

INVESTIGATING THE CULTURAL PROBLEMS OF SPORT TOURISM IN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN SPORTS EVENTS OF IRAN

Seyedeh Fatemeh Badiee Nameghi, Zynalabedin Fallah, Taher Bahlakeh and Asra Askari

Department of Sport Science, Gorgon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Gorgon, Iran

Original scientific paper

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the cultural problems of tourism in domestic and foreign sports events in Iran. The study was applied research in terms of purpose and it was descriptive-analytical in terms of implementation method, which was performed as a field. The statistical population of the study included all sports tourists of the events inside and outside the country in 2019. The statistical sample included 320 tourists from the domestic sports event and 100 tourists from the foreign sports event. The instrument for measuring the questionnaire was researcher-made. The results of the correlated t-test showed that among the cultural problems of sports tours in domestic and foreign events, gender interference was less than average, lack of coordination for performing religious duties was average and the cultural problems, lack of control of abnormal behaviors, unhealthy social relations, lack of attention to the age and gender, lack of familiarity of tourists with the culture of the destination city and the lack of privacy were more than average. The results of the independent t-test to compare tourists' views of foreign and domestic sports events showed that the cultural problems related to the gender interference and the lack of coordination to perform religious duties in foreign sports events and other cultural problems in tourism were more common. Therefore, cultural issues have been very important in increasing the motivation for re-attending and re-selecting the tour, therefore, efforts to solve the cultural problems of tourists should be the priority for the managers of sports tourism.

Key words: *sports tourism, sports tour, cultural problem, sports event.*

Introduction

The World Tourism Organization defines tourism as the set of activities of the individual or groups, who travel to a place other than their normal place of residence and stay there for a minimum of one night and a maximum of one year with the aim of spending leisure time and they are called tourists (Heydari Chapaneh, 2010). Tourism in general is capable of different attitudes due to its interdisciplinary nature, which has led to many definitions. In the early definitions, the emphasis was more on distance, and tourists were categorized based on their distance from their place of residence. In the geographical dimension, tourism is defined as the time spent in leisure or recreation activities that require a night's absence from a normal place of residence (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016). From a social point of view, the definition of tourism includes a common chapter between the normal life of indigenous peoples and the abnormal life of tourists (Baum, 2016).

Sport is one of the largest and most important industries in the world and many people around the world are employed in it. Due to its connection with culture, economy, and politics, the sport was initially affected by social changes, and now it has become one of the influential factors that determine many other factors (Abhijit et al., 2017; Jabbari et al. 2020). Sports tourism is an industry that is a combination of the tourism industry and the sports industry. In other words, sport is one of the important activities of tourists during a tour, and

tourism and travel are also associated with different types of sports (Abedi et al., 2018). Sports have the ability to attract many tourists; therefore, sporting events attract tourists to the city or the country of destination. Sports tourism, as the third most common industry in the world, is also one of the multi-billion dollar businesses that have always grown rapidly in recent years, so that 5 to 10 percent of all trips are globally devoted to sports tourism, and its growth rate has been announced as one of the fastest sectors (Esfahani et al., 2008). Today, sport is one of the main social events in the world and people's participation in it leads to social, cognitive, and psychological development and fitness, in which tourism is the main economic sector (Rahimi et al., 2016).

Recent research has shown that identifying tourism motives is often the most constructive and effective way to determine effective visitor opportunities. Clarifying the motivations of travel affects the tendency of tourists to behave, which is essential for tourism planners and marketers (Mason et al., 2016). Today, one of the concerns of the organizers of national and international sports events is to increase the reception and presence of visitors and spectators of sports events. Each country and each sporting event offers various products and services to attract tourists, and each tourist has the opportunity to choose one of the various destinations and events. The attractiveness of the sporting event, security, and health, and financial restrictions has a decisive effect on the willingness

or unwillingness of potential participants and their presence (Hosseini et al., 2015). However, it seems that the factors influencing the presence of tourists in an event are different based on the country of origin and the country of destination and their characteristics and culture (Abedi et al., 2018). However, there are various factors that affect the intention and desire of tourists to attend a sporting event and its selection. Studies have shown that there is a great variety of factors influencing the presence of tourists in sports events, such as the attractiveness of the event, knowledge, personality, increasing public relations, calmness, novelty and interest, as well as health, financial and security restrictions (Abedi et al., 2018).

Paying attention to sports tourism in the advanced societies of the world is one of the main concerns of governments, because this is a great economic benefit, and in addition to the economic consequences, this industry also has environmental, cultural and social effects. Also, new theories in the field of tourism show that attractions of sports-based tourism have more economic, social and political advantages than other cultural attractions (Hinch & Higham, 2005). In Iran, due to the many problems in the field of sports tourism, the ability to compete has sharply decreased. On the other hand, Iran can benefit greatly from tourism due to its large capacity.

According to studies, Iran is one of the top 10 countries in the world in terms of tourist attractions. Also, the increase of production, income, and employment-related to different economic sectors show that the tourism sector in Iran is more important than other economic sectors in terms of creating production, income, and employment. However, there are some problems along the way (such as cultural, managerial, infrastructure problems, etc.); therefore, paying attention to these problems and examining them is particularly important. There are significant shortcomings in the development of the sports tourism industry, including the appropriate sports and tourism facilities. Today, Iran does not yet have a good position in the international arena of sports tourism in the above-mentioned cases and similar cases.

With a little reflection on the successful examples of developed countries in the world, it can be found out that the use of destination management systems to promote and develop the tourism industry is essential and inevitable in reducing problems. There is no doubt that it is very important for the trustees to investigate the field of sports tourism and tours. Therefore, it is necessary to use a successful model to improve the situation of sports tourism. Comparing the situation of similar and successful countries in the field of sports tourism can warn the officials of the existing problems, obstacles, and limitations and determine the roots and causes of these problems in order to improve the situation by providing appropriate solutions and proper planning.

Therefore, comparing the situation of sports tourism of the country with foreign examples, in a comparative way, can provide a framework for recognizing and solving problems of the tourism field. The purpose of this study is to answer these questions: what are the cultural problems of sports tourism? And is there a difference between the cultural problems of sports tourism in domestic and foreign events?

Methods

The study was applied research in terms of purpose and it was descriptive-analytical in terms of implementation method, which was performed as a field study. The statistical population of the study included all the sports tourists of the events inside and outside the country. In order to determine the statistical sample size, considering the mean number of Iranian tourists, the present tours of domestic sports events in Iran were estimated by approximately 2,000 people across the country according to the survey of sports elites among the professional group and individual sports. 320 Iranian Tourists were randomly and conveniently selected by Morgan Sampling as the group of domestic sports sample and by information obtained from tourism service agencies, 100 Iranian tourists, who participated in the international sports events that were held in foreign countries, were conveniently selected as the group of foreign sports events sample.

The measurement tool was a researcher-made questionnaire whose face and content validity was approved by professors and sports experts. The reliability of the questionnaires was obtained 0.89 by through Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

To analyze the data at the level of descriptive statistics, frequency table, frequency percentage, mean, standard deviation, and tables were used. In order to study and compare cultural problems from the subjects' perspective, correlated and independent parametric t-tests were used to a significant level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Results

The descriptive findings of the study showed that 86% of the subjects were male and 68% of them were single. Most of the subjects were between 31 and 50 years old, and 67% had a bachelor's degree or higher (Table 1).

According to Table 2, among the cultural problems of sports tourism in domestic and foreign events, gender interference is below the average level (3), lack of coordination for performing religious duties is at the average level and the cultural problems, lack of control over abnormal behaviors, unhealthy social relations, and lack of attention to the age and gender, the lack of tourists' familiarity with the culture of the destination city and the lack of privacy are more than expected.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Individual characteristics of subjects.

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Man	363	%86
	Women	57	%14
Marital status	Single	285	%68
	Married	135	%32
Age	Less than 30 years	107	%25
	Between 31 to 50 years	243	%58
	More than 51 years	70	%17
Education	Diploma and less	140	%33
	Bachelor	238	%57
	Master and PhD	42	%10

Table 2. Results of One-Sample T-Test of Cultural problems of sports tourism tours.

Cultural problems	Test Value = 3					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference
Lack of control over abnormal behaviors	3.29	.879	6.662	419	.000	.286
Lack of familiarity of the tourist with the destination culture	3.22	.905	4.906	419	.000	.217
Gender Interference	2.53	1.271	9.311	419	.000	-.471
Non-compliance with privacy	3.25	.867	5.963	419	.000	.252
Lack of coordination to perform religious duties	2.99	1.137	4.113	419	.797	-.014
Unhealthy social relationships	3.40	.873	9.451	419	.000	.402
Lack of attention to people's age and gender in groupings	3.17	1.117	3.059	419	.002	.167
Cultural issues	3.2694	.66695	8.278	419	.000	.26939

According to Table 3, in comparison with the view of sports tourists, cultural problems related to gender interference and lack of coordination for performing religious duties in foreign sports tours

are more common than domestic events, but the other cultural problems are more seen in domestic events.

Table 3. Results of Independent Samples T-Test to compare Cultural problems in sports events.

Cultural problems	Events	N	Mean	Std. D	t	df	Sig.
Lack of control over abnormal behaviors	Domestic	320	3.35	.847	2.544	418	.012
	Foreign	100	3.08	.950			
Lack of familiarity of the tourist with the destination culture	Domestic	320	3.27	.873	2.118	418	.035
	Foreign	100	3.05	.989			
Gender Interference	Domestic	320	2.19	1.202	-11.207	418	.001
	Foreign	100	3.62	.776			
Non-compliance with privacy	Domestic	320	3.30	.833	2.154	418	.032
	Foreign	100	3.09	.954			
Lack of coordination to perform religious duties	Domestic	320	2.76	1.115	-7.800	418	.001
	Foreign	100	3.71	.880			
Unhealthy social relationships	Domestic	320	3.47	.826	2.442	418	.016
	Foreign	100	3.20	.985			
Lack of attention to people's age and gender in groupings	Domestic	320	3.30	1.035	4.150	418	.001
	Foreign	100	2.73	1.254			

Discussion and conclusion

The results of the study showed that in comparison with the sports tourists' perspective, cultural problems related to gender interference and lacks of coordination for performing religious duties in foreign sports tours are more common than domestic events and the lack of control over

abnormal behaviors, lack of familiarity of tourists with the culture of the destination city, lack of privacy and unhealthy social relationships, lack of attention to the age and gender of tourists have been seen more in domestic events. Regarding the role of cultural problems in sports tourism, the results of the present study were in line with the following researches, such as the study

investigated by Amini et al. (2019), who discussed dimensions and components of tourism and sports tourism as well as the barriers of entering Iran for sports tourists by using content analysis method. In a study entitled identification and prioritization of tourism problems of polo sport in Iran, Moladoost et al. (2017) concluded that in order to develop tourism in Iran, all factors, including cultural factors, must be considered. Lotfi Yamchi et al. (2018), in a study on analysis of sports tourism stimulants and inhibitors, stated that one of the most important factors inhibiting sports tourism in Iran is the existence of cultural limitations and in a study on analysis of the development of the cities that are the hosts of foreign sports tourists in the country, Salimi et al. (2014) pointed out the significant role of cultural barriers to sports tourism.

The cultural problems mentioned are the factors that do not cause disruption in the tour by themselves, but they have a great impact on the satisfaction of the tourist so that many tourists

refuse to accompany the tours in the future due to the cultural problems. Therefore, paying attention to socio-cultural factors creates a strong and effective connection between the tour and the tourist, which can continue for a long time and provide long-term benefits for sports tourism tours. Also, considering the special cultural characteristics of Iranians, paying attention to religious issues and religious duties and observing this category of factors is very important and tour management can satisfy their tourists by considering programs to cover these needs of tourists.

On the other hand, people who go to see a sporting event are looking to spend their free time, therefore, maintaining and observing the issues that would not harm their privacy and maintain their peace is very important. Therefore, cultural characteristics, in general, have been very important in increasing the motivation to re-attend and re-select the tour and even the type of travel, the problems of which should be a priority in the programs of managers of sports tourism tours.

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Received: June 26, 2020
Accepted: August 1, 2020
Correspondence to:
Zynalabedin Fallah
Associate Professor in Sport Management
E-mail: zy.fallah@gmail.com

Acknowledgment

The author would like to express his appreciation to the subjects for their participation.