its effects over the region also through SWOT model and determine applicable touristic strategies to develop tourism, which needs research that current research looking forward to do it.

### Review of literature

Banerjee et al. (2000) In a study using RS and GIS maps of vegetation and its density, land use and soil fertility have been prepared, and areas suitable for developing tourism in West Mednapor, west of Bengal and also India have been identified by the assessment model of ecotourism and programs have been provided. Vanessa (2002) This research in Costa Rica has been reviewed protected areas, which has been protected for organizing studies of tropical areas further more studied ecotourism and its effects in Dominican Republic on stable development of its tourism based on Ecological model being carried out by Tsaur et al. (2006). Reasonable criteria has been employed for the study (local residents, tourists and resource management, economic, social and environmentally) to analyze the relationship between resources, population and sustainability of ecotourism have been analyzing in different directions. Johansen & Williams In (2008) by applying the Freeman method development of tourism in aquatic and land national parks of South Africa planned.

In this study research team in terms of FREEMAN Method, developed a strategic planning table also known as QSPM based on priorities in the areas of economic, social, cultural and ecological. Nouri and Avrgany (2007) this paper assesses the environment capability for tourism development in Choghakhour rural and finally has been divided the whole area into four touristic categories. Morramnejad and Agakhani (2009) research has been dealt with evaluation of threats and opportunities of developments, in a case study of ecotourism in Jajroud protected area, and concluded that tourism industry in the area was not in good condition and turn it to one of the ecotourism poles requires the use of integrated management based on environmental, social and economic factors. Nohegar et al. (2009) in a research under the title assessing ecotourism capabilities of Qeshm Island using SWOAT strategic modeling, some strategies have been offered for improving function of management of ecotourism in the given region. Moshery and Abosahedy (2010), in the paper entitled “ the role of Ecotourism in sustainable rural development in the case study Shandiz (Khorasan Razavi) reviewed and the results reflect the fact that current utilization of the nature despite some activities and limiting measures the current exploitation process from the nature despite of some activities and considerations, its exploitations are above its potential capacity of the environment and there is possibility of serious damages to capabilities of the

environment and of course its economic capabilities. Fazale nya and Hadayate (2010) in an article on “proper strategies for Zariwar lake tourism development”; Their results showed that vulnerability threshold of Zariwar because of being touristic is high and needs review also providing suitable policies for eliminating limitations in region so that we can in best way use its capabilities.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this research using mathematic relation, models computer software being created.

In the first step of tourist development strategy SWOT has been used and for data analysis and also providing analytic strategy SWOT has been used. In this article analyze of SWOT in the tables of SWOT will be done through this steps: providing list of opportunities, threats weak and strong points, description and analyzing of each opportunities and threats, on weak and strong points using SWOT models, using SWOT method for data analysis.

### Theoretical

By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, tourism has become one of the world's highest earning industries and there is intensive competition among countries to attract many tourists, so that tourism industry as in active industry and with its exceptional features dedicated important portion of productive and economic activities of developed and developing nations to itself. (UnwtoT, 2007)

In many countries tourism industry considered as a primary source of income, employment, private sector growth and development of infrastructure, that can be considered as an alternative economic activity in monoculture economy, (Paply Yazdi and Saghaei, 2006). This industry today become one of the main sources of income for countries and has considerable impact on the economic and social development, (Rezvani, 2000), also this industry has attracted 5.1% of national income in the world (2006). It is also capable to solve more than 50% of employment problems which facing developing countries. In 2004 this industry earned more than 75 billion dollars for developing countries which 28% percent of it that is about 21 billion dollars was ecotourism and geotourism share (Saghaei, 2007)

This lucrative source of payment can also be effective in improvement of economy condition of local communities and other sectors of economy like agriculture, foster, fisheries and etc. (Inskeep, 1991). Therefore this industry can be used as in index for economic, social and cultural condition of countries which has substantial capabilities in improvement, and make the country's economy situation more active and also improve the level of wellbeing (Hamilton et al., 2005); (Liu, 2006); (Chaing, 2008). Since the country (Iran) has heavy reliance on oil exports, in order to exit from monoculture economy, country requires to take full advantage of all features and functions ( Zangi Abadi et al., 2006). our country is among top ten countries in the world for its tourism products and resources (Nemati, 2005), However among 150 members of world tourism organization is ranked sixty eight (Samadian et al., 2009) to find a an exit from this situation, by introducing available potential

capabilities we can prepare comprehensive and integrated programs that can recognize and exploit economic grounds (Sinai, 2003). The economy can be changed through effective planning, and attracting domestic and foreign tourists (Fyzbksh, 1976)

### Research area

Kanibarazan Wetland is in N365932 E454632 geographical position in Western Azerbaijan province, south East of Urmia lake, and 35 kilometers North of Mahabad, and in geographical coordinates 45 degree, 46 minutes of east longitude, and 36 degrees and 59 minutes of north longitude (Figure1). Catchment area of lagoon is a 4010 acre which is an area with the 927 acres is managed by environment agency as in shelter for wildlife. Maximum depth of this lagoon is 120 cm and its approximate depth supposed to be 60cm and it's the first bird watching site of the Iran which the discussion of local community's cooperation for conservation of natural capital can be seen clearly about it. Kanibarazan Wetland is located in northern part basin of Mahabad & Semerod rivers which has been expanded from North and East of Garadagh village and extends to the Gross wetland, the construction of main drainage of the right band of the irrigation system in Mahabad, has separated Kanibarazan wetland from the adjacent lagoon land.

This wetland, such as the Great of Urmia Lake wetland are at risk due to the proximity of human nature, so that is still in the process of illegal hunting and harvesting of water plants such (Phargmit) and (Japanese sedge).

Fauna habitat destruction by human-urban roads passing through wetlands, indiscriminate hunting of wildlife, of water Forage harvest, expansion of communities, cities around the elimination of plant and animal species are a serious threat to the existence of wetlands.

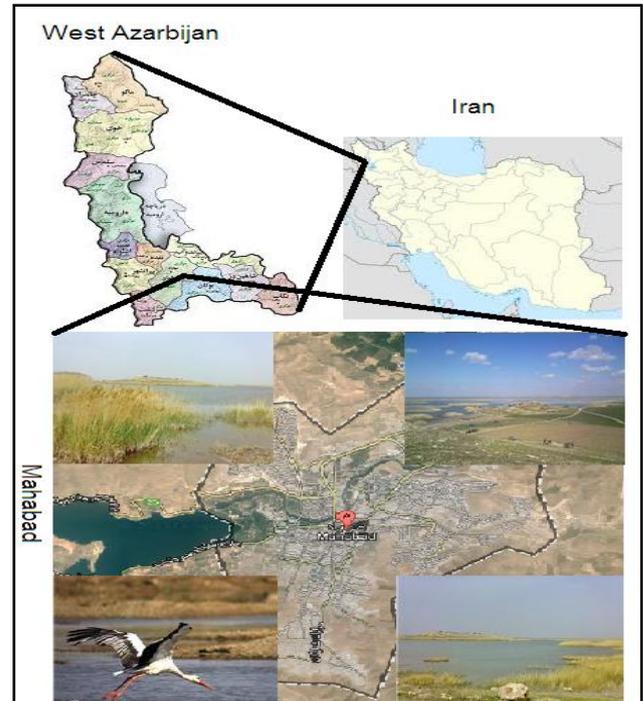


Figure 1. Mahabad City and Kanibarazan Wetland Spatial Position

## RESULTS

### The results of the analyzing internal and external factors in the Kanibarazan Wetland tourism

To organize the internal factors in categories of strengths and weaknesses of the processing system, with the use of the rating factors and given to the importance of each of the potential strengths and potential weaknesses and according to the level of their influence on the functions of the system they were calculated and presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The results of analyzing external factors

Potential strengths (s) & potential weaknesses (w)	Grading	Weighted score	Rating
S1: exquisite weather conditions in hot season of the year	4.75	0.0439	0.3547
S2: Favorable conditions of the wetland in creating diversity of tourist perspectives	4.375	0.0479	0.4230
S3: having enough water and proper depth of the wetland to feed the birds	3.75	0.0538	0.5337
S4: having quiet environment away from the urban hubbub	4.75	0.0529	0.5158
S5: having herbal landscape which reduce the cost of the construction of some of the green spaces in accordance with the regional conditions, such as the native bulrush, sedge, and etc.	4	0.0484	0.4317
S6: having pristine environment in the wetland which increases tourist attractions	2.5	0.0511	0.4814
S7: having enough land for tourist use, and construction	3.5	0.0434	0.3472
S8: prevention of Salt water intrusion from Urmia Lake to the surrounding places	4.875	0.0488	0.4392
S9: moderating the microclimate of the region	3.875	0.0498	0.4567
S10: living of variety of birds which makes the wetland as one of the country's greatest bird watching location	3.375	0.0525	0.5077
S11: being prone area for investment and tourism planning	2.75	0.0494	0.4476
W1: anonymity of the area and lack of attention to it	2.125	0.0466	0.3998
W2: having dusty and inappropriate roads	3.75	0.0411	0.3115
W3: being far away from main road	3.375	0.0357	0.2349
W4: lack of equipped residential and catering locations for tourists	3.25	0.0506	0.4721
W5: deficiency of health care, medical and service facilities	3.375	0.0502	0.4644
W6: not having any facility for disposal of the garbage produced by tourists	3.125	0.0439	0.3547
W7: inappropriate recreational equipments (small boats) and sports facilities	3.5	0.0488	0.4392
W8: lack of coordination among tourism-related organizations	2.75	0.0461	0.3919
W9: lack of minimum welfare facilities for tourists around the wetland	4.125	0.0499	0.4567
W10: lack of roads for tourists to make a complete visit around the wetland	4.875	0.0452	0.3765
Total score	-	1	3.6989

\*\*Source: field studies by authors, 2013

According to the above table, the most important strengths which the Mahabad city contains in relation to wetlands include: having enough water and proper depth of the wetland to feed the birds with the weighted score of 0.0538 and having quiet environment away from the urban hubbub with the weighted score of 0.0529 were considered as the first strengths, and besides, living of variety of birds which makes the wetland as one of the country's greatest bird watching location with the weight score of 0.0525 having pristine environment in the wetland which increases tourist attractions with the weighted score of 0.0511 are in the second rank and finally moderating the microclimate of the region with the weighted score of 0.0498, being prone area for investment and tourism planning with the weighted score of 0.0494 and prevention of Salt water intrusion from Urmia Lake to the surrounding places with the weighted score of 0.0488 are the third priority. It is found that the main weaknesses of Kanibarazan wetland are lack of equipped

accommodations for tourists with the weighted score of 0.0506 and shortage of health care and medical services as well as facilities with the weighted score of 0.0502; Lack of minimum welfare facilities for tourists around the wetland with the weighted score of 0.0499 is in the second rate, And the inappropriateness of recreational facilities (small boats) and sports facilities with the weighted score of 0.0488 is in the third rate which together these items are the most important challenges that the wetland of Mahabad city is facing.

### The results of the analyzing the external factors in tourism Kanibarazan wetland of Mahabad

The aim of conducting this phase of research was to identify the opportunities and the threats in development of the wetland in the Mahabad city. Based on the conducted studies, opportunities, threats and challenges in front of development of tourism in the wetland were identified and the results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The results of the analyzing the external factors in tourism Kanibarazan wetland of Mahabad

Opportunities (o) and the challenges, limitations, and threats (t)	Grading	Weighted score	Rating
1 O creating job and income in the region	4.125	0.0544	0.2244
2 O lack of resources and natural and cultural landscapes in other rival touristy areas	4	0.0514	0.2056
3 O impact on the roads around the agricultural lands in the area and their flourishing	4.25	0.0556	0.2363
4 O improvement and reconstruction of the roads leading to the area	4.25	0.0522	0.2219
5 O accessibility and recognizability in the province and the country	4.5	0.0486	0.2187
6 O proximity to adjacent tourist areas	4.125	0.0491	0.2025
7 O the capability of becoming a tourism hub in the province and in the country development facilities	4.375	0.0514	0.2249
8 O investments in infrastructures and superstructure facilities	3.875	0.0528	0.2046
9 O development of tourism facilities as one of the development strategies	4.25	0.0509	0.2163
10 O providing lodging facilities and increase in receiving tourists	4	0.0492	0.1968
11 O encouraging tourism-related organizations to enhance tourism development facilities	4.125	0.0458	0.1889
1 T excessive hunting of birds	3.625	0.0495	0.1794
2 T entering of waste water drainage and pesticides into the wetland	3.25	0.0463	0.1505
3 T poor sanitary and hygiene conditions and lack of facilities services	3.25	0.0514	0.1671
4 T indiscriminate use caused by feeding animals and livestock	3.125	0.0439	0.1372
5 T poor investments in tourism due to the lack of knowledge of the area	2.875	0.0472	0.1357
6 T use of the incoming water to the wetland in irrigation by farmers	2.875	0.0486	0.1397
7 T drought in Urmia Lake and to some extent saline wetland derived from salts brought by the wind from other places	3.375	0.0534	0.1802
8 T mismatch between the roads and the modern vehicles	3.125	0.0491	0.1534
9 T environmental threats and damages to wetlands, such as drought	3.625	0.0492	0.1784
Total	-	1	3.7625

\*\*Source: field studies by authors, 2013

According to the table 2, the most important opportunities for the Kanibarazan wetland which are available including: impact on the roads around the agricultural lands in the area and their flourishing with the weighted score of 0.0556 and creating job and income in the region with the weighted score of 0.0544 are recognized as the most important opportunities in Kanibarazan wetland. The second priorities are investments in infrastructures and superstructure facilities, improvement and reconstruction of the roads leading to the area, and lack of resources and natural and cultural landscapes in other rival touristy areas with the weighted scores of 0.0528, 0.0522, and 0.0514, respectively. Finally, providing lodging facilities and increase in receiving tourists with the weighted score of 0.0492, accessibility and recognize ability in the province and the country with the weighted score of 0.0486 are in the third place. On the other hand, the most important limitations

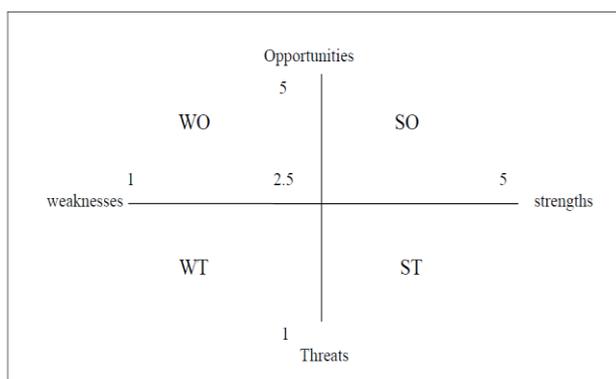
and challenges facing the wetlands include: drought in Urmia Lake and to some extent, saline wetland derived from salts brought by the wind from other places with the weighted score of 0.0534 is the main limitation and challenge and the first priority, poor sanitary and hygiene conditions and lack of facilities services with the weighted score of 0.0514 is the second priority Excessive hunting of birds, mismatch between the roads and the modern vehicles and environmental threats and damages to wetlands, such as drought with the weighted scores of 0.0492, 0.0491, and 0.0495, respectively, are in the following levels.

The aim of this stage was to determine the strategic situation of tourism development in the wetland of Mahabad city; formulate strategies and priorities, and plan applicable strategies. In order to determine the executive strategies, internal and external matrix, the comments of the experts of the field (University professors, trainers,

etc.) and the Likert scale were used. Then the data of the field studies and the expert opinion-based questionnaires were quantified. At the end, the SWOT matrix for the development of tourism within the scope of the case study was provided. The outcome is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** SWOT matrix

Internal -external factors	Strengths (S)	weaknesses (W)
Opportunities (O)	competitive-aggressive strategies (S-O strategies)	revisionary or adaptive strategies (W-O strategies)
Threats (T)	diversity strategies (S-T strategies)	defensive strategies (W-T strategies)

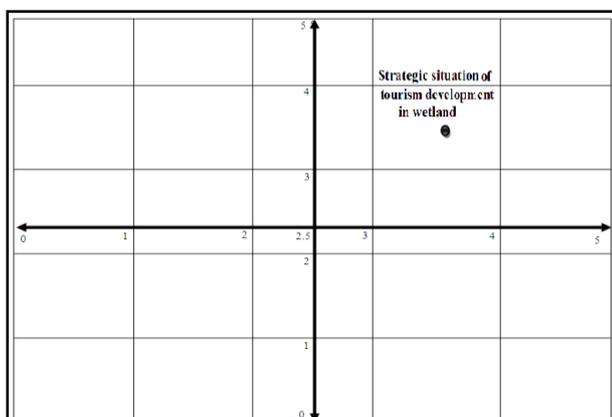


**Graph 1.** The variety of possible strategies based on overall scores of internal and external matrix

So that in the calculations relating to the internal and external factors matrix if the results are put in each of the four quadrants in the matrix, we will have the following condition in determining the type of strategy.

According to the conducted library research and field studies, with combining various factors, the quadruple strategies for development of tourism in Kanibarazan wetland can be presented as follows:

The results of the received data from internal factors evaluation matrix (3.6) and external factors evaluation matrix (3.7) indicate that the dominant strategies for tourism development of wetlands are aggressive ones (SO). Accordingly, strategies and policies should be set in a way that makes it possible to utilize the opportunities in front of the wetland and also opportunities within system in order to develop tourism in the wetland in the best way. The results of the analyses are presented in the Graph 2.



**Graph 2.** The results of the internal and external analyses; Source: calculations of the authors based on the results of the field studies

### Strategies (SO)

1. Preparation and operation of the support of private sector for more investment in the Kanibarazan Wetland

2. Emphasis on natural tourism development due to ability of the region to develop this type of tourism.

3- Utilization of the Lagoon's joining to the International Convention and getting more credits for sustainable development of the tourism industry.

4. Optimum utilization of the capabilities of Lagoon (wetlands) including (water, boating, beautiful landscape of a variety of birds, and etc.) in order to develop and attract tourists to create jobs and source of income for the local people of the region.

5 - Developing a multi-year perspective plan for tourism development of the wetlands (both short term, medium term, long term)

### Defensive strategies (WT)

1. Notification and introducing features and capabilities of the Lake for spending leisure times and resting through the national media, the Internet, books and etc.

2. Holding seminars and social events in the area due to better weather conditions than other regions.

3. Encouraging people to contribute to the development of infrastructure, equipment and facilities for tourism to create jobs and source of income source for them.

4. Using private sector participation in the construction of tourist facilities and infrastructure of the area.

5. Developing the transportation of the Lagoon (wetlands).

6. Developing health facilities, recreation and sport centers, and etc.

### Diversity or pertinent strategies (ST)

1-the development of transport facilities and equip the wetland path to the main road as well as making manuals for tourists.

2- Diversifying tourist facilities and services in order to satisfy tourists and therefore to increase the number of tourists and create jobs for the people of the region.

3- Utilizing the rules and regulations in order to reduce environmental pollution of the wetland.

4. Development and expansion of facilities in and around the wetland for tourists through which they can use the landscape and farms surrounding the wetland

### Revisionary or adaptive strategies (WO)

In this strategy, with the emphasis on internal weaknesses, it is tried to use external opportunities to eliminate existing weaknesses in the wetland of the Mahabad city.

1. Reconsidering the wetland management and selecting a single manager for developing the goals of sustainable tourism.

2. Along with reconsidering the type and manner of the government's planning and support of tourist areas, it is recommended to use logically the supportive laws and regulations in order to develop and equip infrastructure and tourist facilities in the wetland.

3. Locating and distributing services and facilities and constructing more and better equipments and facilities in the wetland.

4. All-sided development of accommodations and resorts

## CONCLUSION

Today, tourism has been growing steadily and so many tourists get attracted to it. As a way to protect nature and create a platform for sustainable development, this smokeless industry has wildly been welcomed in recent years. The United States is among top countries in the world in terms of having cultural and historical centers. The development of this industry could improve the conditions of economy and employment and ultimately environment. The effects of such developments in long-term will be improvement in the status of tourism, environment and sustainable development of the country.

The Mahabad County also provided many tourist attractions for eco-tourists and tourists. Among these unique attractions the Kanibarazan Wetland can be pointed out in specific. The catchment area (drainage basin) of the wetland is y hectare, of which n hectare is managed by the Environment Agency as the wildlife sanctuary of the Kanibarazan Wetland. Dubbed as the heaven of birds, The Kanibarazan Wetland attracts so many domestic and foreign tourists. Therefore one of the most important values of this wetland is the living of sea birds and waterfowls in it through which it provides the exemplary charm and tranquility for nature enthusiasts. In this regard, this wetland can be one of the important tourist centers in the country. By considering the existing situation and identification of strong points and opportunities on the one hand and analyzing threats and weaknesses by using SWOT model on the other hand, it was revealed that lack of residential places for the tourists, lack of services and health facilities, minimal welfare facilities, inappropriate recreational equipment and so on are the most important factors for lack of tourism development in the Kanibarazan wetland. Accordingly, development strategy and expansion of facilities, services and infrastructure in order to attract tourists, reinforcing the publicity through holding seminars and various events for domestic and foreign tourists, encouraging people to participate in the development of infrastructure, supporting the private sector and so on are identified as the most important strategies for tourist development in the Kanibarazan Wetland. To this end, in order to have further development in the Kanibarazan Wetland and attract more tourists, some suggestions are offered in the following:

1. Identifying the constraints and recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of existing infrastructures to enhancing the efficiency of tourism in the region;

2. Participating the local people for the better management of the Wetland and its sustainability in the long term;

3. Investment in developing facilities and providing infrastructures around the Wetland for tourists;

4. Developing balanced and sustainable natural tourism in accordance with the area;

5. Conducting integrated and scientific studies to determine the tourism potential and its actual abilities in the Kanibarazan Wetland;

6. Observing the tourist reception capacity of the Wetland with respect to the time and the seasons of the year;

7. Holding specialized Conference in order to use the comments of professors, researchers and highly qualified experts in the field of ecotourism development coincides with better management of the Wetland;

8. Explaining the policies of sustainable tourism development;

9. Creating appropriate situation to encourage private sector investment in the tourism and ecotourism activities;

10. Preventing local inhabitants of the area from uncontrolled exploitation of water plants

11. Adopting a detailed planning approach to the tourism development of the region, especially in the natural tourism;

12. Encouraging development of construction and infrastructure activities, transportation systems and the production and supply of required goods of the travelers around the Wetland;

13. Introducing the Wetland and promoting it through preparation of films and TV shows, installation of billboards in cities and the road beside the area, providing poster and photo, printing brochures and etc.

14. Inviting domestic and foreign investors, and proving facilities and special privileges to invest in construction of hotels, residential, sport, and entertainment, complexes, and providing sport facilities

15. Paying more attention to the optimal utilization of the capabilities of the Wetland including (its proper depth, its beautiful landscape for photography, boating, its colorful birds, etc.) in attracting tourists which can create jobs and source of income for the people of the region ;

16. Utilization of the Wetland's joining to the International Convention and getting more credits for sustainable development of the tourism industry.

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