

Identifying the environmental criteria of nature-based tourism in arid lands of Iran by Delphi-AHP method

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Corresponding author:**Mirhosseini SA****ABSTRACT:**

In this article, the appropriate indexes and criteria to measure the progress towards the sustainability of ecotourism in the desert regions by a survey based on descriptive and analytical method cum feedback from the experts using Delphi method and then, prioritizing the criteria were done with AHP model. The study area of Yazd province in the center of Iran with an area of 131,000 km² is the third great province of Iran, of which 65 percent includes the desert lands. To have ecotourism planning in the arid and desert regions, after investigating and collecting the external and internal references, seven main criteria and 26 sub-criteria were achieved. The obtained criteria used to determine the most appropriate ecological criteria for locating the nature-tourism areas in the central desert regions of Iran, were weighed and prioritized. For this, AHP questionnaire was prepared for the environment and tourism experts and 30 cases of individuals were selected. The results of questionnaires in the EXPERT choice software were weighed. The results showed that the main ecological criteria included tourism resources, wildlife, water resources, limiting factors with inconsistency rate of 0.01, with the highest priority and the sub criteria included tourism resources, diversity of wildlife species, earthquake likelihood, water quality, population wild life. The sub-criteria of chemical and physical properties of soil, vegetation (quality), water resources, wind and rain also are the last five priorities for planning ecotourism in central deserts of Iran with the inconsistency rate of 0.05 and thus it has been selected.

Keywords:

Ecotourism, site selection, desert, AHP, Yazd