

Sport Tourism Development: Cultural, Economic and Political Perspectives

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Abstract

Sport tourism is a new concept in the world having the most growth in tourism industry. Many of countries enjoy an appropriate status with respect to sport tourism and, accordingly, contribute directly to their nation's economic prosperity. Hence, the goal of this research is comparison and survey of tourism managers, interest managers and tourists' ideas about creation of sport tourism-induced employment and income in Mazandaran-Iran.

The tool of this research is a researcher-made five scale likert questionnaire. The questionnaire reliability and the coefficient validity were confirmed by experienced professors and with ($\alpha = 0.82$), respectively. Finally, The data analysis carried out using the SPSS software and χ^2 statistic test.

The results show that job creation ($\chi^2 = 4.360$, $p = 0.35$) and income production ($\chi^2 = 1.633$, $p = 0.80$) were previously at a minimum. However, the role of tourism industry development is believed to create jobs ($\chi^2 = 9.740$, $p = 0.04$) and income ($\chi^2 = 5.224$, $p = 0.51$). Compared with other studies, the present research indicates that future sport tourism industry influences job and income production in the regions hosting the sport events provided that the sport tourism industry and its respective infrastructures are well-developed.

Key word: sport tourism, tourism economic, income, employment, sport, tourism, job.

Introduction

Sport tourism is a relatively new and ever increasing industry in the tourism industry focusing on the target planning in the developing countries .It is also believed sport tourism shall restructure the rural and urban communities from social and economic perspectives .Seemingly sport tourism shall improve the individuals`life quality through tourist attraction and results in the economic welfare of the local communities (Swart and Bob 2007).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.For example, 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).Then,sport tourism is considered as an effective tool to deal with poverty and unemployment and increase economic growth and social welfare of the communities ,especially underdeveloped nations (Eftekhari,1999)There are two kinds of sport tourisms:the first one employs sport for the sake of its tourism development advantages,while the other one is the result of sport-based activities(Tassiopouloa and Haydamb,2007).So the communities should take both types into account(Daniels,2007) so as to optimally take advantage of their positive results. Since there are various motives as for involvement in the sport activities such as competition, recreation and traveling to watch preliminary or premier competitions or sport attractions(Tassiopouloa and Haydamb,2007),natural resources sport and tourism facilities play a significant role in attracting tourists to the host city ,region or country. In this regard,Kozak studied the factors influencing sport tourist` trip considering their destination and nationality. His results indicated that accommodation, facilities, climate ,price rate, geographical location of the host region and access to sea seashore were the reasons as for why English tourists had traveled to Malt and Turkey (Kozak,2005).

Mazandaran province is regarded one of the leading tourism centers due to its favorable nature and geographical locations(Mazandaran_based tourism organization,2008).No doubt, tourism is one of the important

sectors in terms of economic development of Mazandaran. This condition applies for the communities, especially Mazandaran, in which individuals pursue various activities to make money. Since application of local resources to make and enhance income minimizes the dependency upon national resources, such communities shall persist in the long run depending on their local resources (Poudial et al, 2008). Given potential resources in Mazandaran like Mazandaran sea, various floras and faunas, picturesque mountains, forests and seashore, Damavand summit (5670m), caves, waterfalls, rivers, spas, springs, lagoons especially Miankahe peninsular in Behshar, 800 well-known monumental and historical spots like Amol, Chalous, Sari, rivers, lakes bank, spots, waterfalls, nation parks, protected areas and wild life, preserves and natural-national works, mineral waters, etc. It might be a best choice for tourists with various motives.

The regions in which sport and athletic activities is a part of their culture can surely take advantage of domestic and international tourists, increase natives' income and at the same time, minimize the unemployment and inflation rate. Here, individuals pursue a wide range of various activities to make money (Tao, 2008). Hence, the present research tries to find a reply to this question: to what extent has the sport tourism influenced the job and income creation in Mazandaran-Iran.

Methodology:

The present research is of descriptive-analytical type for which the researcher-made questionnaire conducted based upon the Likert's 5-item scale. Its validity and reliability coefficient confirmed by experienced university faculty professors and Cronbach alpha (82%). The statistical

population, here, was Mazandaran province. Furthermore , all statistical sample was 3 groups

1).31 tourists 2).12 interested managers 3).12 tourism-cultural heritage organization managers. The managers were chosen on the basis of their availability, while the tourists chosen using simple random sampling. In addition, statistics like frequency and percentage as well as chi-square applied for statistical descriptions.

Findings: The present study included 16.4% women and 83.6%men with mean age of 31.Also, 30% and 70% of them were single and married, respectively.Additionally, 43.7% had diploma, whereas 56.3% had higher education. Most of our samples were employees whose average salary ranged from 300-400 dollars.

Table 1 presents the frequency distributions of our samples namely tourists ,tourisms-cultural heritage organization managers and interested managers

Table 1

Sample frequency	Number	Percentage
Tourists	31	56.4
Tourism-cultural heritage organization managers	12	21.8
Interested managers	12	21.8
total	55	100

As far as inferential statistics was concerned , all 3 groups disagreed about the idea that investment in tourism and sport industry had previously led to the youth employment in the region based upon the result gained from chi-square analysis ($\chi^2=4.360,p=0.35$)

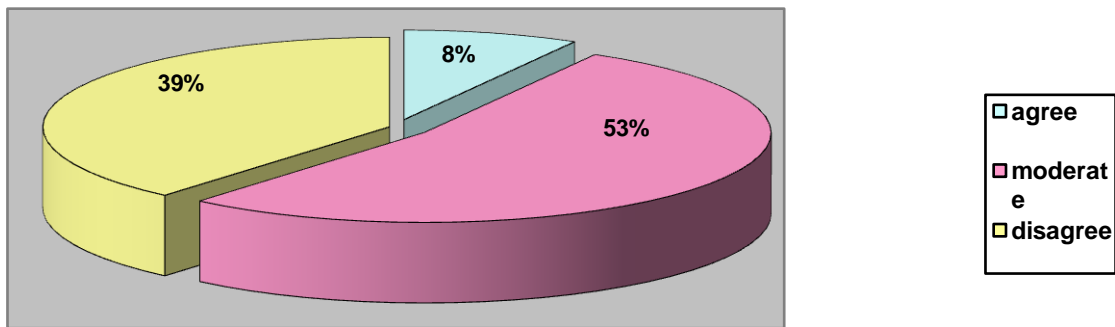


Figure 1: all 3 groups' view points regarding job creation in the region in terms of sport tourism in the past.

However, the results indicated that all 3 groups would agree about the fact that investment in sport tourism in Meandering will certainly create jobs ($\chi^2=9.740$, $p=0.04$).

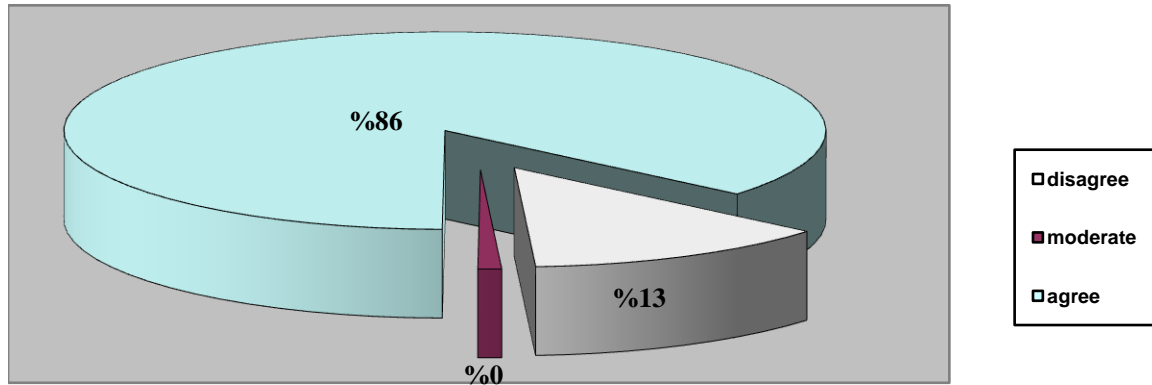


Figure 2: all 3 groups view points regarding job creation as a result of investment in sport tourism industry in Mazandaran

On the other hand, the chi-square analysis results as to whether investment in sport sector (e.g. wrestling) would lead to job creation stimulated all 3 groups' disagreements ($\chi^2=1.631, p=0.9$)

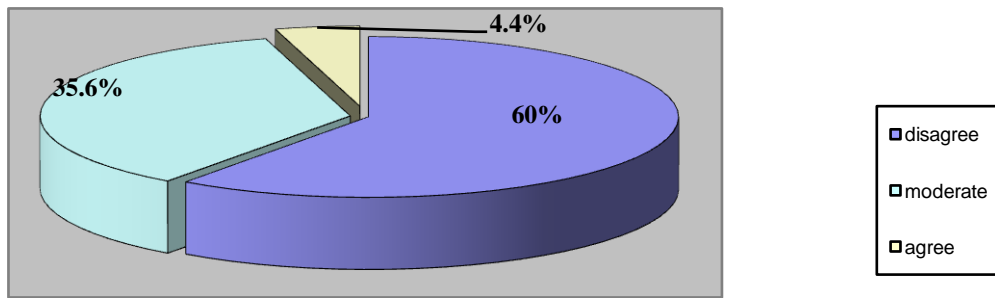


Figure 3: all 3 groups view point regarding job creation resulting from investment in sport sector (wrestling, for example) in Mazandaran in the previous years

The chi –square results as to whether sport tourism development would influence the peoples’ income in the future induced all 3 groups agreement($x^2=5.224$, $p=0.51$)

Also, the chi-square analysis as to whether sport (e.g. wrestling) had increased the people’s income in the past yielded all 3 groups disagreement($x^2=1.663$, $p=0.89$)

Discussion: The present study aimed to investigate the sport tourism impact upon job and income creation in Mazandaran –Iran taking tourists, interested managers and tourism-cultural heritage organization managers’ view points into account. These groups’ view points reflected the fact that job creation rate in terms of investment in the sport tourism in Mazandaran had been at minimum.

The research results indicated that job creation based upon investment in local sport (e.g. wrestling) was insignificant, as well. So, it was possibly that the marginal job creation was associated with lack of related facilities and infrastructures. Similarly, a case study by Bud and Matson(2002) showed that the impact of Los angles Olympic games(1984)and Atlanta Olympic games(1996)upon unemployment had completely been temporary, while the stable condition resulted only when new facilities and infrastructures were economically geared for the following years(Kasimatia and Dawson ,2008).It is noteworthy that sport tourism is made up from two terms namely tourism and sport. So that one should consider both elements thoroughly, whereas these two elements have been disregarded in the province. This reason complies with Manson’s findings(2007)arguing that the host regions should consider both sport

resources and tourism services altogether(Danilzo,2007).The present study results indicate that the tourists and interested managers' viewpoints considering whether investment in sport tourism would bring about job creation in Mazandaran differed with those of cultural heritage organization managers who tended to disagree about this fact, whereas both tourists and interested managers would agree about it .

The reason for that tourists and cultural heritage managers' disagreement lies in the fact that they handled sport tourism as the separate component and didn't consider sport tourism as a job creation tool which, now, has outperformed other industries.

However,Kazimatia and Dawsons` 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.Similarly, Balfonsa and Sava (2002) estimated that Olympic games will create 7700 new jobs between 2006-2012(Kasimatia and Dawson,2007).Also, the studies showed that Sidney Olympic games (2000)would create 5300 jobs in the south Walzder-Australia and 7500 jobs throughout Australia (Lockstone ,Baum 2008).

All 3 study groups in the present study would agree that tourism industry might positively influence the people's income in Mazandaran province.The research is also in conformity with the findings of Shepenger et al (2003),Daniels (2007),Collisa et al(2008), Tassiopouloa and Haydamb (2007).In terms of the impact of local sports (e.g wrestling) in the province upon the natives' income ,all 3 groups wouldn't favor this idea and related their disagreement to lack of facilities and infrastructures in the tourism and sport fields

Nevertheless ,the findings of Mason and Mundaya (2008).Lockstone and Baum(2008) indicated that the hosting regions enjoy considerable increase in income due to holding sport events

Recommendations:

- 1)An improvement and increase in natural and man-made infrastructure so as to effectively attract sport tourists .
- 2) An investment in introducing Mazandaran province as a unique sport tourism region.
- 3)An endeavor to integrate tourism and sport tourism activities.

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