

# Comparing Viewpoint of Experts and Managers about the Impact of Sports Tourism Industry Potentials to Attract Tourists in Golestan Province, Iran

Amin Ehsanirad, Reza Rezaeishirazi\*

*Department of Physical Education, Aliabad Katoul Branch, Islamic Azad University, Aliabad Katoul, Iran*

\*Corresponding Author Email: [rezaii725@yahoo.com](mailto:rezaii725@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** The target of the present study was to compare viewpoint of experts and managers about the impact of sports tourism industry potentials to attract tourists in Golestan Province, Iran. The study was conducted in Golestan Province, Iran and the population was managers and experts involved in the tourism and sports issue at Golestan Province, Iran. The research was descriptive – monitoring type. Standard questionnaires of Balali (2012) was prepared with 2 potential indices and tourism obstacles and 29 items, including 14 items for the potential and 15 items for sports tourism obstacles based on a Likert five-point scale. For statistical data analysis, descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used in two separate parts. In the first part, data descriptive analysis was performed as frequency distribution tables and charts. In the second part, t-test statistical method was used based on the distribution of the data. Data were analyzed using SPSS software. The results revealed that there was significant difference between the viewpoints of experts and managers about the impact of tourism industry potentials to attract sports tourists in Golestan province. The results of this study indicated that regard to identifying the effects of tourism industry development, obstacles, limitations of this sports phenomenon, the importance of sports tourism development and the need to take advantage of different benefits of attracting sports tourism in the province, the need for planning and sports tourism development by province policy makers and planners is felt.

**Keywords:** Sport Tourism, Tourism Potentials, Industry.

## Introduction

In this century, the sport is consider as one of the requirements of contemporary life (Moinfard, 2008) and is part of the culture and identity of the Nations (Debora & Chalza, 1997). It is also one of the major industries in the world and many people are engaged in it around the world (Nogawa et al., 1996). In today's society, sport has been penetrated as much as is mentioned that to be one of the most common motivating factors for travel and tourism. Trends in tourism over the past decade have shown that sport tourism has allocated now a very significant part of the global market for tourism and with its growth, the World Tourism Organization believes that sports tourism is now an emerging market. Many countries know this dynamic

industry as the main source of income, employment, private sector and infrastructure development (Isfahani, 2008).

Tourists are the main source of income and employment for the inhabitants of the host region (Batyk & Smoczyński, 2010). Therefore, sport tourism is a developing sector of tourism that according to statistics has devoted about 32 percent of success and universal access for tourists (Saghaei, 2008). Also, more than one industry has become the socio-economic phenomenon in the world. This white industry has opened its position than ever as a multi-dimensional phenomenon in human societies and many countries has understand well the impact of this industry with abundant funding, benefits and has converted it as an important source to improve the economic, social and political situation (Emery, 2010) and increase of the popularity and destination branding (Van der Zee, 2011). In fact, the term of sport tourism was developed to provide a better understanding of sport as incentive tourism (Ioana & Badulescu, 2008). So, the development of sports activities and synergies lead to maximize the benefits of sport tourism between sport and tourism.

According to published statistics in different countries, about 20 to 30 percent of tourists mention sports as the main reason for their journey as they traveled more than half of their holiday as trips that its purpose is sports, as well (Moinfard, 2008). Shift trend towards a more active holiday has been lead to that almost in holiday trips, a quarter of people consider exercise as the main purpose of travel (Cave, 2003) and this issue makes obvious the necessity of attention to this area. This industry can create leading role as economic engine and creator of political, social, cultural and environmental effects in communities, as far as, nowadays, it has been become as the key tool for the development of the country (Honarvar, 2004).

In the research, it has been reported that based on statistic of World Tourism Organization, 43 percent of the world jobs is associated with the tourism industry. For example, from 1997 to 2005, Sport Tourism has been resulted in 13 percent annual increase of GDP that is due to economic activities. Due to the huge sports competitions, the annual unemployment has been decreased 19 percent (Kasimati & Dawson, 2009). In addition, tourism and sports have immersion relationship with culture and in combination with other agents; sports tourism can play a key role in the further development of culture and increasing cultural awareness through the development of international communications.

The point is that in Iran, due to lack of sufficient knowledge, the lack of management and clear and concise strategies, so far, the concept of sport tourism has been neglected and unique opportunities has been missed in the country. The abundant benefits of economic, social, political, environmental, cultural and sport tourism and understanding the importance of having a healthy and vibrant community by managers, planners and officials and also, the tendency of people to have active holidays and leisure activities make inevitable paying attention to the issues of tourism in the country (Honarvar, 2004).

Some of incentives including, the necessity of recognizing the potential and capacities of sport tourism in different regions and provinces and finding the effects of tourism development in the community to establish proper management, knowledge and identifying planners of sports tourism organizations from obstacles and constraints and involved sports agencies in this phenomenon. Also at the level of policy, it is needed to more coordination among the organizations responsible for sports and the organizations responsible for tourism (Gibson, 1998).

Also, in the category of obstacles and limitations of sport tourism, the lack of proper management and strategic planning has been reported (Balali, et al., 1391). Also, Chu (2004) knows traditional sports of a country as one of the major Sport tourist attractions. Golestan province is known as famous treasures of Iran ecotourism with magical nature and abundant attractions, and has great sports tourism ability due to its waterfalls, hundred special pilgrimage monument and five hundred cultural attractions. Important characteristics of this province in terms of sports tourism is collection of creation beautiful effects in one place. Such as the Caspian Sea and the island of Ashoradeh and beaches close to the Alborz mountains, smooth plains, the vast semi-desert areas, rivers and lakes, lagoons and water dams and thousands of other attractions that has make possible the ability to extend every type of sport and led to do diverse sports at any time of the seasons and in different corners.

Also, there are traditional sports such as horse riding with three national and international field attract thousands of people from all parts of the neighboring countries and has attracted, a special place in terms of potential and active potentials of sports tourism in the country and even in the world (Zeitonly, 2011). Therefore, the present study attempted to compare experts and managers viewpoint about the potentials of sports tourism industry in Golestan province, Iran.

### **Methodology**

The research method was descriptive-monitoring type. The statistical population, according to the Office of Cultural Heritage and the General Directorate of Youth and Sports, Golestan province, were 81 people, including 34 managers and 47 experts involved in the tourism and sports of Golestan province, Iran. According to Morgan table, the sample of this research was 72 subjects including 32 managers and 40 experts who were

selected by stratified randomized sampling which questionnaire was provided to them. The study was performed after describing in detail to participants the introductory remarks about the gauges and the purpose of the test, how to response to tests. It can be noted that regarding to ethical considerations, they were assured that the information will be used only in the research and be protected from any abuse after obtaining the consent of the people and giving the necessary knowledge. To measure the variables, Standard questionnaires of Balali (2012) was prepared with 2 potential indices and tourism obstacles and 29 items, including 14 items for the potential and 15 items for sports tourism obstacles based on a Likert five-point scale. According to the objectives of the study, data on tourism potential were analyzed. To determine the validity of the questionnaire, it was distributed among 6 professors and experts of sports and tourism management and after receiving the viewpoints of professors, their viewpoints and comments were considered in the preliminary questionnaire. After investigation, the questionnaire reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha (0.71) and its internal consistency was confirmed. Independent t-test was used to analyse the data. In all analyses, the significance level was considered  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results

Descriptive statistics of research variables are presented in Table 1. It can be observed that the mean of tourism industry potentials from the viewpoint of respondents and standard deviations of were 2.63 and 0.83, respectively.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of tourism industry potentials.

Variable	Statistics			
	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Tourism industry potentials	2.63	0.83	1.00	4.29

The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed normal distribution of the data ( $p > 0.05$ ). Independent t-test was used in order to study the impact of tourism industry potentials to attract sports tourists. Results are presented in Table 2. Regard to the significant level of independent t test for comparison of experts and managers about the impact of sports tourism industry potentials to attract tourists in Golestan Province was less than significant level (0.05), it can be mentioned that there was a significant difference in the viewpoints of experts and managers about the impact of tourism industry potentials to attract sports tourists at Golestan province, Iran.

**Table 2.** A comparison of experts and managers about the impact of tourism industry potentials.

Variable	Job position	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	df	Sig.
Impact of tourism industry potentials	Manager	24	2.11	0.25	55	0.001*
	Expert	33	3.00	0.90		

## Discussion and Conclusion

The target of the present study was to compare viewpoint of experts and managers about the impact of sports tourism industry potentials to attract tourists in Golestan Province, Iran. The results revealed that there was significant difference between the viewpoints of experts and managers about the impact of tourism industry potentials to attract sports tourists in Golestan province. In this regard, the research hypothesis is confirmed that there is a difference between the viewpoints of experts and managers about the impact of tourism industry potential to attract sports tourists in Golestan province. This finding is consistent with the results of Isfahani (2008), Adabi-firozjah (2006) and Gibson (2006) and Honarvar et al (2007).

Potential of sport tourism expansion can be determined through sports and tourism resources and needed infrastructure at the host city. A list of sport tourism resource can be included of physical environments, constructed Sport equipment, tourism transport facilities and infrastructure. Accommodation and welfare facilities are including secondary elements of the tourism system which can play an effective role in its development and is one of important factors in the development of sport tourism in the province that should be considered. Therefore, the Provincial officials should invest to develop the province's infrastructure, such as transportation, space and athletic facilities, equipment and welfare facilities, spaces and installations,

accommodation, quality of sport facilities, compatibility of spaces and facilities with national and international standards and construction multi-purpose sports facilities and appropriate in order to hold sporting events and non-competitive activities and entertainment for tourists and should be considered in planning and strategy-development of this industry in the future.

In addition, other factors in assessing the capabilities and advantages of the development of sports tourism industry of province in viewpoint of respondents include: amount of conducted research, quality and quantity of tourism special website that is in line with the findings of Moinfard (2008), Sardi-mahakan (2001) and services of travel agencies and passenger, capacity of sports planed tours by tourism agencies. Experts' forces components are consistent with findings of Moinfard (2009), Swart and Bob (2007) and funding devotion. Also, the amount of sport sponsor support and participation is consistent with the researches of Isfahani (2008), Adabi-firozjah (2006), Gibson (2006). Moreover, local and native sports are in line with findings of Sedigh-zerati (2005), Cho (2004), Honarvar et al (2007).

Since, indigenous sports in our country has backed Iran's rich culture and Islam, has always been interesting and noteworthy to tourists. In developing and promoting local sports in the province is necessary to be taken effective steps. Like allocating sports programs of mass media to these fields, promotion of these games take place through the agendas of sports organizations, and tourism, making culture and development of local sports interest among youth and other segments of society. Sport Tourism is one of the ways in tourism revenue. When, attracting sport tourists will be possible, that all effective factors act together and in concert. According to the results of factor analysis in order to provide efficient solutions in the development of sport tourism in Golestan Province, it can be noted that there is significant difference between the viewpoints of experts and managers about the impact of tourism industry potentials to attract sports tourists in Golestan province. Hence, it is suggested that managers and experts of tourism industry invest in order to hold sport events for tourists' usage in the development of province infrastructure such as areas and athletic facilities, facilities and accommodation.

#### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest

#### **References**

- Adabi-firozjah, J. (2006). Investigating the factors effective on sport tourism development with an emphasis on sports natural attractions. M.A. thesis, University of Tarbiat Modarres.
- Balali, M., Moinfard, M. R., Hamedinia, M. R., & Amirahmadi, A. (2012). Investigating the viewpoint of managers and experts on development of sports tourism industry in Khorasan Razavi province. *Sports Management*. 13, 185-202.
- Batyk, I. M., & Smoczyński, S. S. (2010). Tourism–Common cause. Polish tourist products. *tourism management*. 31(4), 553-555.
- Cave, P. (2003). Sports tourism: The Case for a local approach in Africa. Second African conference on peace through tourism, dar es salam, tanzania, December. 7-12.
- Cho, M. (2004). The strength of motivation and physical activity level during leisure time among youth in south Korea. *Youth and society*. 35(4), 480-494.
- Debora, A., West, & Chalza, A. B. (1997). Foundations of physical education and sports. Translated by Ahmad Azad, Publications of Olympic International Committee, Tehran.
- Emery, P. (2010). Past, Present, Future major sport event management practice: The practitioner perspective. *Sport management review*. 13(2), 158-170.
- Gibson, H. (Ed.) (2006). *Sport tourism: Concepts and theories*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Gibson, H. J. (1998). Sport tourism: A critical analysis of research. *Sport management review*. 1(1), 45-76.
- Honarvar, A. (2004). Factors Affecting Tourism Development of holding international sporting events in Iran from the viewpoint of managers and sports experts. M.A. thesis, Tarbiat Moallem University of Tehran.
- Honarvar, A., Ghafouri, F., Farzan, F., & Sharifan, E. (2004). Important factors in the marketing of sport tourism in Iran. *Olympic Quarterly*. 4, 31-40.
- Ioana, M., Badulescu, A., & Bac, D. (2008). Qualitative and quantitative analysis of sport tourism from the perspective of Romanian young adults. MPRA paper, No 7641, on-line at [http://mpra.ub\\_muenchen.de/](http://mpra.ub_muenchen.de/).
- Isfahani, N. (2008). Analysis of Factors Affecting Sports tourism and presenting strategic planning model. PhD thesis, physical education, Tehran University.
- Kasimati, E., & Dawson, P. (2009). Assessing the impact of the 2004 Olympic games on the Greek economy: a small macro econometric model. *Economic modeling*. 26(1), 139-146.
- Moinfard, M. R. (2008). status of Sports tourism industry and presenting an appropriate model of its development. PhD thesis, Physical Education, Tarbiat Moallem University of Tehran.

- Nogawa, H., Yamaguchi, Y., & Hagi, Y. (1996). An empirical research study on Japanese sport tourism in sport-for-all events: case studies of a single-night event and a multiple-night event. *Journal of Travel Research*. 35(2), 46-54.
- Saghaei, M. (2008). Analysis of rural tourism around Metropolitan Area (Case Study: Mashhad metropolis) *Journal of Geography and Regional Development*, No. 10.
- Sardi-mahakan, A. (2001). Investigating the role of marketing in the tourism industry of Mashhad city. M.A. Thesis, Tarbiat Modarres University.
- Sedigh-zerati, S. J. (2005). Investigating analysis of sports tourism in Tehran. M.A. thesis, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research, Tehran.
- Swart, K., & Bob, U. (2007). The eluding link: Toward developing a national sport tourism strategy in South Africa beyond 2010. *Politikon*. 34(3), 373-391.
- Van Der zee, E. (2011). Image improvement as a tangible legacy of hallmark events; the case of the 2010 world cup in south Africa, research master human geography and planning faculty of geosciences.
- Zeitonly, A. H., Honari, H., & Farahani, A. (2011). Recognition of the capabilities of sports tourism in Golestan province, *Journal of Sport Management Research and movement Sciences*, first year. 1, 44-48.