

An Investigation about the Environmental Sustainability of the Darband Recreational Area in Tehran

By

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Executive Summary:

The aim of this report is to analyze the condition of the current eco-system of the Darband tourist resort in northern Tehran and to measure its level of sustainability through a survey of visitors' perceptions. The information in this report may help decision makers to implement effective policies and to incorporate the good practices needed to promote sustainable tourism in Darband. The success of tourism is highly reliant on visitors' satisfaction, which can influence prospective visitors' intention to revisit and repurchase products and services. This report collects and evaluates tourists' perceptions of the Darband area through a pre-formulated survey questionnaire. The report then employs Ko's (2005) perception model in order to assess whether or not the Darband tourist area in northern Tehran is a sustainable recreational area that:

- delivers high-quality tourism and a leisure experience to its visitors, and
- both protects the biodiversity of the eco-system and promotes the quality of the eco-system through employment of high-quality policies and management.

This report focuses only on the tourist area's eco-system, which includes the following four main components:

- general environmental impacts,
- the eco-system's bio-diversity,
- the eco-system's quality, and
- environmental policy and management.

Out of total of 350 questionnaires that were distributed, only 300 were usable. The data collection methods for this report comprised a literature review, a thesis, reports, questionnaires, maps, and pictures. The data analysis of the survey results was conducted through the use of SPSS and Excel for the creation of frequency tables and column charts.

This report makes use of both the Barometer of Tourism Sustainability (BTS) and the AMOEBA approach, as they were employed by Ko (2005) in his methodology, in order to measure the level of sustainability in Darband and develop a sustainability map. The BTS is a tool developed to measure improvement that leads toward sustainability through a blend of a number of indicators that will deliver an analysis of both human and environmental conditions through indexes (De Araújo, Pimenta, Reis & Campos, 2013; Ko, 2005).

The AMOEBA approach is unlike other absolute scientific approaches. Its one main advantage is that it is a very visual approach to summarizing sustainability, and this approach is largely a result of the fact that it was created with non-specialists in mind. The AMOEBA approach can help to express and clarify the sustainability of each tourism indicator (Ko, 2005).

The results of the 300 people surveyed in this research reveal that the Darband recreational area, which is regularly visited by thousands of tourists throughout the year, requires serious attention, especially in the areas of policy and management in order to achieve an acceptable level of sustainability.

The highlights of the 300 survey questionnaires are as follows:

- employment of clean energy sources (wind, water, solar) in Darband,
- attention to the cleanliness of Darband,
- attention to the infrastructure and facilities at Darband,
- improvement in the quality of recycling at Darband,
- preservation and protection of ground cover vegetation at Darband,
- increased accessibility for persons with disabilities at Darband,
- provision of tourism information units and educational resources at Darband.

This report sheds new light on visitors' perceptions of the environment of the Darband resort area. In addition, the report indicates that the development of a comprehensive plan for sustainable development of the tourism industry in Darband, Tehran, requires managers' attention to all of the factors mentioned above.

In general, the sustainable development approach is important when the social and cultural impacts of tourism are considered, because the tourism sector is based mainly on attractions and events that are associated with the natural environment and also with the history and cultural heritage of a respective area. Degradation and destruction of these resources causes deterioration of the tourism industry. In contrast, conservation of tourism resources increases local residents' awareness of their heritage and supports protection of the resort.