

The Impact of Hosting Sporting Events on Sport Tourism Development: A Case Study

Mohammad Ehsani, PhD.^a, Hossein Sadeqi Sogdel PhD^b, Akbar Heidary^c, Arefe Jamshidi^d

^aFaculty Member, Tarbait Modares University,Iran

^bFaculty Member, Tarbait Modares University,Iran

^cSama Technical and Vocational Training School, Islamic Azad University,Zanjan Branch,Zanjan,Iran

^dUniversity of Tehran,Kish International Campus,Iran

Abstract

Sport tourism is an ever increasing industry recognized as a factor influencing the economic and social restructuring of urban and rural areas in the developing countries .It is considered as a main component of sport –dependent tourism in many countries and recently has attracted much attention as a "domestic market. Hence, the purpose of the present research was to investigate and offer guidelines for sport tourism development in Zanjan from economic, social and cultural perspectives .This was an applied research carried out as field study. The statistical sample was divided into 2 groups: (i) experts including physical education teachers, cultural heritage and physical education department employees and (ii) Customers including different sportsmen and sportswomen travelling to Zanjan. The research tool was a 43 item researcher-made questionnaire in Likert scale whose reliability and validity were confirmed by a board of university professors. We applied descriptive to describe the demography and, T-test and Friedman to test our hypotheses

Keywords: Sport tourism; Zanjan; tourism

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1. Introduction

Sport tourism is defined as temporary movement from one's settlement to pass their free time playing and watching games and so forth (Preuss et al, 2007). Today, sport and tourism are concerned with the important economic activities in the developed and developing nations (Swart and Bob, 2007). Based upon the world tourism organization estimates, 43% of the world jobs will be associated with tourism industry by 2010.

From 1997 to 2005, sport tourism brought about an annual increase in gross domestic growth (1.3%) resulted from economic activities with regard to holding big sport competitions, and unemployment declined by 1.9% on annual basis (Kasimati and Dawson, 2009). Thus, the sport can considerably influence sport-based services and products in terms of functional and visual dimensions. Hence, it is considered as one of the effective factor highly influencing national growth and revenue in 21th century (Brown and Nagel, 2002).

The corresponding studies indicate that sport tourism is the most developed sector of tourism industry(Chalip,2004) such that it is regarded as a world multi-billion trading element producing 4.5 trillion dollars for tourism industry and world tour(Tassiopoulou and Haydamb, 2007).

Tourists are a chief source of income and employment for the population of the hosting region (Batyk and Ski, 2009) that is why, the world metropolitans consider Olympic games as a unique opportunity for local marketing,

because a potential economic advantage of being the host of a big sport event is to attract many spectators and tourists to the hosting city and consequently, it shall positive economic consequences (Preuss et al, 2007).

Most published papers in terms of Olympic Games have mainly focused on its long standing benefits such as new infrastructures and facilities, the cities' reconstruction, international credibility, tourism growth, public welfare improvement, job creation and local employment opportunities. Thus, needless to say why in recent years, countries have tended to host the upcoming competitions (Kasimati, 2003).

Since there are various motives as for involvement in the sport activities such as competition, recreation and travelling to watch preliminary or premier competitions or sport attractions (Tassiopoulou and Haydamb,2007), natural resources sport and tourism facilities play a significant role in attracting tourists to the host city, region or country.

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Kazimati and Dawson's studies (2007) asserted that having been the host of various sport competitions, Greece would witness a significant reduction in unemployment through 1997-2004 during which, on average, there was 1.88% annual reduction in unemployment rate. Also, the studies showed that Sydney Olympic games (2000) would create 5300 jobs in the south Walzder-Australia and 7500 jobs throughout Australia (Lockstone ,Baum 2008). Also, the findings of Mason and Mundaya (2008) and Lockstone and Baum(2008) indicated that the hosting regions enjoy considerable increase in income due to holding sport events.

In this study, it is tried to find an answer to the following questions:

- (i) *what are the priorities of sport tourism development?*
- (ii) *what are differences between both groups regarding sport tourism development in Zanjan?*
- (iii) *What are the priorities of sport tourism development?*

Research hypotheses:

(H1) There is a difference between customers and experts' viewpoints regarding sporting events factors affecting sport tourists attraction in Zanjan.

(H2) There is a difference between customers and experts' viewpoints regarding tourism facilities factors affecting sport tourists attraction in Zanjan.

(H3) There is a difference between customers and experts' viewpoints regarding cultural and social factors affecting sport tourists attraction in Zanjan.

(H4) There is a difference between customers and experts' viewpoints regarding geographical factors affecting sport tourists attraction in Zanjan.

(H5) There is a difference between customers and experts' viewpoints regarding marketing factors affecting sport tourists attraction in Zanjan.

2-Methodology

The present study was applied and the data collection method is descriptive and survey type. The selected questionnaire was researcher-made one consisting of 43 5-scale items whose reliability and validity were confirmed by professors and Cronbach alpha (83%), respectively.

Due to the nature of the study, we divided our statistical population into 2 groups as (i) Expert Groups and (ii) Customers Group.

2.1 Experts Group

There were 110 physical education teachers, 4 cultural heritage experts, 15 academic physical education professors and 5 physical education department experts.

Having determined our statistical population, we set out to select the statistical sample in which all of statistical population were chosen as our samples except for the teachers of whom we selected 86 teachers based on the Krejcsi & Morgan table(110=86). Finally our experts group was 110 individuals.

2.2. Customers Group

We wanted to have an equal number of customers as of experts. So, we distributed 110 questionnaires among different sportsmen/women coming to Zanjan.

In this study, the customers were university students participating in academic competitions held in Zanjan as well individuals travelling to resorts in Zanjan. it should be noted we chose our customers based on availability sampling method.

We used descriptive, t-test and Friedman to test our research questions.

3. Findings

Table 1: The demographical information of both groups

Sex	Age	Academic degree	Management background	Coaching background	Job	Event participation background
Male:159 Female: 61	Under 30:143 Over 30:77	Associate degree: 112 B.A.:85 M.A and over:23	No management:92 Under 10:17 Over 10:21	No coaching:108 Under 10:94 Over 10:18	Teacher:86 University professor: 15 Expert:9 Customers: 110	Yes:191 No:29
Total:220	Total:220	Total:220	Total:220	Total:220	Total:220	Total:220

H₁: There is a difference between customers and experts `viewpoints regarding sporting events factors affecting sport tourists attraction in Zanjan.

The findings revealed a significant difference between both groups` viewpoints (df=217,t=13.627,P<.05). The results of this research are compatible with Mohsin (2005), Kim (2005), Smith (2006) and Thomas (2006) results.

These findings indicate the fact that according to the experts, host city by hosting important events can take concrete actions in tourism and sports tourism; and of course Zanjan is not an exception . Therefore above findings are consistent with current research.

H₂: There is a difference between customers and experts `viewpoints regarding tourism facilities factors affecting sport tourists attraction in Zanjan?

The findings revealed no significant difference between both groups' viewpoints ($df=217, t= 1.081, P>.05$) . The results of this research are compatible with Chalip (2001) and Kozak (2005) results. These findings indicate the fact that host city will help attracting sport tourists by providing residential facilities and facilitating tourist access to the tourist attractions.

According to experts and customers, Zanjan has numerous natural and man-made attractions that in case of correct management, it can cause tourist attraction. Therefore, these findings are consistent with current research.

H₃: There is a difference between customers and experts `viewpoints regarding cultural and social factors affecting sport tourists attraction in Zanjan.

The findings revealed a significant difference between both groups' viewpoints ($df=217, t=9.338, P<.05$). The research results are consistent with Weedbal (2004) and Yamagooshi (2004) results.

Zanjan with old places, religious and historic buildings such as huge Soltanieh, the laundry building and beautiful natural attractions such as Katalhkhoo cave, Sohreyn plain, beautiful region of Eldaghi (Gavazng) and its temperate climate has caused to Zanjan- in terms of tourism potentials -be situational in the country. Therefore, according to the experts, introducing the places by authorities can attract numerous tourists.

H₄: There is a difference between customers and experts `viewpoints regarding geographical factors affecting sport tourists attraction in Zanjan.

The findings revealed no significant difference between both groups' viewpoints ($df=218, t= 1.680, P>.05$).

The results of research are consistent with Bruce (2002) results. If we consider the geographical location of the province as well as the communication facilities and network of roads and rails, the focus will be more important. Therefore according to experts and customers, due to favorable geographic location, Zanjan may be the center of tourist attraction. The above findings are consistent with current research results.

H₅: There is a difference between customers and experts `viewpoints regarding marketing factors affecting sport tourists attraction in Zanjan?

The findings revealed a significant difference between both groups' viewpoints ($df=218, t=11.554, P<.05$).

The results of this study are consistent with Chalip(2001) results. Current research experts believe that apparently tourism medium, marketing offices, information offices, foreign tourism agencies work closely with local agencies, and the specialty of travel agents have great importance from the perspective of tourists.

The above findings are consistent with current research results. *Friedman test to prioritize both groups perspectives regarding sport tourism development*

Table 2: Groups, Variables and Mean Rank

Groups	Variables	Mean Rank
Experts	Quality	6.93
	Tourism Facilities	6.05
	Cultural & Social attraction	4.93
	Geography	2.31
	Marketing	4.09
	Safety	2.02
	Economic Factor	1.68
Customers	Quality	6.40
	Tourism Facilities	6.60
	Cultural & Social attraction	4.87
	Geography	2.50
	Marketing	3.70
	Safety	2.59
	Economic Factor	1.35

As table shows there is a difference between both groups priorities regarding sport tourism development ($\chi^2(1.166)$, $p=0/001$).

4-Conclusion

Sport tourism is an ever increasing industry recognized as a factor influencing the economic and social restructuring of urban and rural areas in the developing countries. It is considered as a main component of sport –dependent tourism in many countries and recently has attracted much attention as a "domestic market. In this study, it has been investigated that there is a relationship between the sport tourism development in Zanjan and socio-economic and cultural basis. Based on the findings of this study, a guidelines for sport tourism development has been developed. The field research has been applied conducting a questionnaire with a statistical sample which has been divided into 2 groups: (i) experts including physical education teachers, cultural heritage and physical education department employees ; (ii) customers including different sportsmen and sportswomen travelling to Zanjan. The research tool was a 43 item researcher-made questionnaire in Likert scale whose reliability and validity were confirmed by a board of university professors. We applied descriptive to describe the demography and, T-test and Friedman to test our hypotheses Based on the results of this study, for the development of sports tourism in the Zanjan, it is strongly advised to focus on (i) attempting to develop and promote sports tourism facilities and services in Zanjan, (ii) trying to increase safety in residential, recreation, transportation areas, health and nutrition in Zanjan, (iii) improving and developing the quality and quantity of residential centers including hotels, motels and for sports tourists in Zanjan, (iv) optimal use of tourist attractions during sporting events in order to increase the number of visitors and tourists in Zanjan, (v) attempting to improve the quality of facilities and equipment and increase their numbers in the regional and international levels to meet the needs of sport tourists, (vi) planning and implementation of various and coherent sporting events at provincial, national and international level with good timing and a good location to attract more sports tourists,(vii) performing marketing activities to inform and attract sport tourists to Zanjan, (viii) designing and developing management information system for developing sports tourism in related areas.

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