


Analysis of Drivers Affecting the Future of Sports Tourism in Iran

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Abstract

Purpose: Sports tourism can have many effective drivers on which travel decisions are made. Analyzing the effective drivers of the future of sports tourism can help the progress of this field. Therefore, the aim of the current research was to analyze the drivers affecting the future of sports tourism

Method: The current research method is mixed and of analytical and exploratory type, and in terms of its purpose, it is part of applied research. The participants in this research included experts and experienced people in the field of sports tourism, including guides of sports tourism tours, experts in the field of sports tourism, senior managers of organizations related to tourism, and professors of sports management with tourism expertise, and the purposeful sampling method was used in the research. In the expert section, interview tools were used and theoretical saturation was achieved with 18 interviews. To analyze the data, the interaction analysis method was used.

Findings: At first, key and influential factors on sports tourism were counted and 58 key and influential factors were compiled. In the second step, with the formation of an expert panel, similar key and influential factors were merged with each other, and out of 58 key and influential factors, 8 main influential drivers for sports tourism were identified. In the end, the mutual effects of the propellants were analyzed by using the future research software MicMac and applying the cross-matrix analysis method. The results of the research showed that 8 main drivers affect the future of sports tourism, which include the development of tourism and its infrastructure, technology and digital, health and wellness, management and employment developments, environmental sustainability, diversification, economic factors and media and communications.


Conclusion: Finally, the future of sports tourism is guided by a combination of tourism infrastructure, technology and digital, health and wellness, management and employment developments, environmental sustainability, diversification, economic factors and media and communication. Destinations that welcome these drivers and invest in these factors will be in a good position

Key Words: future of tourism, sports tourism development, tourism infrastructure, tourism management.

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Introduction

Sports tourism (ST) is one of the fastest growing sectors in the tourism industry. Millions of tourists are interested in sports and recreational activities during their trip, regardless of whether sports is the main purpose of the trip or a secondary purpose. Sports tourism, which is a two-dimensional economic and social activity, is located at the intersection of tourism and sports sectors (Pigeassou, 2004), both of which face the challenge of sustainable development (McCool, 2015; Taks, 2013). Today, the interrelationships between active living and active travel have a powerful economic and social impact on societies worldwide and simultaneously play an essential role in the sustainability of regions (Gibson et al., 2012). In the Higham & Hinch (2018) study, the authors determined four criteria to describe sports tourism, all elements of which are directly related to sustainable development goals. The first case is travel, which refers to a trip beyond the hometown to a tourist destination. The second case is accommodation, which includes accommodation, at least one day in the host destination. The third case is motivational factors, which include internal or external motivations (motivators) to actively involve people in a sports product or service. The fourth item is the nature of the sports product, which describes the formation of sports products and the consumer may be involved with it (McCullough & Trail, 2022).

Sports, events and tourism together have the potential to have a wide range of impacts on the host destination and its people, such as increased tourism numbers, seasonal reduction, employment generation, income generation, tax revenue from expenditure, urban regeneration, urban development, emergence Apply new service sector opportunities as well as new business opportunities (Duglio & Beltramo, 2017). All the sub-dimensions mentioned above are highly related to a wide range of actors involved, issues that make sustainable sports tourism planning even more challenging given this complex and multidimensional nature of sports tourism (Dehnavi et al., 2012). Tourism is an activity that has many complexities and affects the main aspects of society such as economic, cultural, social and traditional aspects (Lopes et al., 2021) and for this reason, the macro-effects of investigating its key factors seem necessary and necessary. arrives. These cases show that sports tourism, as one of the important branches of tourism, needs a comprehensive and documented investigation and future research so that a better road map can be drawn for it from the results of suitable research works. Sports tourism can have many effective drivers on which travel decisions are made. Increasing self-awareness and the ability to do the chosen sport can be one of the most effective things. Risk theory is another one that can provide a comprehensive understanding in this field. This theory addresses the idea of the need to compete with oneself for the risk of adventure and excitement that sports provide (Grimes, 2011). In different regions of the world, the effective drivers in sports tourism can be different. Therefore, the investigation of drivers in different places and regions of tourism has its own importance. In addition, considering the very global changes and developments, the existence of different trends and the influence of many important factors and areas on other areas, it is necessary to investigate the drivers affecting the future of sports tourism. This research seeks to answer the question of what are the driving forces affecting the future of sports tourism and how do they affect each other?

Research Question(s)

What are the main drivers affecting the future of sports tourism in developing countries?

What is the effectiveness of the main driving forces affecting the future of sports tourism?

2. Literature Review

A proper and structured view of sports tourism was created in the 1980s and attracted a lot of attention. In this period, sports tourism emerged as a combination of sports and tourism activities and provided unique experiences for people (Huggins, 2013). During the past years, sports tourism has evolved and faced contemporary challenges. Research in this field has expanded in a way that has linked a wider range of sports and tourism, which shows the participation and increasing importance of sports in addressing social and environmental issues (Yildiz & Cekic, 2015). Sports tourism in a macro issue such as the Olympic Games has led to significant development and promotion of the host regions, which has affected various sectors such as transportation, accommodation and local infrastructure (Higham, 2021). While research has been conducted on sports tourism behavior, preferences, and impacts, there is still a need for more studies on the future of sports tourism and its influencing factors (Bouchet & Sobry, 2019). It has been found in the research that one of the driving and motivating factors for the growth of sports trips and tourism is the increase in interest in sports and fitness. Global health and wellness trends are driving the desire for more active and engaging vacations, driving travelers to seek out destinations that offer a variety of sports and recreational activities. This issue is another key factor in the attraction of important international sports events. Global sporting events attract millions of visitors and bring significant economic benefits to host countries and host cities. In addition, the emergence of social networks and online platforms has made it easier for sports enthusiasts to connect with like-minded people, share experiences and discover new destinations, fueling the growth of the sports tourism industry (Zauhar, 2004).

Considering the importance of the tourism industry, especially sports tourism, and its role in creating socio-cultural, intellectual and economic benefits of each region, it is necessary to examine the key factors affecting the future of the sports tourism industry, and by identifying the issues raised, necessary planning should be done to facilitate them. In tourism, each region and place needs its own attention and requirements for development, and it is not possible to recommend a general plan for all tourism regions. In addition, each type of tourism needs to be thoroughly investigated according to its specific background conditions. Sports tourism is also one of the cases that, due to its specificity, needs effective and practical future research in order to make better decisions about its development. In the field of drivers affecting the future of sports tourism, limited research has been done in Iran. In the following, some studies related to the research area are mentioned.

Methodology

The current research is in the field of applied research. The current research is based on the strategy of a mixed research and is analytical and exploratory. In this research, mutual effects analysis methods were used to analyze the data. The community of participants included experts and experienced people in the field of sports tourism (including guides of sports tourism tours, experts in the field of sports tourism and senior managers of organizations related to tourism and professors of sports management with tourism expertise. The number of participants in the interaction analysis section was 18 people. The sampling method in this section was purposeful. In the current research, two library and field methods were used to collect data. To identify the components and variables, literature and previous researches related to the topic and experts' opinions were used. In the experts' opinion section, the interview tool was used. In the section of mutual effects analysis, the tool used in this research was the use of the mutual effects matrix. In this research, in order to try to increase the accuracy and to ensure the validity of the analysis in different stages, the identified findings and variables were provided to two interviewed experts and necessary adjustments and changes were applied according to their opinions. For the reliability of the Mic Mac software, by calculating the reliability rate of the direct effects matrix, it showed that there is an acceptable reliability for the variables. In the beginning, drivers influencing sports tourism were calculated and in the second step, similar drivers were merged with the formation of an expert panel. In the end, the research was carried out by using the future research software MikMak and applying the cross-matrix analysis method. By entering the data in the software and performing relevant calculations by the software, the key factors affecting the future of sports tourism were identified.

Results

At first, key and influential factors on sports tourism were counted and 58 key and influential factors were compiled. And in the second step, with the formation of an expert panel, similar key and influential factors were merged with each other, and out of 58 key and influential factors, 8 main influential drivers for sports tourism were identified. In the end, the mutual effects of the propellants were analyzed by using the future research software MikMak and applying the cross-matrix analysis method. The results of the research showed that 8 main drivers affect the future of sports tourism, which include the development of tourism and its infrastructure, technology and digital, health and wellness, management and employment developments, environmental sustainability, diversification, economic factors and media and communications. The results of MikMak software showed that the drivers influencing sports tourism are more influential and less influential. Tourism development variables and management factors were identified as risk variables. These factors have a high impact on the system and at the same time they are greatly affected by the system, for this reason they are known as key factors and play an important role in improving system relations. The variables of economic, technology and digital factors and media and communication were recognized as influential variables. These factors had the least influence and the most influence among other drivers. It is also necessary to pay attention to these indicators. Also, based on the graph, it can be said

that the variables of diversification, environmental sustainability and health and well-being were recognized as influential variables. These factors have high influence and low influence.

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