

The role of O-Sport in development of the tourism industry in Hamadan

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the role of O-Sport in the development of the tourism industry in Hamadan. Therefore, the research method was descriptive-analytical and its data were collected by field method using questionnaire. The statistical population of this research is divided into three groups according to the research variables: experts of Hamadan province sport and youth departments and experts of cultural heritage and tourism departments of Hamadan province, experts of O-Sport (including champions, coaches, referees and heads of sport boards in Hamedan province). Due to the infinite population, the population size was considered as the sample size. After distributing the questionnaires, 141 persons answered the questionnaires correctly. In order to test the research hypotheses in inferential statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and one-sample t-tests were performed using SPSS software (version 22). The results of this study showed that empowerment, social, environmental and economic factors have an effective role in the development of the tourism industry in Hamadan.

Keywords

O - Sport, Tourism, Social Factor, Economic Factor.

Introduction

Until the 1990s, there was no research conducted on tourism with sports as a general or even accidental topic at the center of attention. Research on the added to our understanding of the impact of major events but gave little insight into the different nature of sport-based events from other events. There is also a similar criticism of research in other research areas such as outdoor recreation and health-based tourism (health tourism) (Higham & Hinch, 2006). As

might be expected in the emergence of any field of study, sport tourism researchers have used part of their energy to explain the conceptual foundations of this field, although there are conflicting definitions. Despite the lack of agreement in the definitions, there are some commonalities in the concepts that help clarify their relationship. O-Sport is derived from the "Original Persian Sports" acronym, a brand of authentic Persian sports, and its idea was founded in 1999 by Iranian martial arts champion Mohammad Ghasem Manouchehri and has been successfully marketed worldwide. In fact, O-Sport is derived from local indigenous skills and games, battles and tests of strength and arts of the traditional peoples of the Persian land, which, after the industrial process, has turned into its effective and modern form and has changed into competitive sports and has been marketed worldwide. This popular and modern sport has developed by the Research and Strategic Studies Center of the World O-Sport Federation (WOF) after evaluating, standardizing and re-building its techniques over the past years and has been introduced to the responsible authorities in the Olympic movement and after refining the sciences, techniques and legal and medical issues by the International Court of Arbitration for Sport and the World Anti-Doping Agency, it has been identified and developed in different countries.

On the other hand, the travel and tourism industry is considered to be the largest and most diversified industry in the world. Many countries see this dynamic industry as a major source of income, job creation, private sector growth and infrastructure development. The tourism industry around the world, especially in developing countries which have no other economic resources such as production or extraction of natural resources, is highly regarded. However, the opportunity to use this source of income is equal for all countries (Moharramzadeh, 2005). Although it is difficult to measure the impact of sports and tourism worldwide, the growth rate of the sports tourism industry is estimated to be around 10% per year (Hodson, 2003). Tourism has advantages that its development in a potential country would increase its labor capacity and national income, in foreign currency, and cash flow speed significantly (Pirouzian, 2001). In the modern era, the tourism industry accounts for 11% of the world's GDP and has 100 million people employed, equivalent to one out of every 12 jobs. Also, this expanding industry displaces more than 800 million people internationally each year (World Tourism Organization (WTO), 2005) and this is projected to be doubled by 2020 (Zargham, 1996). At present, sport in the world has become a large and successful industry to the extent that it accounts for 2.5% of world trade (Moeinfard, 2008). Today, sport is an important part of the culture of nations and the world and has become so pervasive in today's society that it is one of the most common and important motivating factors for travel and tourism (Kurtzman & Zahar, 2003).

Sport tourism, on the other hand, is a multi-million-dollar business with the fastest growth of nearly \$ 4.5 million in the world and is expected to comprise about 10% of the indigenous economy by 2011. Cities and regions across the world that embraces spectators, golfers, skiers, hikers, footballers, rugby players and sponsors of sports have contributed to the growth of 10 percent. In some countries, sports account for more than 25 percent of tourism income of the country. The economic impacts and benefits of these competitions are obtained by calculating the value of an event. Therefore, to hold a global event, the return on capital and its profitability need to be assessed and calculated. For example, the 1993 World Rally Championship in Australia brought in revenue of nearly \$19 million for Australia. Also, nearly 92 countries around the world were televised for the competitions, which was in fact one of the best ways to promote and introduce these countries around the world. Some countries have been very successful in developing and benefiting from sport tourism. In the United States, revenue from sporting events combined with tourism was estimated at \$27 billion in 2000 and more than 75 million adult Americans (two-fifths of the country's population) reported that they had attended

a sporting event while traveling over the past five years whether as a spectator or as a participant (Campbell, 2008).

When tourists enter a country, they must pay for food, accommodation, hotel, hostel, entertainment, transportation, tours, and also for buying souvenirs and indigenous goods of the host country and for museums or sightseeing. These costs contribute to the economic prosperity of the host country through the currency they enter the host country. Tourists are called invisible export as well (Khodarahmi, 2017). Ahmadi Aghdam (2011), in a study entitled *Relationship between Natural Sport Attractions and Sport Tourism Development in East Azarbaijan Province*, concluded that there is a significant relationship between natural sport attractions and the development of sport tourism industry in Azerbaijan province and that there is a significant relationship between sports tourism and attractions related to beach, water and summer sports, winter sports, mountaineering attractions, plain and forest attractions, fishing and hunting attractions. Today, sports tourism as a white industry among developed countries has become one of the most important strategies to increase employment, income, infrastructure development, improve economic and political situation. According to the available evidence, the inflow of each foreign tourist to the country generates foreign exchange earnings of 20 barrels of oil (Isfahani, 2008). Among all types of tourism, sports tourism is growing rapidly and becoming a large and independent industry. Sporting event is one of the most important forms of sports tourism, with many people traveling to different places every year to watch. Research shows that big and small sports competitions can attract participants, spectators and tourists (Chalip et al., 2003) and have been able to generate thousands and even millions of dollars in revenue for the local economy (Solberg & Preuss, 2007). The Olympics (Sanahuja, 2002) and the World Cup illustrate these important sporting events (Zeytinli, 2011). Therefore, all countries are trying to provide destinations for holding major sporting events and attracting tourists so that they can have a large share of this economic activity in the region and country (Kamilla and Urmilla, 2007). Because of their economic impact, sporting events are the most prominent category of sports tourism. As a result, the development of sports tourism and the holding of major sporting events and its growth have attracted the interest of many countries and authorities (Solberg & Preuss, 2007). For example, Turkey have invested in sports tourism, especially Antalya, and have attracted 700 sports teams in 2003 and 1200 sports teams in 2007 from around the world even from Iran to hold training camps, and in 2007 it made \$ 6 million in revenue in 2007 through this and has provided employment to a large number of youth in the region (Icoz et al., 2010). Research has shown that if major sporting events are successful, it will have long-term social and economic consequences directly or indirectly in the region (Campbell, 2008). Research has shown that traditional sports can also attract a large number of tourists (Cho, 2004).

In the last century, some countries, such as China, Japan, South Korea, the US, Thailand, etc., to export and promote their national identity and culture to other countries of the world, and pursue employment and revenue in foreign exchange in their plans by its cultural attachments through the sports tourism path, the strategy and cultural approach, especially with the development and dissemination of martial arts and indigenous sports, reinforce their influence throughout the world, to the extent that they have organized new and old methods of martial arts and their modern-day sports and have taken the lead from other countries in this regard and have achieved a special place in the world (Manouchehri, 2013).

Fortunately, despite the influx of alien sports and martial arts into Iran over the past few decades, our country's masters and champions who have been carrying the heavy burden of Iranian sports and martial arts have come to self-esteem and, by showing initiative and doing

physical and mental exercises as well as structuring modern techniques of sports and indigenous martial arts of the country, invented authentic Persian sports (O-Sport) with intellectual content and skills independent of alien culture, with native and local Iranian techniques and tactics and with their own philosophy, and they eventually took a major step toward the excellence of local indigenous sports and ancient martial arts and the flourishing of authentic Iranian sports culture.

Nowadays, one of the concerns of marketers and organizers of sporting events is to increase the interest of participants, visitors and spectators in sporting events and to plan and identify the causes and factors affecting their attendance. There are various causes and factors affecting the intention and desire of tourists to attend a sporting event and its choice. Considering that Hamadan has a lot of potential for attracting tourists in general, but unfortunately, so far, there has not been enough action regarding sports tourism and development of the infrastructure.

In this study, considering the theoretical foundations and field studies, the empowerment, social, environmental and economic factors related to sports tourism industry in Hamadan are investigated and lack of enough standard sports complexes, proportional to different sports for holding national and international competitions, lack of active airports and railways, lack of consulting offices and training of managers in organizing international sporting events, lack of adequate international amenities in existing sports complexes, lack of custom-built parks and gardens for modern recreational and luxury sports are considered as the challenges ahead of the development of sports tourism industry in Hamadan. Therefore, given the current situation, it has been always tried to provide consulting offices, custom-built accommodation for participants, and holding dozens of sporting event management training courses in the Abbas Abad tourist area of Hamadan and the Manouchehri Tourism Center in Hamadan at least for O-Sport and to resolve much of the problems and challenges confronting O-Sport and the tourism industry by benefiting from the investment of the "Manouchehri Group of Companies". And alongside the O-Sport complex, small businesses such as the O-Sport Equipment Manufacturing Workshop, O-Sport Development and Equipment Company, O-Sport Alliance Institute (After-Sales Service Provider), O-Sport Central Academy, O-Sport Residence, IT Spedan Service Company, O-Sport Fish Farming, Manouchehri Organic Agriculture and Industry, O-Sport Strategic Studies and Research Office have been established which have resulted in employment and earnings for so many people.

Given the above mentioned, in today's world, sports tourism is a great source of profit and revenue, and every country and region that can provide the conditions for using this resource will benefit from its advantages and blessings. Statistics show that many countries in the world that have good conditions for sport tourism manage a large part of their economy through the sports tourism economy (Hadavi et al., 2004). Given that today we are seeing new financial resources for the development of the national economy and utilization of the sports industry for revenue in general and financial independence of the sports sector in particular, and in this regard the creation and development of sports tourism is one of the most important global channels in the development of the sports industry's share of GDP and, on the other hand, different regions of Iran based on specific geographical, cultural and climatic features can have a special share in this national and regional development. Therefore, the present study, while helping with sport planning in Hamadan province, can be a model for other regions and is therefore of great value for implementation. Also, reviewing the research literature in the subject of the present study reveals limited scientific activities in this field, so the subject is quite new and its findings will provide specific innovation for the country's authorities, especially Iranian sports authorities. And in this regard, O-Sport can be considered as a model

for other sports and its economic, social and environmental consequences can be seen. Therefore, given the current challenges to the research variables, the main question in the present study is what role does O-Sport play in the development of the tourism industry in Hamadan?

Methodology

The present study was a descriptive-analytical one whose data were collected by the filed method using questionnaires. The statistical population of this study is divided into three groups according to the research variables: experts of Hamadan province sport and youth departments and experts of cultural heritage and tourism departments of Hamadan province, experts of O-Sport (including champions, coaches, referees and heads of sport boards in Hamedan province). Due to the infinite population, the population size was considered as the sample size. After distributing the questionnaires, 141 persons answered the questionnaires correctly. After distribution of questionnaires, 36 sports experts, 59 O-Sport experts, and 46 tourism and cultural heritage experts answered the questionnaires. The total sample number was 141. The standardized questionnaire of Karkon et al. (2013) consisting of 20 5-choice questions (Likert scale) was used for data collection. The questionnaire has four dimensions: empowerment factor (questions 1-5), social factor (questions 5-10), environmental factor (questions 11-15) and economic factor (questions 16-20).

In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, using the content validity method, the questionnaire was provided to expert professors of sport management and their corrective comments were included in the final design of the questionnaire. Using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the reliability of the questionnaires was confirmed by conducting a pilot study with 30 participants, which was 0.79. Statistical indices such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used in the descriptive analysis of the data. In order to test the research hypotheses in inferential statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and one sample t-tests were performed using SPSS software (version 22).

Findings

Demographic results showed that 67.4% were male, 32.6% were female. Of these, 24.1% were married and 75.9% were single. The highest mean age was over 36 years (65 people, 46.1%). Most of them held bachelor's degrees (51.1%).

Table 1. Descriptive findings regarding the research variables

O-Sport components	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Empowerment factor	5	24	15.95	3.71
Social factor	5	23	14.50	3.92
Environmental factor	5	23	14.78	3.68
Economic factor	5	24	15.91	4.15

Results of Table (1) show the descriptive information (mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum) of the research variables.

Table 2. Results of single-sample t-test on O-Sport dimensions in the tourism industry development

O-Sport components	T statistic	Degree of freedom	Significance level	Mean difference
Empowerment factor	50.94	140	0.001	15.95
Social factor	43.85	140	0.001	14.50
Environmental factor	47.61	140	0.001	14.78
Economic factor	45.50	140	0.001	15.91

Data in Table 2 on the role of empowerment factor in the tourism industry development in Hamadan shows that empowerment factor plays a role in the tourism industry development in Hamadan ($P \leq 0.05$ and $t = 50.94$). Therefore, the null hypothesis indicating that the empowerment factor does not play a role in the tourism industry development in Hamadan is rejected and the first hypothesis with 95% confidence is accepted by the subjects. Regarding the role of social factor in the tourism industry development in Hamadan, it shows that social factor plays a role in the tourism industry development in Hamadan ($t = 43.85$, $P \leq 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis indicating that social factor does not play a role in the tourism industry development in Hamadan is rejected and the second hypothesis with 95% confidence is accepted by the subjects. Also, data in Table 2 on role of environmental factor in the tourism industry development in Hamadan show that environmental factor plays a role in the tourism industry development in Hamadan ($P \leq 0.05$ and $t = 47.61$). Therefore, the null hypothesis indicating that the environmental factor does not play a role in the tourism industry development in Hamadan is rejected and the third research hypothesis with 95% confidence is accepted by the subjects. Finally, regarding the role of economic factor in the tourism industry development in Hamadan shows that economic factor plays a role in the tourism industry development in Hamadan ($P \leq 0.05$ and $t = 45.5$). Therefore, the null hypothesis indicating that economic factor does not play a role in the tourism industry development in Hamadan is rejected and the fourth research hypothesis with 95% confidence is accepted by the subjects.

Discussion and Conclusion

Since sports tourism is an activity that has economic, political, social and cultural consequences in regional developments and in recent years it has received much attention not only at the transnational level but also at the national and regional levels. Many managers in developed countries seek to expand the areas under their supervision and increase sports tourism infrastructure and optimize sports tourism services to enhance the added value of this activity in order to flourish and develop sports tourism. Most of the provinces in Iran have numerous potentials in terms of tourism and if they are recognized and utilized in the right way, they can be effective in attracting foreign and domestic tourists. Hamedan province, with its natural attractions and tourism and beautiful landscapes, is a privileged position to promote tourism objectives.

According to the findings of the present study, the empowerment factor of O-Sport plays a role in the tourism industry development. The results of this study showed that the empowerment

factor of O-Sport in Hamadan province plays a role in the tourism industry development. In general, this finding is consistent with the results of Chaghajardi et al. (2017), Khodarahmi (2017), Parvini et al. (2015), Andam et al. (2014), Karkon (2013), Asgari (2006), Honarvar et al. (2004), Vickermatton and Kumari (2016), Mason & Duquette (2008), Ntloko & Swart (2008). Because Hamadan province has a great variety to develop different types of tourism activities. Also, the capabilities and attractions of this province are less affected by the phenomenon of seasonality due to the wide range of the capabilities and attractions and it provides the possibility of tourism activities in all seasons of the year. A very important point is that sports tourism is considered one of the most important ways for developing Third World countries and if developing countries take specific strategies to develop sports tourism and provide the necessary arrangements for holding the Olympics and sports competitions in their own countries, they can create growth and prosperity in their own countries. Identifying the phenomena and factors affecting sports tourism can help tourism planners in any country to be successful and diligent in advancing and prospering it according to existing opportunities, needs and wants, problems and obstacles. And the most successful countries in this field were the ones that opened the windows of knowledge to them; they thought globally and acted locally.

Aside from attractions of the O-Sport events and competitions, other attractions are among the natural attractions which are one of the strengths of Hamedan province. The importance of natural sports attractions on tourism development has been acknowledged in the researches of Higham & Hinch (2006), Gibson (2005), Adabi Firouzjah (2006), Zeytinli (2007), Heider et al. (2011). The importance of capabilities of tourism destinations as important components in gaining hosting of events has been acknowledged in studies of Moeinfard (2008), Westerack et al. (2001), and the importance of planning and identifying sports tourism potentials and capabilities as one of the four stages of sports tourism development has been acknowledged in studies of Yat (2006), Moeinfard (2008) and the importance of sport identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, development of sports tourism strategy has been confirmed in studies of Isfahani (2008) and Tourism Association and countries such as Turkey with the development of tourism strategy (2003) in 2007 and also the sport tourism planning model in 2006 in Canada, China and even Qatar has been confirmed and reviewed. Also, the importance of environmental analysis for any managerial planning, identifying and selecting the target market and adopting marketing and positioning strategy has been acknowledged in studies of Kotler (2008). Nogawa (1996) states that a sports tourist is a temporary visitor whose main purpose is to participate in a sporting event but at the same time there may be secondary attractions for him/her in the area (Wade & Ball, 1997; Honarvar et al., 2004). Sports spectators who are interested in watching sporting events are people who love sports and are often interested in doing sports as well. They tend to participate actively in sports that are mostly non-competitive, and even to provide the basics in order to reap the many benefits of sports in terms of health, social and psychological dimensions (Adabi Firouzjah et al., 2009). Iran is a vast country with many natural attractions. Establishing proper and standard sporting facilities in the locations of natural sports attractions in the country and trying to organize different sporting events in these areas can be a strategy for the development of the tourism industry in the country.

The result of the second hypothesis test showed that the social factor of O-Sport plays a role in the tourism industry development. Socialization is the most important factor that encourages tourists to attend sporting events. The results showed that social factor is an important factor for development of the tourism industry. Because, for sports tourists, attending sporting events gives them the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends, they also get the chance

to meet people from other cultures, which is consistent with the results of Ottevanger et al. (2007) and Stig & Funk (2005). Wade & Ball (2004) have also mentioned the opportunity to enjoy a favorite sport with other people as a very important factor. In fact, tourists tend to meet new people by attending sporting events and also enjoy their favorite sport with them. Most participants stated that they would like to relax by attending sporting events, which is consistent with the study of Ottevanger et al. (2007) that stated that many participants in sporting events, despite congestion, crowding, queuing, and so on, see the relaxation in a sporting event as their primary reason for attending a sporting event. Philip et al. (2005), Williams (2008), and Funk et al. (2000) also cited the relaxation factor as one of the effective factors for tourists attending sporting events. Most participants in sporting events and competitions tend to temporarily get away from their living places, working issues and routines, experience a new atmosphere and relax, which can be achieved by attending a sporting event that is also their interest and desire.

The results of the third hypothesis test indicate that the environmental factor of O-Sport plays a role in the tourism industry development. The effect of environmental factor on tourist tendency in studies of Bahari & Meymandi et al. (2018), Khodarahmi (2017), Andam et al. (2014), Fallahi et al. (2013), Tabias (2007), Higham & Hinch (2006) and Kosasi (2005) has also been confirmed and the mentioned studies also reported that as an important factor in tourist tendency which is consistent with the research findings. Gomesal & Miallik (2008) in their research suggest that natural resources and blessings are a very important competitive factor in the tourism industry and alone can be an opportunity for tourism development (Quoted by Andam et al., 2014). Tourism is one of the most important and dynamic activities in the world todwith the number of foreign and domestic tourists increasing and the amount of its income increasing worldwide. On the other hand, a large percentage of this tourism activity is nature-based tourism, and much of the activity around the world is currently concentrated in temperate regions. Ecotourism is considered as one of the fastest growing areas of tourism. Accordingly, although the growth of ecotourism has had many benefits for the region, its undue expansion has also led to negative environmental consequences. These facts clearly indicate that the balance between tourism and the environment is very sensitive and it is necessary to maintain this balance through proper planning and sustainable tourism management in tourism areas (Bahari Meymandi et al., 2018). Hamadan province, due to its favorable environmental conditions such as abundant food resources and favorable soil, has long been a place of residence for various tribes, and has hosted tourists with its numerous monuments and historical sites. In general, the environmental factor refers to the physical, chemical, biological, social and economic change of the environment due to one or more activities and the identification of environmental impacts constitutes a major part of the environmental studies process. At the same time, one of the most important factors in attracting tourists and growing the tourism industry in different regions of the world is the enjoyment and utilization of natural attractions and environmental beauty, hence the study of the impact and interaction of tourism and natural environment in recent years has been considered (Bahari Meymandi et al., 2018). Recreational or outdoor activities represent an area that has a lot to do with sports tourism. The emergence of this field is rooted in recreational activities that take place in natural environments and most of them are usually classified as sports (Hall, 1992). These activities take place in natural environments such as forests, mountains, beaches, deserts, rivers and lakes, and even in the semi-natural spaces and environments that are today designed as urban natural parks. Leisure activities ranges from very light activities such as sitting and enjoying a beautiful landscape or nature photography to activities like sports such as canoeing, skiing, surfing, rock climbing, swimming and scuba diving (Kar, 2006). Due to the high potential of Hamadan province in enjoying natural and pristine environments with pleasant weather, attractiveness and low cost of the mentioned activities for tourists, tourism authorities of

Hamadan province can use this factor as an exceptional opportunity to attract sports tourists (Andam et al., 2014).

The results of the fourth hypothesis test indicate that the economic factor of O-Sport plays a role in the tourism industry development. This finding is consistent with the results of Karkon (2013), Elham (1997), Li Fei (2017), Vickermatton & Kumari (2016), Gibson et al. (2012), Mason & Duquette (2008) that have emphasized the role of sports in development of tourism in their results. But it is not consistent with the research by Parvini et al. (2015). The results of Parvini et al. (2015) show that rock climbing festival does not affect the economic aspect of tourism development. While the economic benefits of hosting all sporting events are in doubt, there are intangible reasons showing why countries are willing to host these events despite the difficulties. One of the reasons is the advantage of the perceived position of the city, which enables it to climb the hierarchy of cities in the world. Given the globalization process, it can help the tourism industry in that region. Clearly one of Beijing's goals for hosting the 2008 Olympics was to be one of the top 10 cities in the world and outperform its Asian rivals Tokyo, Singapore and Hong Kong. In addition, other benefits such as self-esteem, national pride and dynamism have been mentioned, as a result holding major events bring about personality and identity for the area. For the Chinese, the 2008 Olympic Games were of little importance in sports, and were used more as a stage for displaying China's economic and political growth. In fact, the organizer of the Games announced that the Olympics is an opportunity for China to show how free, democratic, civilized, friendly and orderly it is (Parvini et al., 2015). Tourism industry has wide economic implications. Creating employment and achieving sustainable and appropriate foreign exchange earnings (Li Fei, 2017), increasing employment and diversification of economic activities, reducing unemployment and creating jobs for low-income people, improving people's living standards, improving infrastructure and existing facilities (Vickermatton and Kumari, 2016) are the most important positive economic impacts of tourism development. Economic factors related to sporting events are one of the reasons that motivate officials in different cities to hold sporting events. Economic impacts can be direct or indirect, generate income, lead to construction of infrastructure, attract tourists, create employment, or indirectly increase government tax revenue and improve city and country conditions in future.

A very important point is that sports tourism is considered one of the most important ways for developing Third World countries and if developing countries take specific strategies to develop sports tourism and provide the necessary arrangements for holding the Olympics and sports competitions in their own countries, they can create growth and prosperity in their own countries. Identifying the phenomena and factors affecting sports tourism can help tourism planners in any country to be successful and diligent in advancing and prospering it according to existing opportunities, needs and wants, problems and obstacles. And the most successful countries in this field were the ones that opened the windows of knowledge to themselves, they thought globally and acted locally.

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