

The Study of the Comments and Recreational Needs of the Visitors to Reyzamin Located in Central Alborz Protected Area

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Abstract

The study of the comments of the visitors is one of the important criteria in selecting, planning and designing recreational region that causes the pleasure productivity in the areas which have potential for tourism. The present research is the result of a 4 months field work to evaluate the recreational region needs of the visitors to Reyzamin that is a part of Central Alborz Protected Area in Karaj District and in side of Karaj-Chalous Tourism Road. Clawson Method, one of the most common methods of studying recreational region in the world, was used in this research to obtain people's comments and some questionnaires were used for the study. A questionnaire with 18 questions was designed and 156 copies of them were completed through distribution and face to face interview from July 2011 to October 2011. The questionnaires were distributed during this period, in holidays, middle and early week of each month. The results showed that men are the most visitors. Most of the visitors are academically High school Diploma to Bachelor's Degree and financially they are in an average status. Most of the visitors are under 30 years old. The visitors are there mostly with their families and in their own car and it takes them less than two hours to get there and their cost of trip is less than 50,000 Tomans. If the weather is fine, they prefer to go on a picnic than have other entertainments. They say the facilities in the area are not enough. Even if they do not agree to pay admission fee, but if the condition improves, receiving the admission fee can increase the number of the visitors to the area and they can benefit more from the area.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is impossible to imagine the cities with no resorts in various forms, and the consequences of urban development and its environmental problems have made the existence of a range of recreational resources and their development inevitable ([Farsadzadeh, 1999](#); [Faryadi, 2007](#); [Majnounian, 1995](#); [Majnounian & Goshtasb Meygoni, 2003](#); [Pan, Cui, & Wu, 2010](#); [Yakhkeshi, 1978](#)). Due to the rapid growth of global population in the twentieth century and the increasing urbanization, more than half of the world's population has been located in urban centers ([Papli-Yazdi & Saghaei, 2006](#)). Nowadays, tourism has become a phenomenon affecting the global economy ([Ebrahimzadeh & Aghasizadeh, 2011](#)), so that, according to the released statistics by the World

Tourism Organization, it has become the largest source of global income in the new millennium ([Lee & Liu, 2011](#); [Papatheodorou & Song, 2005](#)). Furthermore, the economics have considered this industry as the third most dynamic industrial phenomenon after the oil and automobile production ([Yakhkeshi, 1978](#)). According to the World Tourism Organization prediction, this industry is expected to grow significantly by 2020, and more than 1.6 billion people will experience the international travel ([Amiri, 2004](#)). Some researchers believe that the sustainable tourism will not be achieved despite its commitment to the environment ([Goodall & Cater, 1996](#)). The conducted studies in different regions of the world indicate that the negative effects of tourism will be increased as this rapid growth increases ([Tohid Ardahaey, 2011](#)). In the case of dedicating for protected areas, tourism should be considered as a mean of developing their goals, maintaining the unity of ecosystems, maintaining the biodiversity, promoting public awareness, and improving the public quality and conditions of life. The measures of tourism and its associated underlying factors will be in contrast to the purposes considered in the "World Conservation Strategy", and "Earth conservation strategy" if they undermine the cultural and environmental integration of protected areas and have no benefit for local communities and environment ([Goshtasb Meygoni, Shams & Cheshmeh Khavar, 2008](#)), then Landscaping, or organizing the perspective are essential in line with the programs of sustainable tourism ([Jahani, Makhdoum, Feghhi & Etemad, 2011](#); [Madhoushi & Naserpour, 2003](#)). Numerous studies have been conducted in Iran and other countries to study tourists' behavior; for instance, the HLA and ARA Consulting Groups ([Gateway Antarctica](#)) investigated the demographic situation of North American nature. This survey indicated that most tourists are in the age group of 35 to 45 and half of them are female and the rest are male. Crishtian and lemon investigated the tourists' behavior in dealing with the natural environments. The results of this study indicate that a majority of tourists are interested in the environment and welcome conducting the environmental studies even more than purchasing the green products. Pan et al. ([2010](#)) conducted a research on the tourists' behavior with the management objectives in a national wetland park in China. Three main factors in the success of planning and managing the national park include: tourists' expectations, experiences and satisfaction. In addition, many studies are conducted on the tourists' satisfaction and ideas of tourism destinations in Iran ([Abbasi, Salajegheh, & Zare, 2010](#); [Aghababaei & Malekian, 2013](#); [Ardakani, 2007](#); [Esmailpour, 2007](#); [Faryadi, 2007](#); [Kalantari, 2008](#); [Kazemi-Mazandarani, 2006](#); [Majnounian, 1995](#); [Raheli-Namin, 2008](#); [Safarzadeh, 2008](#); [Sepasi, 2008](#); [Soleimani, 2011](#)).

In terms of natural and cultural attraction, Iran is among the world's top ten countries especially for foreign tourists ([Butler, 1991](#)). The Central Alborz Protected Area is one of the four Environmental Protection Agency areas in the newly established Alborz Province and has significant wide effects on the environmental quality of Karaj metropolis. The most important effects include the influence on the urban environment, and environmental conservation, the effect on the urban landscape, the impact on the recreational needs, the impact on the visitors' environmental awareness, attracting the domestic and foreign tourists, creating jobs at local and national levels, improving the transportation service and manual industries, increasing the number of nature supporters, communication between different cultures, and familiarizing children with environment ([Tebyanian, 2012](#)). Therefore, this study seeks to create the context for appropriate planning for recreational management of the area by investigating and identifying the factors and variables affecting the recreational management demand in Rey Zamin. The aim of this study is to provide the context of future planning and management to provide regional facilities according to the tourism in the region.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Case study:

Rey Zamin recreational area is located in Central Alborz protected area in 41 km of Karaj-Chalus road. This area is limited to Asara from the north, Rey Zamin mosque from the south, Karaj River from the East, and fire station from the West. Figure 1 shows the location of the area in Alborz province and central Alborz protected area.

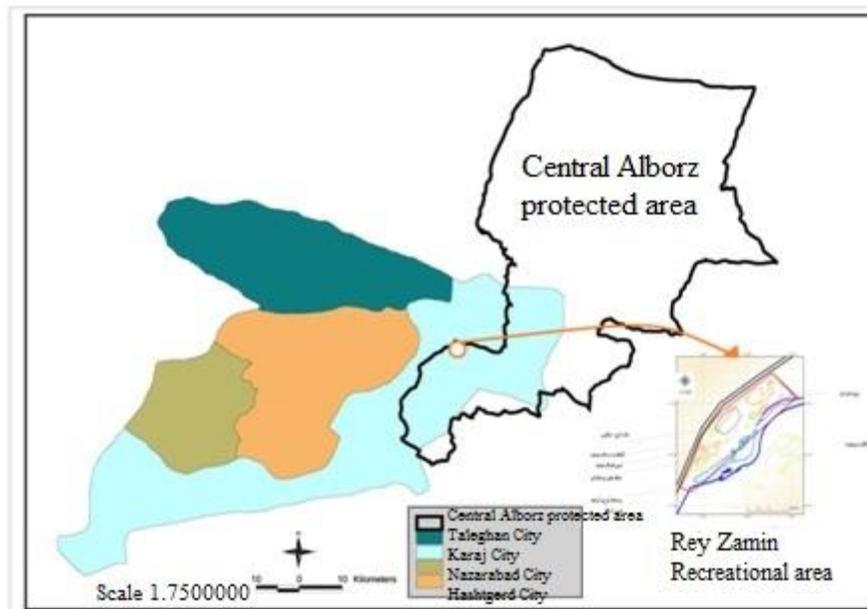


Figure 1- Location of Central Alborz Protected Area and studied area (Rey Zamin) in Karaj City

Research method:

Investigating the issues of recreational areas in the country is often done through Clawson socio-economic evaluation method. In this regard, the demand for recreational areas is estimated by Clawson questionnaire and interview. The age group, distribution according to the source, ways of access, frequency and duration of visit, visiting models of social, jobs, educational levels, visit motivation, length of stay, ways of access, favorite hobbies, selected vegetation, staying in overnight, access fees, visitors' incomes, design and arrangement of recreational facilities, and payment of entrance fees are among the factors required to meet the recreational needs in recreational areas. The three factors of time, cost and distance are the main factors affecting the recreational demand.

Due to the social and economic changes in society and consequently the changes in the type and quality of factors influencing recreational demand, these factors should be investigated and reviewed in different periods. We need to pay attention to the individuals' recreational interests and behaviors when planning and managing the recreational areas. We can implement positioning, planning and finally the appropriate plans by identification of these factors ([Makhdom, 2011](#)).

The basic information of research is collected through a field study on the area and library search of relevant sources as well as the interviews and data collection from native people and environmental protection officials and experts especially in Alborz Province. The tourist questionnaire and the native tourists needs assessment of are the data collection tools in this study as well as distributing the questionnaire among the target groups and observing the region and taking pictures, videos and surveying the regional maps.

A total of 156 questionnaires are randomly distributed among Rey Zamin tourists from June to the end of summer and then collected. Its validity and reliability should be investigated to prepare an appropriate questionnaire. The trust or reliability is a quantitative issue and responds to the question of how well the measurement tool assesses the target factor (Kiani, 2009-10). There are several ways to calculate this coefficient and this research uses Cronbach's alpha. If the value of this coefficient is greater than 0.7 (70), this means that the reliability of the tool is acceptable in measurement. In fact, if it is applied under similar conditions, the result will be constant. This study measures the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for tourists' satisfaction variable in recreational area with 17 questions and its value is equal to 0.75 which is acceptable. The validity of questionnaires is another case which should be taken into consideration while designing the questionnaires. That validity means: to what extent the measurement tool measures the desired characteristics. There are several methods to test the validity and this study utilizes the content validity method. The content validity depends on the experts' idea and judgment about the studied subject; hence, the questionnaires are given to relevant experts in order to determine the validity and conducting the necessary revisions, and then the final questionnaire designed after concluding of their comments.

The statistical population of this study includes the native and local tourists. The Clawson method, which is a socio-economic method, is applied for this study. This method is only applied for parks and recreational areas outside the city; A park where you need to spend money and time to access to and the visitors' aim at recreation in the nature (Mahmoudi & Danehkar, 2004). This approach describes the tourists' actual reaction to recreational facilities. The questionnaire questions are classified into three categories: The underlying questions about the individual age, gender, educational level, and marital status; the objective questions which have nothing to do with personality and have fixed responses. These questions are not complicated; and finally, the attitudinal questions which usually depend on the individual personality and their responses depend on all the factors which make the respondent's view.

RESULTS

The analysis of 156 completed questionnaires in interviews with tourists in Rey Zamin recreational area shows their different behavior and characteristics of demand and expectations of tourism service in this area. According to this survey, the men make the largest percentage of respondents (Figure 2). The highest percentage of visitors is between 16 and 30 years old and the lowest percentage is over 60 years (Figure 3). Furthermore, most of visitors visit this region from Tehran and Alborz Provinces (Figure 4). Based on Figure 5, most interviewees are among the educated groups. As shown in Figure 6, most of the tourists had medium income levels, and only a few percent of the tourists were those with very high incomes.

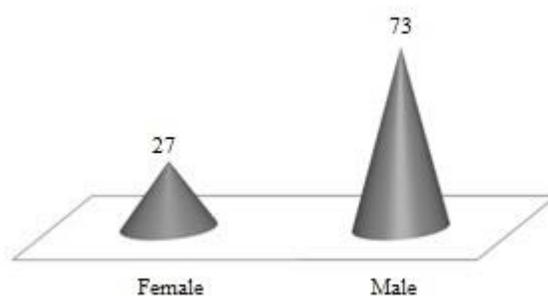


Figure 2: Respondents' gender (percent)

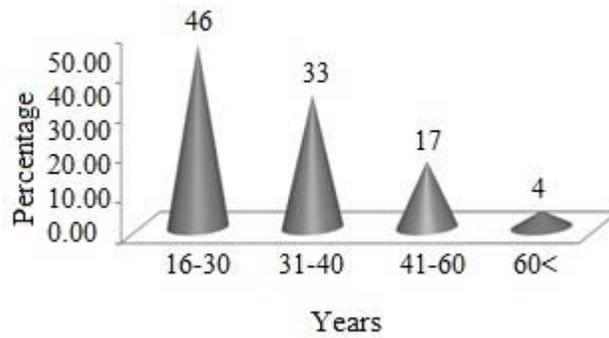


Figure 3: Respondents' age (percent)

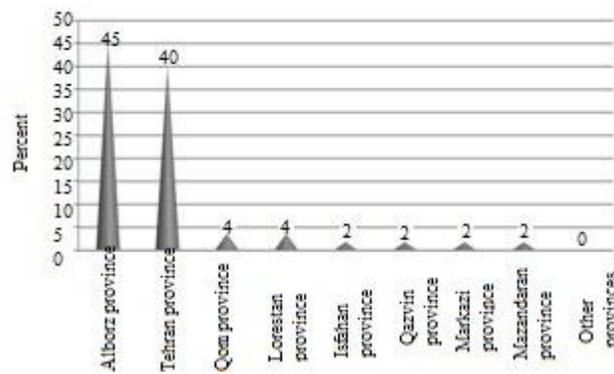


Figure 4: The interviewees' residential province

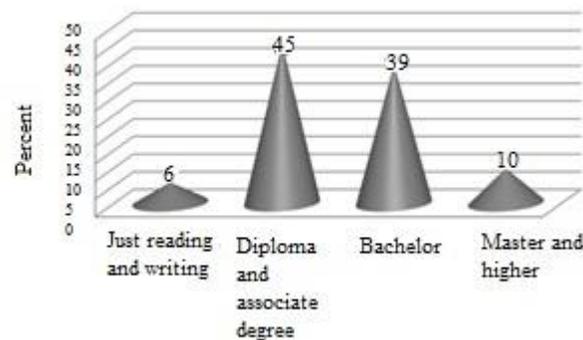


Figure 5: The interviewees' educational level (percent)

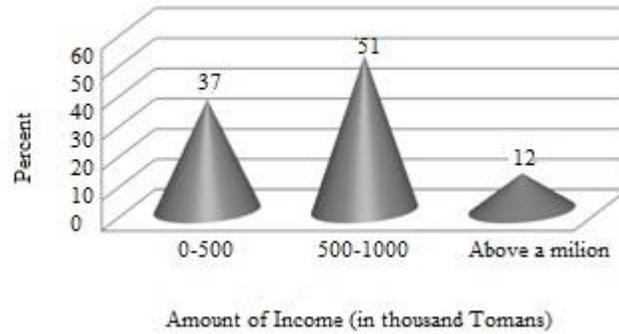


Figure 6: Respondents' amount of income

Distribution of visitors according to the duration, modes of travel and numbers of companions

As shown in Figure 7, most of the tourists have been on the way for less than two hours to reach the studied area. According to the questioned statistical population, among the ways of access to the area, the personal vehicle has a maximum frequency of 94%. Therefore, use of personal car is the most common way of access to the area for recreation (Figure 8). Based on this survey, most of the visitors have 0 to 3 companions under 16 and over 16 years old (Figures 9 and 10).

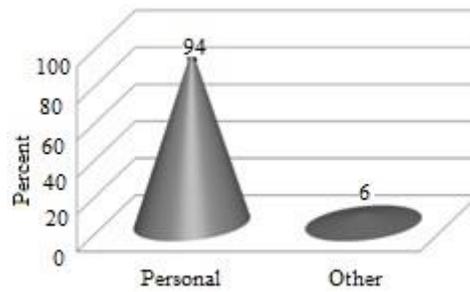


Figure 7: The time taken to reach the area

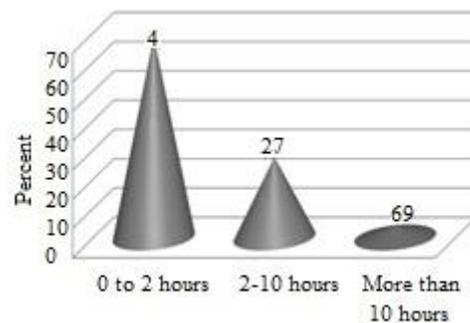


Figure 8: The visitors' types of vehicle to visit the area

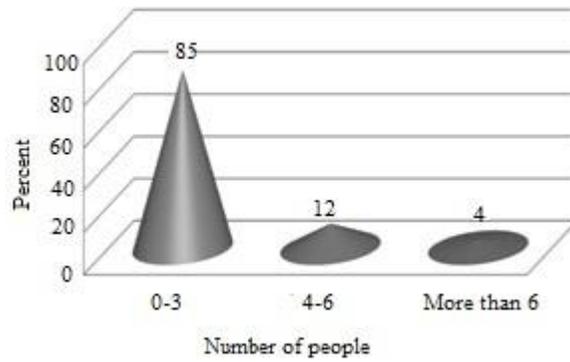


Figure 9: Numbers of companions under 16 years old

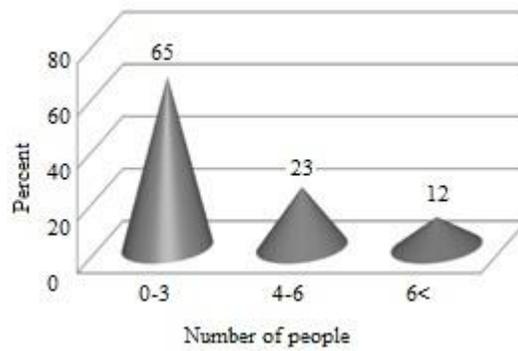


Figure 10: Numbers of companions over 16 years old

Numbers, types and length of tourists' stay in the area

The studied population often visits the area once a season a year (Figure 11). As shown in Figure 12, the majority of respondents visit the area with their families and stay there for 1 to 4 hours or the whole day. Thus, tourists who tend to stay in the area the whole day and the ones who prefer to spend one to four hours in the region are at the same level (Figure 13). Furthermore, most of the tourists tend to mountaineering, hiking in nature or visiting beaches if the weather is good, and fewer numbers prefer swimming pools, cinemas and sport clubs (Figure 14).



Figure 11: Distribution statistics of visiting the region

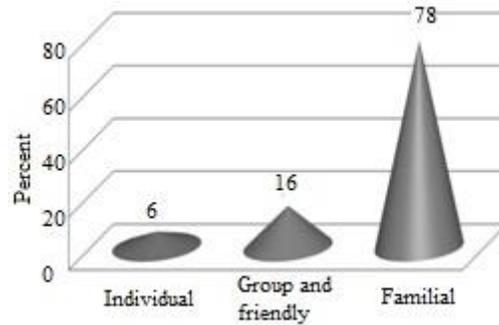


Figure 12: The model of tourists' visit of region

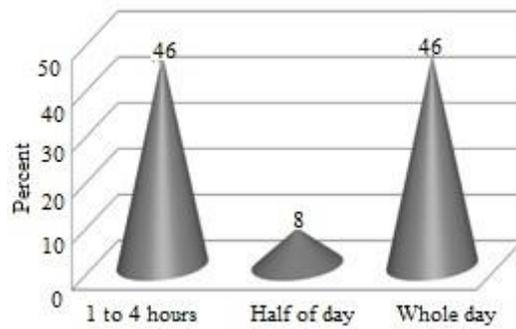


Figure 13: Visitors' length of stay in the region

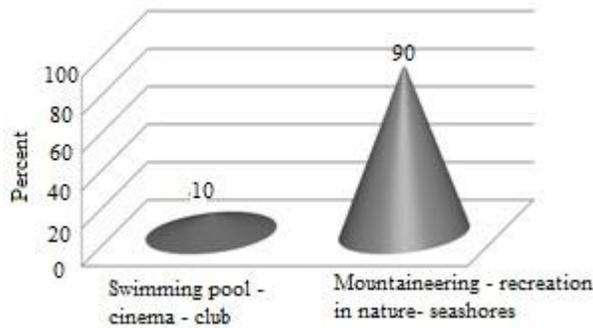


Figure 14: Visitors' preferences for leisure time

The tourists' expenses and willingness to pay the entrance fees

Most of the tourists, who were surveyed, spent from 0 and 50 Tomans to reach the area (Figure 15). According to this survey, most of the respondents were opposed to paying and, considered the cost of entrance as a reason of tourists reduction in the region. A small percentage of them were willing to pay the entrance and believed that the numbers of tourists would increase if the situation improves (Figures 16 and 17).

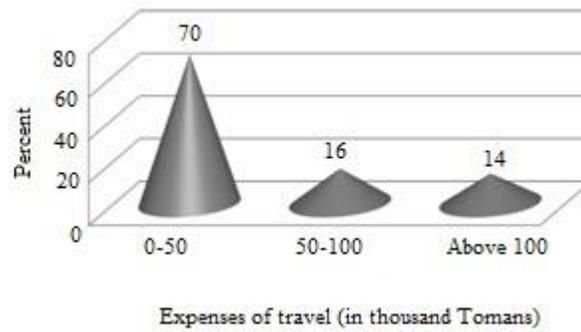


Figure 15: The cost to reach the region

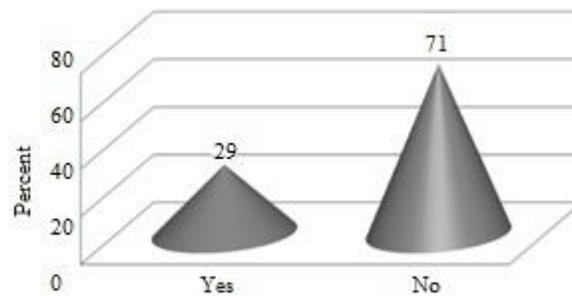


Figure 16: Visitors' views on an agreement to pay entrance fees

Table 1: Visitors' views on the impact of paying the entrance fees on the public visit of a region

Row	Visitors' view	Percentage
1	It reduces the rate of demands and numbers of visitors.	37
2	It increases the rate of demands and numbers of visitors.	6
3	It does not any significant impacts.	10
4	It increases the numbers of visitors in case of improved regional situation.	47

Visitors' view on the proposed facilities

As shown in Figure 18, most of the visitors have achieved the consensus on the insufficient facilities in the region and suggested increasing health facilities to improve the situation of the area (Figures 19 and 20); and most of the tourists have said that they will have further visit if the area is equipped with some recreational facilities, (Figure 20). The population density of 50-200 people in a space with an area of a football field is the desired population according to most of people visiting the park (Figure 21).

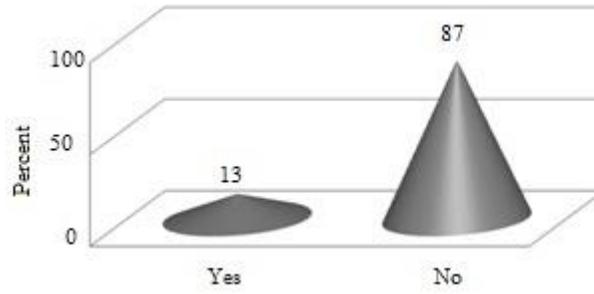


Figure 17: Visitors' views on the adequacy of facilities

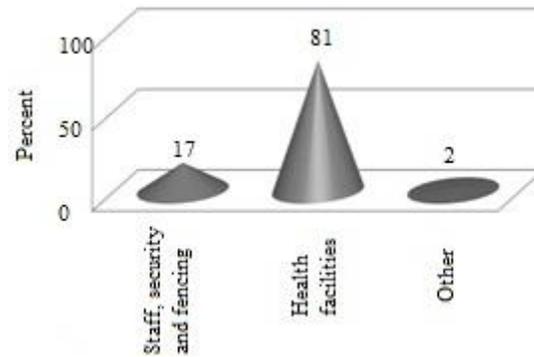


Figure 18: Visitors' suggestions for improving the status

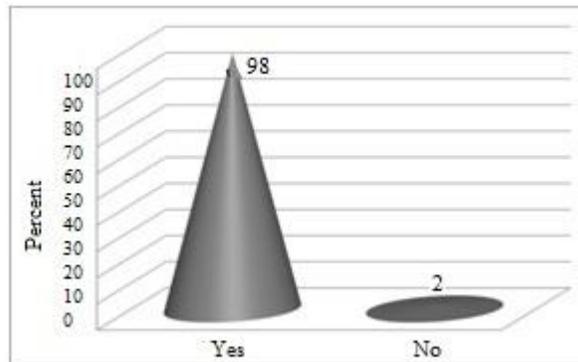


Figure 19: Visitors' views on the further use of area in the case of equipped with facilities

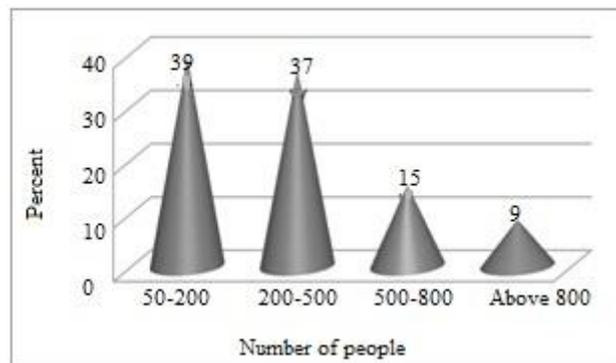


Figure 20: Numbers of people per hectare with tourists' expected comfort

Based on the tourists' views and as shown in Figure 22, the bathrooms and trash bins are among the major regional shortages but fishing facilities, road asphalt, gas station, chairs and benches, information panels, the police, etc are less mentioned in collected questionnaires.

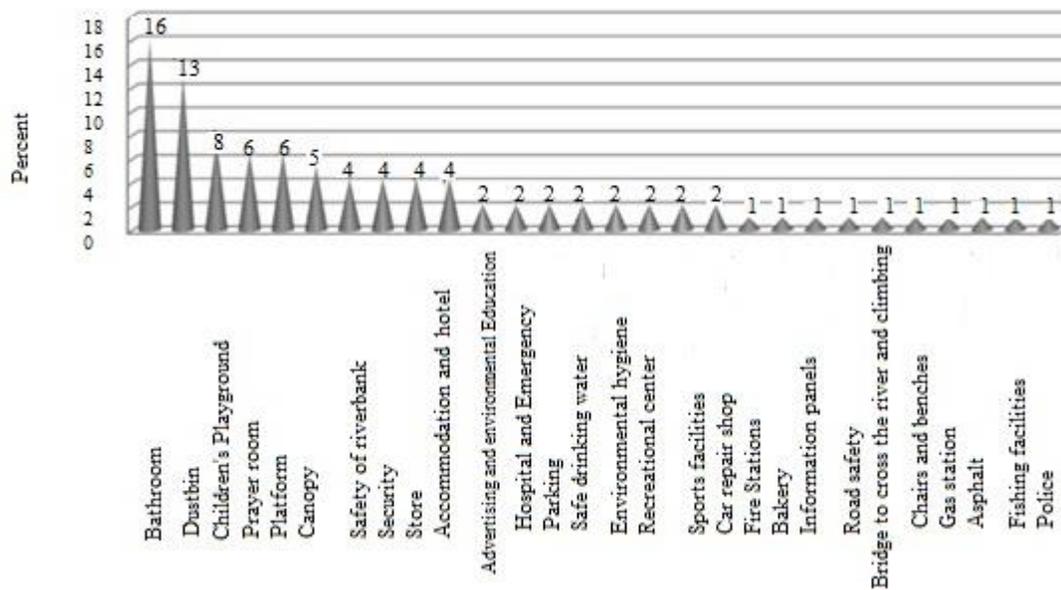


Figure 21: The lack of regional equipment and its facilities from the tourists' views

DISCUSSIONS

Given the social and economic changes in the society and thus the changes in the types and factors affecting the recreational demand, it is essential to investigate these factors in different periods. We need the individual recreational interest and behavior for planning and managing the recreational areas and we can implement the appropriate design by locating and designing. In this regard, the research results, which is the sum of tourists' opinions and views in Rey Zamin recreational area located in central Alborz protected area (Karaj area) and in the margin of Karaj-Chalus tourist road, indicate that most of the studied tourists are men. Grouping the tourists' age shows that most of the visitors are young. The results of this research represent that most of the tourists have come to visit the area by their families. Since the young people have a lot of energy, promoting the activities associated with the excitement, may lead to more popularity. However, there is a need for recreational planning for people of all ages; in other words, this recreational area should have a recreational goal and plan for all different classes, so that all age groups can effectively benefit from the region, and this needs considering these individuals' recreational demands and interests along with the environmental potential of region. Based on the results of questionnaires, it is revealed that most visitors have spent less than 2 hours to reach the area and this indicates the proximity of tourists' residential area to the studied region, and since the majority of tourists come this area from Alborz and Tehran provinces, it is certain that this area is a recreational region for local tourists, thus this region can be called an area to take refuge in the nature especially for the citizens of Tehran and Alborz provinces. Given that the location of this zone is in the protected area, it can be considered as a turning point for citizens and tourists' familiarity with the nature, environment and encouraging and motivating them to protect the environment and cooperate in its maintenance.

The results of this investigation indicate that majority of tourists have spent less than 50 thousand Tomans to reach this area considering the fact that most of the visitors are of medium income level and also over 70% did

not agree to pay the entrance fee, but they believe that if the regional situation improves, the fee can increase the number of tourists; it should be noted that the region may lose most of the visitors, who are from the medium income level if the fee is received or raised for facilities. However, the fee is the tool to control the recreational capacity of regional recreation, thus the reasonable fee can control the capacity of tourism, equip the region with necessary facilities and thus increases the number of tourists in the long term.

CONCLUSION

According to the conducted survey and the visitors' view, there have not been enough facilities in this area and the health facilities have been the main problems. Furthermore, they have declared that in the case of equipping the region with some facilities, they will visit the region more. Moreover, they have made suggestions to improve the region in terms of the bathrooms, dustbins, children's playgrounds, platforms, prayer rooms, canopies, security, safety of riverbank, stores, accommodations and hotels, so it seems that most visitors need to fulfill their demands such as bathrooms, prayer rooms in addition to a place for appropriate use and convenience as well as an area with facilities such as canopies, children's playgrounds, and stores. Tourist can also be more attracted by making the riverbank secure, observing the river zone and providing the regional security by police station as well as equipping the region with the possibility of staying overnight.

Comparing the findings of this survey with results of studies by Goshtasb-Meygani et al. (2008), Soleimani (2011), Assadollahi et al. (2010), and Abbasi et al. ([Asadollahi, Danehkar & Alizadeh, 2010](#)) in different natural areas of country (Sisangan natural park, Hara forests of Hormozgan province, Chaghakhor wetland and Kish island) indicates that most of the tourists in this area were men, young and educated people, visiting the region with their families and weren't satisfied with the tourist facilities. Due to the situation of Rey Zamin in the margin of Karaj-Chalus road and Karaj River and because of its flatness and being used by people as a recreational zone, it can be concluded that this region has the capability of designing and equipping as a recreational area. Given the appropriate capacity of this site, it is hoped that the honorable officials will pay special attention to this area and select, design and equip it.

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