Ecological Capacities and Introduction of an Ecotourism Development strategy for Azini Wetland Mangrove Forests Based on SWOT Model

Morteza Zarei[1*]
Mojtaba Zakeri[2]
Mostafa Bahadori[3]
Zahra Bahadori[4]

1. Department of Environmental Management, Higher Education Center, University of Hormozgan, Bandar Abbas, Iran
2. Graduated in Governmental Management, Field of Study Change Management, PNU Mehriz University, Yazd, Iran
3. Graduated of Geography and Urban Planning, PNU Rezvanshahr University, Yazd, Iran
4. Graduated of Math Education, Minab Branch, Islamic Azad University, Minab, Iran

*Corresponding author:
Mzarai2200@yahoo.com

Abstract
Tourism industry nowadays is among the most dynamic and lucrative industries and plays a critical role in revenue generation worldwide. Accordingly, identifying and further assessing regions that hold high potential for tourism, and taking advantages of their economical, social, and cultural benefits will further lead to the development of these regions. Khur-e-Azini International wetland located in Sirik, Hormozgan province, Iran is an internationally recognized ecosystem. This tropical wetland is made of Mangrove forests that consist of two dominant species of *Rhizophora Mucronata* and *Avicennia Marina.* This wetland is indeed a unique ecotourism attraction because of its geographic properties, stunning scenery, and rich wildlife. This study aims to conduct a thorough analysis of Azini wetland ecological potentials and further develop a strategic management and planning scheme for this wetland for the year 2015, based on the SWOT method for sustainable development. This study also identifies current and upcoming strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that Azini wetland might face, and further develops a strategy for their effective management. Thanks to the use of SWOT matrix, and after the ranking, weighting, analysis and interpretation of internal and external factors that may influence the development of tourism, this study devised an appropriate strategy to achieve its objectives. The IFE matrix with the score of 2.48 in this study showed that the present case is faced with more weaknesses as compared to the potential strengths. EFE matrix with the score of 2.40 demonstrated that threats outweigh opportunities. Results show that, based on the SWOT model, the defensive strategy is among the best strategies for the region under study in this research. With regard to the great tourism and habitual potentials that Azini International wetland holds, it has the capacity to develop into a tourism hub within southern parts of the country. With regard to the tourism development of Azini International wetland, governmental administrations and private institutions are advised to collaborate to achieve the pre-defined objectives.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Azini International wetland, Mangrove forests, SWOT model.