

Sport Tourism as a Tool for Halabja's Development

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, sport tourism is one of the essential elements in many countries. This study shows the importance of sport tourism in hosting countries which can have a positive impact on the life of local population such as economic and social system. This study investigates factors which have effect on developing of sport tourism in Halabja we interviewed with regard to best practice in order to explore those factors which have influenced on improving sport tourism in the study area such as host events, tourism facilities, recreational activities, infrastructure, natural, and advertising. Furthermore, the study uses Excel and SSPS program in order to explain and display date by chart and table. In addition, the result of this study shows that host event and tourism facilities is two most significance factors which have effect on the developing of sport tourism in Halabja province.

Keywords: Tourism, sport tourism, host event, Halabja province

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, tourism is one of the important elements for developing economy and industry in the world, especially for national economic. In the last few decades, the importance of tourism has become well-known in enhancing the economy of many countries. According to Eslami et al. (2013), the development of the tourism sector and its participation to national economy has enhanced the general recognition of tourism as a main job generator. Sport tourism is one of the important approaches which can promote tourism sector or world tourism. Some people believe that sport have a positive effect on the development of economy in several countries in many ways like sport tourism. Mbafut (2013) says that "the interest on sport-related tourism has been of growing

interest as a tourism product as well as an academic discipline" (p. 1).

What is Sport Tourism?

Today, tourism is the world's number one industry while sports are regarded as the number one industry in the leisure sector. It is emerging as a component of tourism supply. Major tourism destinations are promoting tourism product concepts rotating around pleasure sports.

Sport tourism is the travel undertaken for the purpose of involving in a special sport, e.g., golf, skiing, and to watch a preferable team play. Therefore, sport tourism can be defined as a special travel outside or international trips in order to engage in the international events and competitive sports such as Olympic, FIFA World Cup, and Champions League (Hinchand and Higham, 2011). In addition, sport can be described as a part of entertainment industry such as people watching football and sport in order to be entertained and it has many different aspects from other entertainment scoter or normal business (Buhler and Nufer, 2006).

Importance of Sport Tourism

Sport and tourism have a good relationship between them and they have an important role in commercial

Access this article online



Website:
<http://sjsr.se/>

ISSN:
2001-9211

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development and provide financial benefits for host countries or cities. For example, when people travel to host countries in order to watch football or participate in several types of sports and racing, they spend more money in host countries. Sport tourism does not only affect economy but it can also make an important contribution to improving community system. For this purpose, sport tourism is a suitable way to grow economy and build a stronger social system. There are many researches and studies have been investigation the impact of economic on sport tourism and the relationship between them. For instance, Gratton et al. (2006) argued that "the potential long-term benefits to a city of hosting the summer Olympics: Newly constructed event facilities and infrastructure, urban revival, enhanced international reputation, increased tourism, improved public welfare" (p. 42). Therefore, European Commission Report of the European Community notes that sport tourism or industry was responsible for nearly 2.5% of world trade in 1994. Furthermore, sport tourism can provide more job opportunities and participates straight to improve the national economy. Eslami et al. (2013) believe that sport tourism can have economic advantages through creating employment and providing great job opportunities for unskilled women and youth. On the other hand, sport tourism does not only have an impact on developing economy or but it also has an effect on the improvement of the social system and exchanging culture. Sport tourism is one of the fundamental elements which is related to social or community system. For instance, when people travel or move to another place of the world in order to watch their favorite team or involve in FIFA World Cup, this helps them exchange their culture, make foreigner friends that come from other countries (Marumo et al., 2015).

Aim of the Research

1. Identify sport tourism
2. Identifying the impact of sport tourism on economy
3. This research will help in future researches related to sport tourism.

Research Questions

1. Why is sport tourism important in Halabja city?
2. What are the factors which influence the sport tourism in Halabja city?

Overview of the Problems

Countries and communities are increasingly aware of the fact that the economic situation must take the

initiative and seek new ways in order to develop of their economic. Although the situation is different in different parts of the world, the tourism industry has always been a force for economic development. Furthermore, this field could be a cause for changes in economic and social sectors. Therefore, local planning at the regional level for the sport tourism as well as unified management is imperative and necessary. Currently, cities and provinces are considered space expression of economic power, political, social, and cultural arm of the government. Management and planning for urban areas in the province are needed dynamic and systematic approach until developed with instruments and strategies, and identifying stimulants to achieve the goals. According to the Ministry of Planning of Kurdistan Regional Government (2012), Kurdistan region population has been increasing especially since 2003. Halabja city as one of the important areas of Kurdistan region has extended as a result of the growth of economy and population. This growth has had an impact on Halabja city in terms of tourism sector. Tourism sector requires management, urban planners and authorities of Halabja need to carefully consider this aspect. In this regard, this study examines the potential of sport tourism from the perspective of managers and experts, the participation of organizations in the field of tourism, the tourism infrastructure capabilities in the sector, identifying the main potential in attracting tourists in sport, review priorities, places such as natural sports, sports potential, and priorities of local sports in the province have been investigated. Finally, this study utilizes the benefits of the various interests of the individual, economic, social, political, and cultural had been proven to be the field of attention in several studies to managers and officials, planners and policy makers in the tourism and sport. Furthermore, in collaboration with appropriate organizations to identify and develop attractive entertainment and sport upgrade, payment and expansion of the industry and the management of its regional launch are necessary for infrastructure in the provinces and various cities.

Literature Review

Tourism can be defined when people leave their live and countries to go to other places and environments in order to participate in activities there such as sport events and shopping. According to Athanasopoulou (2013, p. 5), "tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon, which entails the movement of people

to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors.” Therefore, tourism sector has played a significant role in improving economic world. Moreover, several developing countries have worked to raise their involvement in the world economy through the development of international tourism (Richardson, 2010). Furthermore, tourism can provide more benefits for commercial development and economic progress in several countries, particularly developing countries (United Nations, 2013). On the other hand, tourism has another importance in social improvement because tourism can have built a bridge between cultures. According to Athanasopoulou (2013), tourism is an important driver of social improvement and economic growth.

Economic and Social Impact

Sport tourism is one of the important ways which can contribute to economic growth in both countries (developed countries and developing countries). For example, sport tourism can make a significant contribution to national and local economies and has essential potentials to further build on this participation especially for industrial countries (Dehnavi et al., 2012). Furthermore, several researches and studies show that sport tourism have played an important role in developing local economic and income. For instance, Homafar et al. (2011) argued that sport tourism is the main improving sector of the tourism industry and unique chance for domestic marketing. Sport tourism has become a significant means for the economic growth to domestic community. Such as, tourism officials estimated that Cricket World Cup provided 1.2 billion rands for the economics of South Africa in 2003 (Elendu, 2013). Furthermore, several kinds of the sport events can bring important effect on local economy or host countries economy. According to Huang (2011), the Olympic Games are the most popular sport event in the world, and have more fans than any other sport, which can promote local economy.

Sport tourism does not only contribute to improving local economy or hosting countries but it also influences on hosting countries in terms of social system. Sport tourism often has cultural components which promote and allow domestic cultural expression and improvement. According to Hritz and Ross (2010), sport tourism provides more opportunities to build strong relationship between hosting countries and gusting countries and has a positive influence on social

system. This reason helps tourists make new friends and integrate between national and international community and culture. During events, sport can help people make and establish relation between both nation and international sport tourists. These relationships between each other are counting after sport events by individual relationship and friendship (Elendu, 2013). Another benefit impact of sport tourism on hosting countries is that it is useful way to ingrate culture between nation and international countries. Elendu (2013) argues that “mega sports events provide the opportunity to incorporate supporting events and attractions of social and cultural nature that promote the host country’s capabilities, culture and traditions even further” (p. 145).

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Study Area

The study area, Halabja city, is situated in the east of Kurdistan region of Iraq. It falls in southeastern of Sulaymaniyah with the distance of approximately 80 km (Figure 1). It lies among longitude $45^{\circ}58'59.05''\text{E}$ and latitude $35^{\circ}10'59.22''\text{N}$. Additionally, Halabaja province covers an area of nearly 1260 km² (Alwaely et al., 2015).

Geographical View of Halabja

Topographically, Halabja locates in the southeastern plain of Sharazur and mountain of Hawraman in the north; bordered by mountain of Balamboin the south and in the west, it is surrounded by the dam of Darbandikhan and Serwan Lake (Alwaely et al., 2015), it has a beautiful nature and environment which has attracted many visitors or tourists. In terms

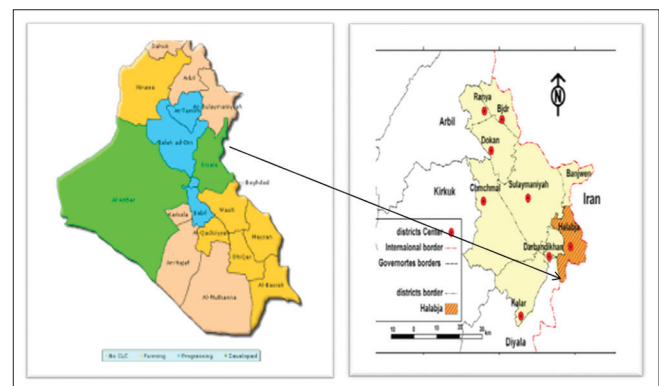


Figure 1: Study area (Halabja city)

of environment, Halabja city is surrounded by many mountains and beautiful places which are covered by vegetation, green areas like Hawraman chain of mountains, and there are several archeological areas and tourist areas such as Kormal and also waterfalls such as Ahmad Awa (Alwaely et al., 2015). These natural resources of Halabja are an important factor which can facilitate doing several types of sport activities and having a good time. According to Farajirad and Aghajani (2010). In terms of climate, Kurdistan has a semi-arid climate. The weather is very cold and wet during season of winter, temperature in winter decreases to about 7°C and sometimes drops to 0°C, particularly in January. In summer, the weather is dry and hot. The highest temperature which is regularly recorded from June to August and it may reach to more than 38°C and 40°C. Halabja city as other cities of Kurdistan region has almost the same climate (Zakaria et al., 2013). In addition, Halabja city also has autumn and spring seasons in which the nature portrays its beauty especially in spring.

Data Collection - Interviewees

This research is especially important because it shows the function of tourism industry and the influence of this type of tourism on economy, social-cultural, environmental, and political improvement in Halabja province as a destination.

Kurdistan policy makers and those organizations which are related to the sport tourism have to realize the importance of increasing the standards of sports infrastructure and tourism facilities to obtain their long-term aims. Methods of qualitative and quantitative were utilized in this research in order to get data. "A literature study was used to provide background to the study, presenting a holistic understanding of sport tourism events, while placing in context what the study sought to achieve" (Ntloko and Swart, 2008, p. 81). Statistical society of this study included 15 subjects ranging from authorities, expert staffs which are related to sport and geographic aspect. Furthermore, this study has selected non-randomly and purposefully methods. This research used Interview and questionnaire method in order to collect the data. These were appropriate ways particularly for the topic and its case as there are not enough maps and statistics. In addition, Excel and SPSS techniques are the other methods utilized to find some data, which were related to the research such as data illustrated by tables and charts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In order to be able to answer its questions, the study tried to collect and analyse the collected data via different means such as interviews, and the study utilized several statistical techniques such as Excel.

Table 1 shows mean and standard deviation and rank of the six factors. Based on the findings of the research, hosting international events with 4.88 mean, 31.81 rank, offerings standard service to visitors with 4.83 mean, 31.25 rank, national championship of the national level with 4.66 mean, 27.83 rank, specialty executives managers in the sports tourism sector with 4.66 mean, 27.47 rank, establishing security in different areas of tourism with 4.50 mean, 26.25 rank, and conference halls, museums, historical and holy places with 4.55 mean, 25.81 rank. While written advertising activities with 3.00 mean, 5.89 rank, authorized attractions related to authorized hunting birds and animals with 3.50 mean, 11 rank, and electronic advertising activities and attractions related to riding on the slopes and meadows with 3.50 mean, 11.92 rank had the highest and lowest mean and rank of tourism development in Halabja province, respectively. The result from this research agree with the Westerbeek et al. (2001) explain that hosting events is the more important factor which has an effect on tourism sector and sport tourism in host countries. Their study revealed that the sport events are essential phenomena which have provided advantage for the local community.

Furthermore, the findings of the study indicate that rank of host event (25.72), while infrastructure (23.22) but tourism facilities (18.00), recreational activities (16.44), Natural (15.97), and advertising (14.47) (Chart 1). In addition, the result from Chart 2 illustrates that the

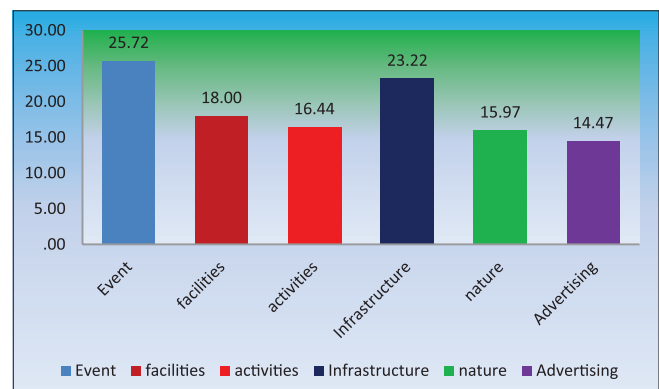


Chart 1: Rank of the factors

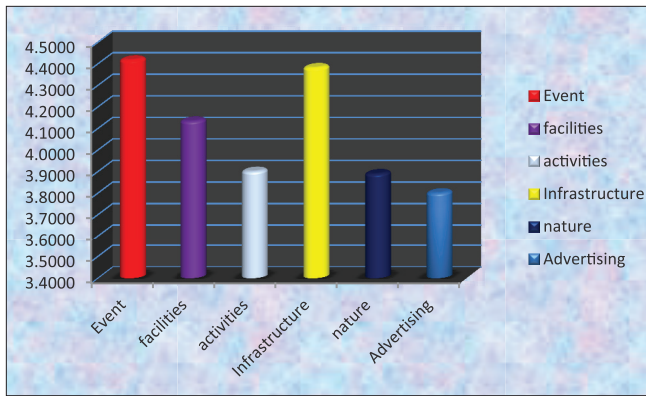


Chart 2: More information about factors which use in the study

event is a more important factor if compare with other factor while advertising is less significant factor than nature. The result of the research illustrates that the facilities and infrastructure are another two important factors among all other factor. The income from this survey agrees with the finding of Rajaiee et al. (2011) believe that infrastructure and facilities are two essential significant factors in the improvement of sport tourism and eligibility for hosting significant sport event.

The conducted interviews which have been done, allowed the researcher to get some non-governmental and also

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and rank of factors which have effect on developing of sport tourism in Halabja

Factors	Question	Mean	SD	Rank
Host event	1. Hosting international events	4.88	0.32	31.81
	2. National championship in the national level	4.66	0.48	27.83
	3. Hosting conferences and university sport competitions	4.33	0.48	22.75
	4. Supporting sponsors	4.33	0.48	23.00
	5. Specialty executive managers in the sports tourism sector	4.66	0.48	27.47
	6. Having a club in the premier league	3.50	0.78	12.06
Tourism facilities	1. Coordination of relevant ministries and institutions for the development of tourism	4.16	1.09	22.50
	2. Appropriate design models for visiting sport tourists	3.83	0.92	15.69
	3. Medical and welfare services	4.16	1.24	23.25
	4. Creating sport tourism agencies	3.66	0.48	12.28
	5. Offering standard services to visitors	4.83	0.38	31.25
Recreational activities	1. Attractions related to climbing and rock climbing	3.66	0.97	14.53
	2. Attractions associated with swimming, diving and scuba diving	4.16	0.70	20.06
	3. Attractions related to boating , sailing and hydro-ski	4.00	1.02	20.81
	4. Attraction associated with winter sports (skiing, snow skiing, climbing and ski jumping)	3.83	1.24	18.56
	5. Attractions related to the castle mountain (paragliding)	3.77	1.06	17.31
Infrastructure	1. Recreational centers and night clubs	4.44	0.51	23.83
	2. Quality communication services and telecommunications	4.38	0.50	23.69
	3. Restaurants, hotels and accommodation centers (quality, price, quantity)	4.33	0.48	23.06
	4. Conference halls, museums, historical and holy places	4.55	0.51	25.81
	5. Welfare and urban transportation easier	4.38	0.50	23.39
	6. Existence of commercial centers and sales	4.27	0.46	21.58
Natural	1. Attractions related to riding on the slopes and meadows	3.50	0.78	11.92
	2. Attractions related to walking and running slowly in nature	4.33	0.76	24.31
	3. Attractions related to cycling	3.50	0.78	11.94
	4. Authorized attractions related to authorized hunting birds and animals	3.50	0.51	11
	5. Existence of lakes, forests, mountains, scenery and beautiful landscapes	4.33	0.48	22.78
	6. Climate conditions of the province	4.16	0.92	20.53
Advertising	1. Electronic advertising activities	3.50	0.51	11.92
	2. Media advertising activities	4.00	0.59	17.36
	3. Written advertising activities	3.00	0.59	5.89
	4. Advertising for the prevention of insecurity	4.00	1.18	19.78
	5. Establishing security in different areas of tourism	4.50	0.78	26.25

SD: Standard deviation

governmental information and data. Table 1 that has been utilized in the study shows the result of this analysis. These are all showing more benefits of the sport tourism in the case study as they had/have significant impacts on different aspects of the life of its citizens such social or culture and growth in economy. According to Hassan (2016) argues that sport tourism can have contributed in developing economic and social system in Halabja city. Furthermore, Nasir (2016) believes that sport tourism is one of the important phenomena to mix culture.

CONCLUSION

Sports and tourism are two important phenomena which contribute to the improvement of any national economy and social system. There is a high mobility in sports and among sports participants. Sports have taken many people to countries, and continents of the world. In addition, people can travel far for the sake of sports. People temporarily leave their home and spend many hours outside their countries or cities in order to participate in a sport event or another. Sport tourism can contribute to, infrastructural, social, cultural, and economic improvement of the host city or country. However, the wave of sport tourism in Halabja is slowed down as a result of the lack of a strong infrastructure, corruption, weak sports management, and security challenges. Furthermore, SPSS and Excel technical are applied in the study in order to show data which are used in the study.

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