



The Role of Sports Tourism Development in Job Creation: Providing a Model

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the role of sports tourism development in job creation. The study was a descriptive survey study conducted in the field. The research population consisted of professors and graduate students studying sports management, entrepreneurship, and tourism at Tehran universities. The research samples were selected through a convenience sampling approach, and finally, 190 people completed the questionnaires. The instrument used in this research was adopted from library studies and literature reviews as well as interviews with five experts. This questionnaire has 10 items for the tourism development component, three items for the direct job creation component, and three items for the indirect job creation component. The face and content validity of the final questionnaire was confirmed by eight professors of sports management, entrepreneurship, and tourism. Convergent and divergent validity and composite reliability were checked and confirmed by the PLS software. Findings indicated that sports tourism had a positive and significant effect on direct job creation and all its dimensions; additionally, sports tourism had a positive and significant effect on indirect job creation and all its dimensions. The study results demonstrate that the development of sports tourism in Iran provides a basis for increasing direct and indirect job creation and permanent, seasonal, and part-time employment.

Introduction

It is necessary to use resources optimally to develop the economy in any society, organization, or group. In this regard, human resources serve as the most important and sensitive component (Eslami, Farahani, & Asadi, 2014). Human resources that are efficient and specialized are the most

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important driving force behind a society's economic, social, and cultural development (Pantić & Milojević, 2019). The development of organizations and institutions required by societies to achieve comprehensive social and economic development necessitates the training and provision of essential human resources in various economic and social sectors. As a result, providing human resources and lowering the unemployment rate by increasing employment levels are among a country's long-term strategic goals and policies (Waezi & Razeqi, 2018).

Population growth and an increase in the labor force, in respect to the demands, limit job opportunities in society and increase unemployment; as a result, it is necessary to study the capabilities and identify the current potentials and capacities in the country in order to generate investments and attract labor in economic activities for creating employment (Farahani, 2019). To some extent, these principles have shaped a country's employment policy, requiring decision-makers and policymakers to identify the influential factors in labor supply and demand to achieve a quantitative and qualitative balance of employment.

Paying attention to the tourism industry, which plays a crucial role in creating employment and entrepreneurship, is an effective factor in increasing individuals' employment in society (Shirvani, Eivazi, & Ghasemi, 2017). Tourism is one of the world's largest and most diverse industries, and it has eclipsed numerous economic, social, cultural, and environmental sectors (Aynalem, Birhanu, & Tesefay, 2016; Vujko et al., 2019). Since many tourism services cannot be provided using technologies, the tourism industry provides numerous job opportunities directly. Tourism is also a user industry, and many human resources can be employed in this industry (Owusu-Mintah, 2014). Consequently, tourism development in various locations creates opportunities for permanent, seasonal, and part-time employment for human resources with medium expertise and training, and lowers the unemployment rate (Eslami et al., 2014). Pantić and Milojević (2019)

Tourism has grown to become one of the world's largest industries in recent years. Over 1,186 million international tourists visited the world in 2015, generating approximately \$1,260 billion in revenue; according to the 2015 statistics, the tourism industry contributes 10% to the global GDP, exports contribute 7%, and the number of jobs created worldwide is estimated to be one job for every 11 jobs (UNWTO, 2014). Tourism is one of the most economically profitable industries for countries regarding employment, entrepreneurship, and economic prosperity (Akkemik, 2012; Kadiyali & Kosová, 2013). Hence, if it is properly planned and managed as a kind of invisible export, it can significantly contribute to job creation, wealth distribution, eradicated regional imbalances, reduced poverty, improved living standards and livelihoods of community members, and enhanced positive cultural interactions (Richards, 2014).

International statistics indicate that the tourism industry is continuously growing; the World Tourism Organization (WTO) reports that the number of international tourists was approximately one billion in 2010 and is expected to reach 1.6 billion by 2020, which is an increase of approximately 4.3%. Tourism revenue was projected to be approximately 1,000 billion in 2010 and approximately 2,000 billion in 2020 (Nishio, 2013). Narangajavana, Fiol, Tena, Artola, and García (2017) concluded in their research that it was critical to invest in developing tourism infrastructure to increase tourism investment, economic growth, and employment through social media advertising and policy measures.

Tourism has developed into a significant international trade case; international tourism has surpassed oil, fuel, and automobile industries as the fourth most significant source of export revenue (Seghir, Mostéfa, Abbes, & Zakarya, 2015). Tourism contributes significantly to income generation, employment, private sector growth, and infrastructure development in many countries (Lee & Chang, 2008). Pantić and Milojević (2019) concluded that it was essential to invest in developing tourism infrastructure for Serbia to experience increased economic growth and employment due to tourism investment policies. Economic growth and tourism are mutually reinforcing, which means that they both, directly and indirectly, satisfy customer requirements. Direct employment refers to positions in businesses, organizations, and institutions that are in direct contact with tourists, such as hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies. In addition, indirect employment refers to positions in establishments with which the tourist has no direct contact, such as bookkeeping firms, construction companies, and various handicraft stores (Owusu-Mintah, 2014).

Sports tourism is one of the most influential and significant sectors in the tourism industry that has the potential to become a multi-sector issue (Shahbazi, Jalali Farahani, & Khabiri, 2019). Sporting events have the potential to attract a large number of sports tourists (Elizabeth, 2019; Hosseinpour, Fahim Devin, & Adyal Baf Moghadam, 2014). In recent decades, sports tourism has been regarded as a novel form of tourism; as a result, tourism and sports have become increasingly interdependent and complementary. Sports activities, in the form of sports tourism, provide appropriate and diverse opportunities for job creation and economic development (Haddawee, 2018). Thus, the association between tourism and sports has resulted in developing a new and comprehensive structure for infusing leisure and recreation with mental and physical vitality (Gilani et al., 2012). For instance, hosting the Olympics, which garners global attention, provides the best opportunity to generate jobs in various fields. Millions of tourists and athletes enter a country that, with proper planning, has the potential to generate various jobs (Solberg & Preuss, 2007).

Increased recreational trips associated with sports and the prevalence of active lifestyles have enabled people to develop an interest in sports while on the road (Bayat, Seyed Ameri, Hosseinpour, & Fathi, 2013). Thus, sports tourists have become one of the primary sources of revenue and employment for the host community. According to Swart, Tichaawa, Othy, and Daniels (2018), hosting sporting events is critical for increasing employment and developing the Gabonese economy. Furthermore, according to a 2004 World Tourism Organization report, 55% of German and 52% of Dutch international travels are for sports. According to available data, developed countries earn more than \$20 billion annually from sports tourism; however, despite being one of the top ten countries in the world in terms of tourist attractions and one of the top five countries in terms of natural attractions, Iran has not benefited significantly from this sector thus far (Zeytounli & Zeytounli, 2012).

Numerous studies on sports tourism have been conducted, most of which emphasize permanent and long-term benefits, such as facility and infrastructure development, urban regeneration, international prestige, improved public welfare, tourism growth, and job creation (Rose & Spiegel, 2011). Thus, many cities host sporting events, which attract many tourists (Gratton & Dobson, 2002). Sports tourism events generate an estimated amount of \$27 billion in revenue in the United States annually, and more than 40% of Americans reported that they attended a sporting event as a spectator or participant in the last five years (Hamidi, Razavi, Amirnejad, Shafizadeh, & Fazli Darzi, 2010).

According to Adabi Firoozjah, Koozechian, and Ehsani (2009), sports tourism has developed as a leading industry in most countries of the world, and it is predicted that this industry will grow at an average annual rate of 10% by 2020. Hematinezhad, Shahriary, and Malek-Akhlagh (2015) concluded in their research that sports tourism was a critical development component of third-world countries. If developing countries make a concerted effort to develop this industry through developing targeted strategies, they can grow and prosper within their borders. According to one study by Panahi and Adami (2016), tourism development requires increased attention from those involved in the industry to create a context for extending attractive and motivating factors. Hence, many countries with significant investments have absorbed the benefits of sports tourism. They have embraced it as a critical source of economic, social, and political development (Emery, 2010) to increase their employment and income, develop their infrastructure, and enhance their funding and branding (Seghir et al., 2015).

Sports tourism is the third-largest industry globally, with the dual objective of generating revenue and creating jobs. It is one of the most significant resources available to leading countries in sports tourism for economic, social, and cultural purposes (Honarvar & Khatibzadeh, 2014). Furthermore, it is considered the most popular recreational activity. Sports tourism should be developed by utilizing the numerous fields available in its sports. According to (Homafar, Honari, Heidary, Heidary, & Emami, 2011), if the sports tourism industry and associated organizations are developed, the industry will affect job creation and revenue generation in areas where sporting events are to be held in the future. Holding sporting events is an effective tool for developing sports tourism; therefore, we must prioritize the development of the country's sports infrastructure in order to attract more foreign athletes and tourists, which can contribute to creation of new markets and direct and indirect jobs associated with sports tourism (Mollah, Cuskelly, & Hill, 2021).

Tourism and sports tourism are among the world's most diverse and largest industries, and many countries regard these dynamic sectors as their primary source of revenue, job creation, private sector growth, and infrastructure development. This issue is critical to the economies of developed countries, as over 500 tourism-related disciplines are taught in schools, colleges, and universities throughout Europe and the United States. Accordingly, education, culture, job creation, media management, and social media are crucial to establishment of academic training and valid certificates in the field of sports tourism. It is indispensable for academics and specialists in this field to lay the groundwork for the development of this industry by developing curricula with appropriate content and training specialized human resources. Hence, the researcher seeks to answer the question "How sports tourism development does affect job creation?"

Methodology

The method of the present study was quantitative of descriptive-survey type, and in terms of purpose, it was applied, which was conducted in the field. The statistical population of this study was all professors and graduate students studying sports management, entrepreneurship and tourism of Tehran universities. Statistical samples were obtained using convenience sampling, and 190 people answered the questionnaire of this research. The adequacy of the sample was confirmed by the Cochran's formula. The instrument used in this research was a questionnaire adopted from library studies and literature review as well as interviews with five experts in the field. This questionnaire has 10 items for the tourism development component: 3 items for the direct job creation component and 3 items for the indirect job creation component. The face and content validity of the final questionnaire was reviewed and confirmed by 8 professors of sports management, entrepreneurship and tourism. Convergent and divergent validity as well as composite reliability were checked and confirmed by the PLS software. The reliability of the questionnaire was also confirmed using Cronbach's alpha test. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and structural equation tests were employed to analyze the data. The software used in this research were SPSS and PLS software programs. The period of the present study was from October 2020 to February 2021.

Results

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics, including gender, education level, and field of study. Structural equation modeling was used to address the research hypothesis, aided by the PLS software. Structural equation modeling is a path modeling technique that enables the simultaneous study of theories and metrics.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the subjects

Variable	Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	140	73.7
	Female	50	26.3
Education level	M.A	114	60.0
	Ph.D.	76	40.0
Field of study	Sport Management	78	41.05
	Entrepreneurship	48	25.25
	Tourism	64	33.7

External model

PLS's external model is equivalent to structural equations' measurement model. The external model incorporates convergent and divergent validity, composite reliability, and an investigation of the factor load of items associated with the research structures, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Convergent validity and composite reliability (hybrid)

Composite reliability quantifies the degree to which one-dimensional questions correlate with a good fit of measurement models. When one or more attributes are quantified using two or more methods, the correlation between these measurements provides two critical validity indicators. If there is a high correlation between the results of tests measuring a single attribute, the questionnaire has convergent validity. This correlation is necessary to insure that the test measures the correct variables. The mean of the extracted average variance (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) is calculated for convergent validity. It is essential to obtain the following equations:

$$CR > 0.7 \quad (1)$$

$$AVE > 0.5 \quad (2)$$

Another relevant criterion for evaluating the external model in PLS modeling is that the structure should have the most common variance with its markers compared to the variance shared by other structures in the model. The researchers suggest using the average variance extracted (AVE) for this evaluation, which is the mean of the common variance between their structures and their markers. In this criterion for determining the measurement tool's validity, the hidden variable appears to have a greater degree of correlation with the specified markers than any other hidden variable. Table 2 summarizes the results of the convergent validity and composite reliability of the current study. The mean value of the average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5, confirming the convergent validity. The composite reliability (CR) value is greater than 0.7 in all cases, demonstrating that the composite reliability is greater than 0.7.

Divergent validity

We examine divergent validity using a matrix. The main diameter of this matrix contains the square root of the AVE of the latent variables, while the other tables contain the degree of correlation between the latent variables. Table 3 presents the results of divergent validity. As Table 3 shows, the values of the matrix's main diameter (the square root of the AVE coefficients in each structure) are greater than the values of the matrix's low diameter (correlation coefficients between each structure and another structure), indicating that the divergent validity of the structures is acceptable.

Table 2. Results of convergent validity and composite reliability

Research variables	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Composite reliability (CR)
Tourism development	0.54	0.84
Permanent job creation	0.74	0.89
Seasonal job creation	0.62	0.74
Part-time job creation	0.52	0.72
Direct job creation	0.57	0.68
Permanent job creation	0.73	0.87
Seasonal job creation	0.66	0.91
Part-time job creation	0.71	0.79
Indirect job creation	0.64	0.83

Table 3. Results of divergent validity

	Tourism development	Permanent	Seasonal	Part-time	Direct employment	Permanent	Seasonal	Part-time	Indirect employment
Tourism development	0.694								
Permanent	0.612	0.79							
Seasonal	0.578	0.732	0.78						
Part-time	0.569	0.568	0.493	0.71					
Direct employment	0.410	0.522	0.623	0.578	0.75				
Permanent	0.523	0.712	0.436	0.536	0.541	0.84			
Seasonal	0.495	0.523	0.635	0.487	0.415	0.635	0.81		
Part-time	0.689	0.574	0.712	0.635	0.678	0.754	0.615	0.84	
Indirect employment	0.657	0.556	0.706	0.587	0.635	0.725	0.593	0.768	0.80

Factor loading and T-values of each item

The reliability of the metrics in the structural equation method is determined using factor loading. This criterion indicates the degree to which these metrics are related to the underlying structure. Table 4 shows the factor loading and t-value (significant) statistics for the questionnaire items. According to Hulland (1999), the minimum acceptable value for each item's factor load is 0.4, and items with a factor load less than this value should be omitted from the test process (Hulland, 1999). Table 4 summarizes the factor load and the number of significant items associated with the structures of the current study. According to the results in Table 4, the factor loading obtained for items associated with each structure is greater than 0.4; therefore, the items in the research structures can be used to explain the structures.

Table 4. Factor loading and significant numbers of items associated with the structures

Structures	Items	Factor loading	Test statistic
Tourism development	Security	0.569	8.587
	Services and facilities	0.369	6.365
	Accommodation	0.268	5.326
	Economy	0.857	10.257
	Human resources	0.598	8.968
	Advertising and Marketing	0.745	9.369
	Transportation	0.468	7.632
	Sports events	0.435	7.235
	Places and equipment	0.278	5.758
	Tourism attractions	0.936	11.148
Direct job creation	Permanent employment	0.365	5.125
	Seasonal employment	0.832	9.123
	Part-time employment	0.648	7.186
Indirect job creation	Permanent employment	0.215	4.195
	Seasonal employment	0.589	7.185
	Part-time employment	0.436	6.652

Internal model of research

After testing the external model, the internal model must be presented, indicating the relationship between the research latent variables. The internal model can be used to examine the research hypotheses. The model's output contains standardized coefficients, and the significant coefficients

are presented in Figures 1 and 2. When the t-value for a path is greater than 1.96, it indicates the significance of the effect of specific structures on that path on one another after the research hypothesis is confirmed. The values on the standard state lines are the beta coefficients from the regression equation between the variables, which is also known as the path coefficient.

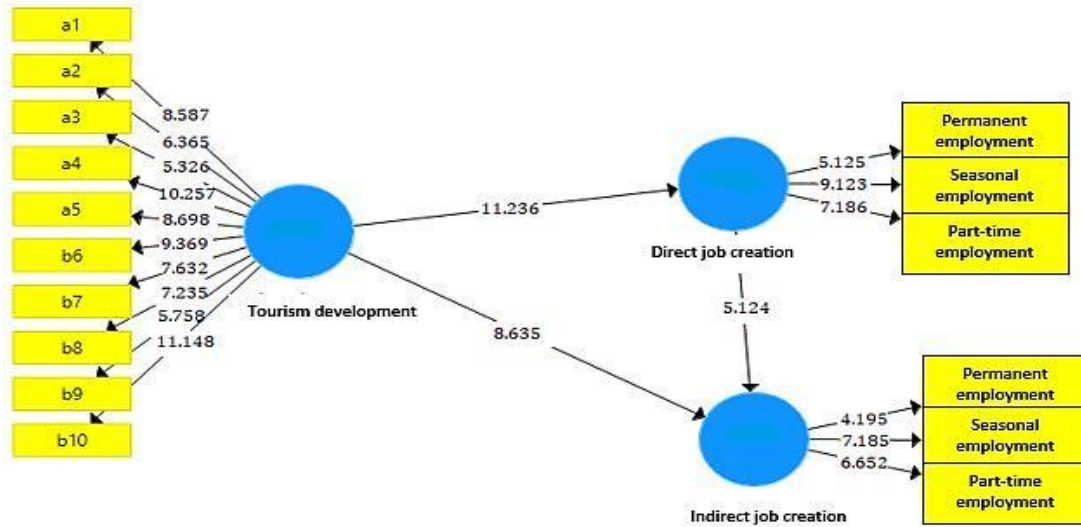


Figure 1. The research validated model expressed in terms of significance

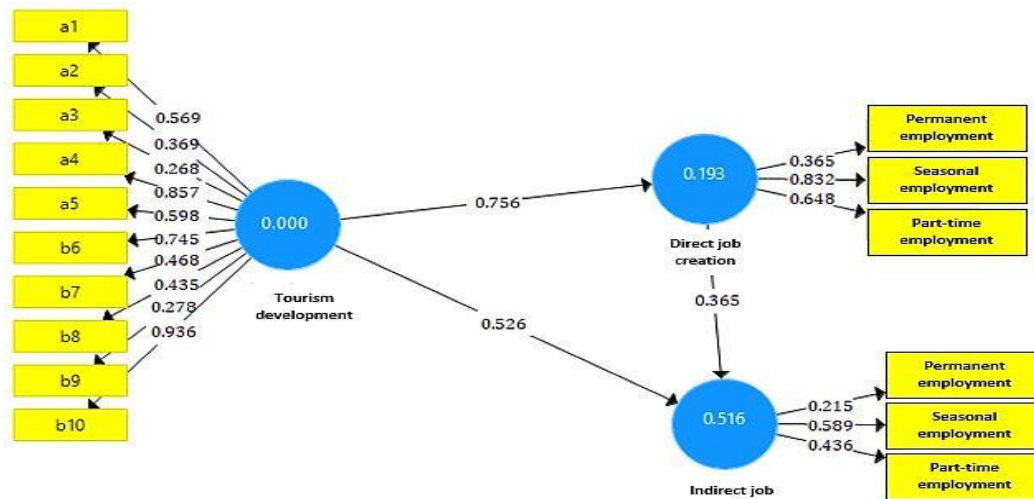


Figure 2. The research validated model expressed in terms of standard coefficients

Discussion and Conclusion

Sports tourism is a knowledge-based industry that has developed owing to recent advances in information and communication technologies that enable users to transfer, share, store, and create knowledge on a large scale. Technology advancements and their impact on consumer cultural distribution and access to travel-related information are required in sports tourism, as many countries with significant investments in this industry rely on it as a critical source of revenue and branding to improve their economic, social, and political positions, infrastructure development, and revenue generation. In light of the importance and position of sports tourism in society, this study sought to determine the role of sports tourism development in job creation. According to the results of structural equation modeling, sports tourism has a positive and significant effect on direct employment and all of its dimensions (permanent, seasonal, and part-time). Moreover, sports tourism has a positive and significant impact on indirect job creation in all of its forms (permanent, seasonal, and part-time). The findings of the present study corroborated those obtained by Vujko et

al. (2019), Aynalem et al. (2016), Kadiyali and Kosová (2013), Akkemik (2012), and Eslami et al. (2014).

The tourism industry has created an ideal environment for job creation and the development of sports tourism businesses. According to the findings of related research in this field, sports tourism is an excellent environment for job growth owing to the evolution of competitive environments and the complexity of various businesses.

Tourism is a significant source of employment and sustainable wealth generation in several countries. Numerous experts maintain that tourism can be referred to as the “white industry”, since it, unlike most manufacturing industries, fosters international friendship and understanding without polluting the human environment (Heidari & Khashei, 2016). Economically, tourism is the world’s largest and most diverse industry; according to World Tourism Organization statistics in 2016, one in every five people employed worldwide works in the tourism sector. Its annual revenue is approximately \$5.4 trillion, accounting for approximately 8% of the total global employment (UNWTO, 2014). Owing to the significance of sports in any country, particularly our own, we can appreciate the value of sports tourism and its impact on the economic issue, to the extent that Everett (2012) evaluated job opportunities and jobs created by various sporting events and concluded that hosting sporting events could generate new job opportunities both directly and indirectly. Additionally, this study indicated that tourism development could affect job creation, both directly and indirectly.

Direct and indirect employment in sports tourism indicates that the presence of foreign tourists in a country can stimulate both direct and indirect employment in sports (e.g., sports clubs, sports venues, sports shops, camps, and sports camps) (such as hotels, restaurants, handmade tourist attractions, transportation systems, and other businesses and industries that may be involved). Furthermore, some jobs are permanent in the field of direct and indirect employment, i.e. individuals continue to work until their retirement; some jobs are seasonal, i.e. they work during a specific time period or season; and the third type of employment is part-time, i.e. individuals have another job in addition to an activity in the field of direct or indirect employment in sports tourism. Moreover, this study stated that growing sports tourism could increase direct and indirect employment and permanent, seasonal, and part-time employment in a country. Bakhtiyari and Yazdani (2010) found that a new job was created for every 20 tourists directly and every 6 tourists indirectly. Owing to the sports industry’s high capacity for production and job creation, it is possible to use the benefits of this industry to help society to develop sustainably and economically through proper planning and management. The tourism industry has not developed well in our country, and sports and non-sports managers and planners must consider the issue to enhance economic development and job creation.

When tourists enter the country, in addition to their primary objective of attending a sporting event, they establish relationships with other related sectors and industries; this issue can mobilize industries and sectors indirectly related to sports, resulting in increased job creation. Thus, strengthening the relationship between these two sectors can increase employment rates (Honari, 2011). Countries that host various sporting events at various levels can provide opportunities for sports tourism development. Our country benefits from excellent natural resource and tourism conditions; however, it must create the conditions for these tourists to visit to promote these resources to the rest of the world, create jobs, and earn money. Sports events are one of the fields that should be employed to attract tourists through proper planning and management.

Among the significant findings of the study is that expanding sports tourism has a greater impact on part-time and seasonal employment than on permanent employment. Permanent employment requires the necessary opportunities for active development and continuity of activity; thus, given the lack of necessary fields and the government’s failure to support the field of sports tourism in the country, active employment in sports tourism is impossible. It is suggested that the country’s sports executive managers should develop sports tourism, attract sports tourists, implement appropriate programs, host major international sporting events, and improve the country’s sports infrastructure in order to create the conditions necessary to accomplish these goals.

Given the significance of tourism, particularly sports tourism, in developed countries' economic stability, we should follow suit and develop sports infrastructure in the field of tourism development and sports tourism in our country.

It is necessary to implement consistent management and comprehensive planning across all economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of the country to assist it in achieving its proper position in the development of sports tourism. Finally, this study recommends that appropriate infrastructure and sports facilities should be developed considering physical education graduates' abilities and experiences. It is also suggested that specialists in other fields should be employed and proper management and good advertising be promoted concerning sports tourism in the country. Holding various sports events in various fields with the participation of different countries can help to promote the country and its tourist attractions and to develop sports tourism, leading to increased job creation.

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