

Full Length Research Paper

The role of sport tourism in employment, income and economic development

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Sport tourism is a new concept in the world having the most growth in tourism industry. Many 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 to compare and survey 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 was carried out using the SPSS software and χ^2 statistic test. The results showed 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 ($\chi^2 = 5.224$, $p = 0.51$). When 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 words: 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 of developing countries. It is also believed that 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 a temporary movement from a person'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 the tourism industry by

2010. For example, from 1997 to 2005, sport tourism brought about an annual increase in gross domestic growth (1.3%), which 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, 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 factors highly influencing national growth and revenue in the 21st century (Brown and Nagel, 2002).

The corresponding studies indicate that sport tourism is the most developed sector of the tourism industry (Chalip and Kim, 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

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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 bring 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.

There are two kinds of sport tourism: the first one employs sport for the sake of its tourism development advantages, while the other one is the result of sport-based activities (Tassiopoulou 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 for involvement in sport activities, such as competition, recreation and traveling to watch preliminary or premier competitions or sport attractions (Tassiopoulou and Haydamb, 2007), the natural resources of 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 tourists' 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 per why English tourists had traveled to Malt and Turkey.

Mazandaran province is regarded as one of the leading tourism centers due to its favorable nature and geographical locations. 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 (Poudyala et al., 2008), given potential resources in Mazandaran, like Mazandaran sea, various floras and faunas, picturesque mountains, forests and seashore, Damavand summit (5670 m), 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, and mineral waters. However, 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 and Geoffrey, 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 a questionnaire conducted based upon the Likert's 5-item scale. Its validity and reliability coefficient was confirmed by experienced university faculty professors and Cronbach alpha (82%).

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

FINDINGS

The present study included 16.4% women and 83.6% men with a 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 the samples used in this study were employees whose average salary ranged from 300 to 400 dollars (Table 1).

As far as the inferential statistics is 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 (Figure 1) based on the result gained from the chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 4.360$, $p = 0.35$).

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

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

The chi-square results as to whether sport tourism development would influence the peoples' income in the future induced all 3 groups' agreement ($\chi^2 = 5.224$, $p = 0.51$). Also, the chi-square analysis, as to whether sport (for example, wrestling) had increased the people's income in the past, yielded all 3 groups' disagreement ($\chi^2 = 1.663$, $p = 0.89$).

Table 1. Presentation of the frequency distributions of the study's samples, namely: tourists, tourism-cultural heritage organization managers and interested managers.

Sample frequency	Number	Percentage
Tourists	31	56.4
Tourism-cultural heritage organization managers	12	21.8
Interested managers	12	21.8
Total	55	100.0

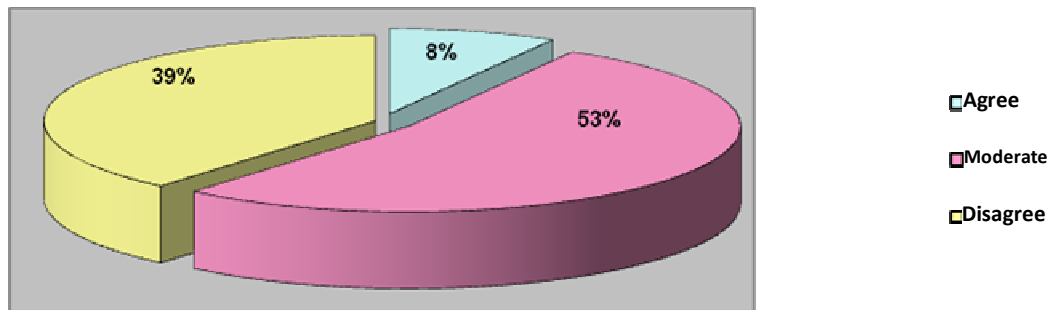


Figure 1. All 3 groups' view points regarding job creation in the region in terms of sport tourism in the past.

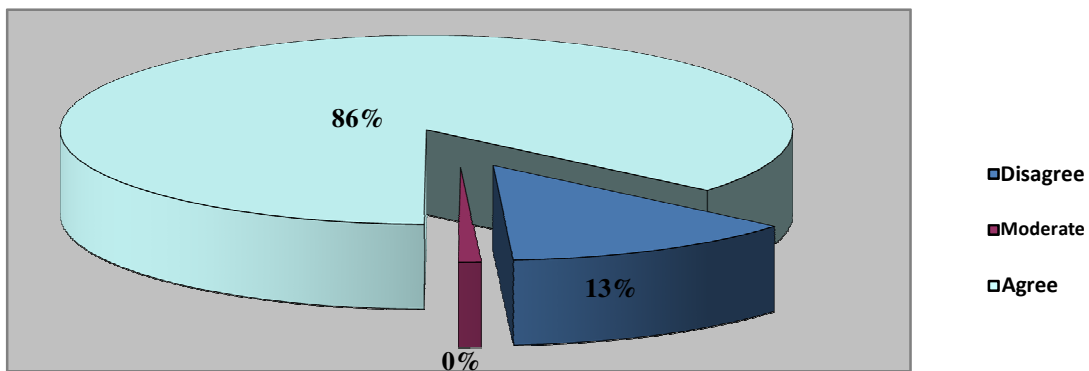


Figure 2. All 3 groups' view points regarding job creation as a result of investment in sport tourism industry in Mazandaran.

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 sport tourism in Mazandaran, had been at minimum. The research results indicated that job creation based on investment in local sport (for example, wrestling) was insignificant as well. So, it was possible that the marginal job creation was associated with lack of related facilities and infrastructures. Similarly, the impact of Los Angeles 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 in 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. The present study results indicate that the tourists and interested managers' viewpoints considering whether or not investment in sport tourism would bring about job creation in Mazandaran differed with those of cultural heritage organization managers who tended to disagree with this fact, whereas both tourists and interested managers would agree with it.

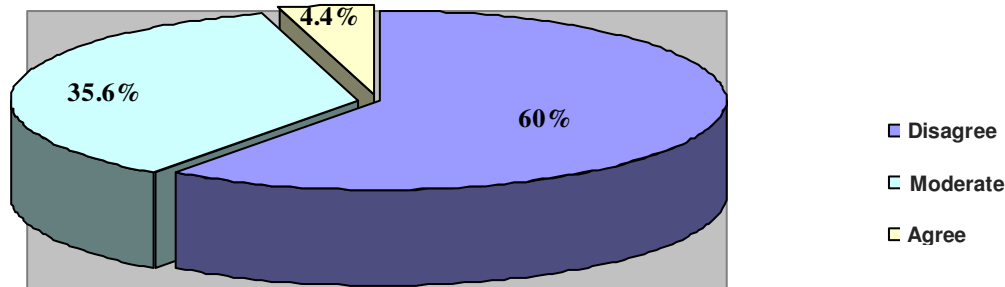


Figure 3. All 3 groups' view point regarding job creation resulting from investment in the sport sector (for example, wrestling) in Mazandaran, in the previous years.

The reason for tourists and cultural heritage managers' disagreement lies in the fact that they handled sport tourism as a separate component and did not consider sport tourism as a job creation tool which, now, has outperformed other industries. Also, the studies showed that Sidney Olympic games (2000) created 5300 jobs in south Walzder-Australia and 7500 jobs throughout Australia (Lockstone and 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 Tassiopoulou and Haydamb (2007). In terms of the impact of local sports (for example, wrestling) in the province upon the natives' income, all 3 groups would not favor this idea and thus relate their disagreement to lack of facilities and infrastructures in the tourism and sport fields. Nevertheless, the findings of Munday et al. (2009) and Lockstone and Baum (2008) indicate that the hosting regions enjoy considerable increase in income due to holding sport events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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