

FEASIBILITY OF INTERNAL FACTORS OF MAZANDARAN PROVINCE TOURISM SPORT ABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

This research has been done with the aim of Feasibility of internal factors of Mazandaran province tourism sporty abilities. Research method was mixed that has been done quantitatively and qualitatively. The statistical population of this research is composed of all masters of sport and tourism management in Mazandaran province which because of restriction, all members of statistical population has been considered as research sample (n=101). Measurement tools included researcher-made questioner has that is arranged and adjusted as Delphi method. Face validity of the questionnaires was confirmed by masters and its reliability was accounted and determined as 0/77 by using Cronbach's alpha test. Also, in addition to descriptive statistics, T-test and Friedman test has been used for inferential analysis of findings. According to T-test, the results showed that internal factors of Mazandaran province sporty tourism is acceptable by experts in the meaningful level $p < 0/01$. Also according to Friedman test, the meaningful level of all variables of internal factors was equivalent to 0.001 that was the determinant of priority existence and Lack of coordination between strengths and weaknesses (internal factors) of Mazandaran province sport tourism.

Keywords: *Sporty Tourism, Mazandaran Province, SWOT Internal Factors*

INTRODUCTION

Today, sport industry has been developed rapidly in recent decades. This industry had growth of \$ 213 Billion in the late of 1990s and in addition, this growth was reached to more than \$ 90 billion in the early of next decade (Mahoney and Howard, 2001). Now, sport is one of the most major social events in the world (Kurtzman and Zauhar, 2003) and people participation in that causes social, cognitive and emotional development and fitness improvement (Cohen *et al.*, 2014) and tourism is the most common economic sector (McCannell, 2002) Also, industrial sport tourism is relatively new and one of the most rapid growth sections in tourism industry that concentrates on destination planning in developing countries and has been recognized as a factor in economic and social regeneration of urban and rural communities (Henry, 2012).

Sport tourism is an industry that is emerged from combination of tourism and sport industry. In other words, sport is one of the important tourist's activities during tourism (Honarvar, 2005). Therefore, the expansion and development of sport tourism industry is one of the areas that help tourism expansion and can potentially lead to attract lots of tourists both internal and external. Because of existing thousands of tourist and historical attractions in Mazandaran province, it is in very good level of required potentials to set up various sport activities.

According to importance and necessity of sport tourism and mentioned statements, we can say that one of the important proceedings to accomplish the mission of Mazandaran tourism organization and effectiveness of its activities is utilization of strategic planning. So, in order to achieving the objectives that are about feasibility of sports tourism potentials of Mazandaran province with SWOT analysis, it is necessary to do lots of research about this issue. In this research, we try to investigate strength and weakness points (internal factors) of development of sport tourism in the studied area and present strategies to sustainable development of sporty tourism in Mazandaran province by collecting data in the form of tourists SWOT model.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

For achieving the aim of this research, in addition to quantitative methods, qualitative methods such as interviews with masters of sport and tourism management like masters of tourism, geography, sports economics, managers of tourism enterprises, pundits and the people attended at the sports tourism area in Mazandaran province were used. Due to the objectives and research method, sampling in the first phase of research was done purposefully and accessibly and continued until interviews receive to the theoretical saturation stage (20 persons). Also, because of restriction, all statistical universe of this research included masters of sport and tourism management, masters of tourism, geography, and managers of tourism institutions in Mazandaran province (totally 101 persons) was considered as statistical sample. Measuring tools included scholar's questionnaire was made which designed and set according to Delphi method and distributed in two phases. This questionnaire included 56 questions in two sections contained strengths points (questions 24) and weaknesses points (questions 32) which items associated with each question were accomplished by using of Likert 5-options method. Face validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by sports and tourism professionals and its reliability was calculated and determined by Cronbach's alpha calculation ($r=0/77$). In this research, two methods of descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. At first, some information about status and demographic characteristics of respondents was obtained by using cognitive descriptive statistics. Then, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test, t-test and Friedman test were used for testing questions in the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What are the sporty tourism's blind spots and priorities of Mazandaran province?

To test this question, binomial test and subsequently Friedman test was used. According to findings associated with mentioned question, these tests were used in order to estimation of existing indicators conditions and questions of research tools in different sections. So, the base number (in T-test) in this research was considered 3 according to the questionnaire scores in each section (spectrum used in research tools is 5). According to the findings of this research, from experts' points of view, related factors to the weaknesses of sporty tourism of Mazandaran province are acceptable in meaningful level of $p<0.0$). Also, the results of Friedman test about the weaknesses of sporty tourism of Mazandaran province were meaningful with χ^2 88.889 and freedom degree of 31 ($p<0.01$). These results represents the higher priority of rating average 20.32 to lack of doing scientific marketing criterion by experts' help and modern technology in the field of sporty tourism (table 1).

Table 1: Friedman test statistics obtained by analyzing the sporty tourism weakness of Mazandaran province

| Ranking average | Average | Criterion | Ranking |
|-----------------|---------|--|---------|
| 20.39 | 4.45 | Lack of doing scientific marketing by experts' help and modern technology in the field of sporty tourism | 1 |
| 16.74 | 4.14 | Lack of using modern technology of the world in holding athletic competitions | 13 |
| 17.14 | 4.13 | Lack of international standards in stadiums and sports halls | 9 |
| 18.14 | 4.27 | Lack of professionals in different positions | 4 |
| 14.74 | 3.95 | not assigned special camps to sports tourists | 30 |
| 16.11 | 4.0 | lack of private sector participation in the field of sports tourism | 19 |
| 16.00 | 4.02 | Lack of holding scientific seminars in the field of sports tourism | 21 |
| 17.50 | 4.17 | Lack of sports tourism advertising in the media | 8 |
| 16.10 | 4.04 | Lack of cooperation and coordination between the various organizations in the field of sports tourism | 20 |
| 15.38 | 3.91 | Lack of various websites about cultural-sports problems | 25 |
| 15.34 | 4.01 | Lack of release of information related to sports events and their | 26 |

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| | | lateral ceremony before holding of sports events | |
| 14.85 | 3.85 | Lack of appropriate sport- entertainment places in the town | 29 |
| 17.02 | 4.13 | Lack of universal credit card system in ATMs and shopping malls | 11 |
| 13.46 | 3.72 | Lack of sports events reflection in the media | 32 |
| 16.22 | 4.01 | Quality of urban public transport | 18 |
| 14.58 | 3.88 | Lack of implementation of Conferences or special ceremony in holding of sports events | 31 |
| 15.04 | 3.92 | High level of prices of goods and services costs | 27 |
| 15.93 | 3.95 | Lack of holding international sports tournaments and races | 22 |
| 17.12 | 4.11 | Bureaucratic administrative rules for acceptance and attracting tourists | 10 |
| 15.87 | 3.97 | Lack of budget and dedicated financial resources for sports tourism | 23 |
| 16.66 | 4.04 | Lack of encouragement and stimulus systems for researchers' activity | 15 |
| 16.60 | 4.09 | Lack of appropriate sports spaces with attractive architecture for races | 16 |
| 17.53 | 4.17 | To ignore sports tourism of province in TV networks | 7 |
| 15.70 | 4.01 | Weak potential for participation in the international sports leagues | 24 |
| 14.87 | 3.91 | Lack of appropriate hotel and restaurant adjacent to tourist attraction centers | 28 |
| 16.59 | 4.11 | Lack of holding different sports tours with appropriate quality | 17 |
| 16.71 | 4.08 | Lack of holding sports procurement camps at national and international level | 14 |
| 18.24 | 4.21 | Lack of communication infrastructure | 3 |
| 16.81 | 4.08 | Lack of attention to sports tourism of province in the past | 12 |
| 17.73 | 4.21 | Weakness of sporting-cultural infrastructure | 6 |
| 19.14 | 4.32 | Lack of applied short-term and long-term programs of sport and tourism | 2 |
| 17.76 | 4.19 | Not use of academic potential of the country to grow the sport | 5 |

What are the Priorities and Strength Points of Mazandaran Province Sporty Tourism?

T-test has been used to examine this question too. According to the findings of this research, from studied samples points of view, related factors to the strengths of sporys tourism of Mazandaranprovincene are acceptable in meaningful level $p < 0.01$. Also, the results of Friedman test about the strengths section criteria in sporty tourism of Mazandaran province were meaningful with K square 108.572 and degree of freedom 23 ($p < 0.01$). These results give higher priority to various local and natural attractions criterion for holding tours and various sporty competitions on rating average of 15.20 (table 2).

Table 2: Friedman test statistics obtained by sports tourism strengths analysis of Mazandaran province

| Ranking average | average | Criteria | Ranking |
|-----------------|---------|---|---------|
| 14.59 | 4.44 | Historic buildings and primeval places | 2 |
| 13.58 | 4.36 | Diversity of traditions and crafts | 6 |
| 15.20 | 4.5 | various local and natural attractions for holding tours and various sports competitions | 1 |
| 14.04 | 4.33 | To hold various sports competitions in different leagues | 3 |

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| | | framework | |
| 12.94 | 4.24 | Social security in order to hold sports competitions | 11 |
| 13.72 | 4.29 | Various climates in different seasons of the year for holding different sports events | 5 |
| 13.80 | 4.31 | Native economic potential for investment in tourism | 4 |
| 11.58 | 3.91 | Entertainment, utilities and welfare Services with appropriate price | 17 |
| 11.70 | 3.94 | existence of food and beverage proportional to different tastes of tourists | 16 |
| 11.42 | 3.79 | Authorities belief in employment through tourism industry | 18 |
| 10.22 | 3.76 | Public awareness of tourism | 24 |
| 10.41 | 3.75 | Existence of health and medical facilities | 23 |
| 10.43 | 3.72 | Proper water recreation center | 22 |
| 12.58 | 4.02 | Availability of suitable sports tourism routes | 13 |
| 11.04 | 3.93 | To hold native-local races in different fields | 21 |
| 11.22 | 3.93 | Ability to hold national sporting events | 19 |
| 12.85 | 4.15 | To hold races and national sporting tournaments | 12 |
| 13.14 | 4.18 | The susceptibility of the province to investment and sports tourism planning | 10 |
| 12.56 | 4.1 | Existence of relaxed environment and without noise of large cities | 14 |
| 11.22 | 3.92 | Proper geographical condition | 20 |
| 13.22 | 4.24 | Sports tourism infrastructure development in the province | 9 |
| 11.84 | 4.06 | Fans encouragement to accompany sports teams in the cities of the province | 15 |
| 13.44 | 4.28 | Foreigners awareness promotion interested in Sport tourism and ecotourism to the province facilities | 7 |
| 13.26 | 4.29 | To enrich the leisure time of youth and young adults throughout the year | 8 |

Internal factors evaluation matrix has been used to assess the internal factors. After recognizing the internal factors (weaknesses and strengths), priority factors were located in a matrix column and scored by specific coefficients and ranksto finally determines that sporty tourism strategic plan of province Mazandaran will have either more strengths for the future that want to plan for it or face with more weaknesses. Because the final score of sporty tourism of Mazandaran province in this matrix is 2.417, we conclude that the weaknesses of sport tourism of Mazandaran province will partially dominateits strengths. It is noteworthy that the amount of importancecoefficient and criteria priority has been presented as arithmetic average which statistical population of the research was respondent (table.3)

Table 3: Evaluation matrix of internal factors of Mazandaran province sport tourism

| × rank) (weight) | Rank | Weight | Strengths |
|---------------------|------|--------|---|
| 0.071 | 3.58 | 0/02 | Historical buildings and primeval places |
| 0.068 | 3.42 | 0/02 | Diversity of traditions and crafts |
| 0.079 | 3.16 | 0/025 | various local and natural attractions for holding tours and various sports competitions |
| 0.113 | 3.66 | 0/025 | To hold various sports competitions in different leagues framework |
| 0/067 | 3.83 | 0/02 | Social security in order to hold sports competitions |

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|--------------------|------|--------|---|
| 0/083 | 3.13 | 0/025 | Various climates in different seasons of the year for holding different sports events |
| 0/071 | 3-58 | 0/02 | Native economic potential for investment in tourism |
| 0/083 | 3.33 | 0/025 | Entertainment, utilities and welfare Services with appropriate price |
| 0/07 | 3.5 | 0/02 | existence of food and beverage proportional to different tastes of tourists |
| 0/063 | 3.16 | 0/02 | Authorities belief in employment through tourism industry |
| 0/067 | 3.33 | 0/02 | Public awareness of tourism |
| 0/073 | 3.66 | 0/02 | Existence of health and medical facilities |
| 0/047 | 3.16 | 0/015 | Proper water recreation center |
| 0/054 | 3.58 | 0/015 | Availability of suitable sports tourism routes |
| 0/051 | 3.42 | 0/015 | To hold native-local races in different fields |
| 0/047 | 3.16 | 0/015 | Ability to hold national sporting events |
| 0/091 | 3.66 | 0/025 | To hold races and national sporting tournaments |
| 0/096 | 3.83 | 0/025 | The susceptibility of the province to investment and sports tourism planning |
| 0/083 | 3.33 | 0/025 | Existence of relaxed environment and without noise of large cities |
| 0/089 | 3.58 | 0/025 | Proper geographical condition |
| 0/083 | 3.33 | 0/025 | Sports tourism infrastructure development in the province |
| 0/07 | 3.5 | 0/02 | Fans encouragement to accompany sports teams in the cities of the province |
| 0/063 | 3.16 | 0/02 | Foreigners awareness promotion interested in Sport tourism and ecotourism to the province facilities |
| 0/05 | 3.33 | 0/015 | To enrich the leisure time of youth and young adults throughout the year |
| × rank) (weight | Rank | weight | Weaknesses |
| 0/028 | 1.28 | 0/022 | Lack of doing science marketing by experts' help and modern technology in the field of sports tourism |
| 0/027 | 1.57 | 0/017 | Not use of modern technology of the world in holding athletic competitions |
| 0/029 | 1.71 | 0/017 | Lack of international standards in stadiums and sports halls |
| 0/016 | 1.28 | 0/013 | Lack of professionals in different positions |
| 0/016 | 1.28 | 0/013 | not assigned special camps to sports tourists |
| 0/011 | 1.42 | 0/008 | lack of private sector participation in the field of sports tourism |
| 0/038 | 1.71 | 0/022 | Lack of holding scientific seminars in the field of sports tourism |
| 0/011 | 1.42 | 0/008 | Lack Of sports tourism advertising in the media |
| 0/018 | 1.14 | 0/013 | Lack of cooperation and coordination between the various organizations in the field of sports tourism |
| 0/008 | 1 | 0/008 | Lack of various websites about cultural-sports problems |
| 0/017 | 1.28 | 0/013 | Lack of release of information related to sports events and their lateral ceremony before holding of |

Research Article

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| 0/017 | 1 | 0/017 | sports events |
| | | | Lack of appropriate sport- entertainment places in the town |
| 0/022 | 1 | 0/022 | Lack of universal credit card system in ATMs and shopping malls |
| 0/018 | 1.42 | 0/013 | Lack of sports events reflection in the media |
| 0/009 | 1.14 | 0/008 | Quality of urban public transport |
| 0/017 | 1.28 | 0/013 | Lack of implementation of Conferences or special ceremony in holding of sports events |
| 0/034 | 1.57 | 0/022 | High level of prices of goods and services costs |
| 0/029 | 1.71 | 0/017 | Lack of holding international sports tournaments and races |
| 0/016 | 1.28 | 0/013 | Bureaucratic administrative rules for acceptance and attracting tourists |
| 0/022 | 1.28 | 0/017 | Lack of budget and dedicated financial resources for sports tourism |
| 0/018 | 1.42 | 0/013 | Lack of encouragement and stimulus systems for researchers' activity |
| 0/022 | 1.71 | 0/013 | Lack of appropriate sports spaces with attractive architecture for races |
| 0/031 | 1.42 | 0/022 | To ignore sports tourism of province in TV networks |
| 0/019 | 1.14 | 0/017 | Weak potential for participation in the international sports leagues |
| 0/026 | 2 | 0/013 | Lack of appropriate hotel and restaurant adjacent to tourist attraction centers |
| 0/022 | 1.28 | 0/017 | Lack of holding different sports tours with appropriate quality |
| 0/017 | 1 | 0/017 | Lack of holding sports procurement camps at national and international level |
| 0/022 | 1 | 0/022 | Lack of communication infrastructure |
| 0/031 | 1.42 | 0/022 | Lack of attention to sports tourism of province in the past |
| 0/025 | 1.14 | 0/022 | Weakness of sporting-cultural infrastructure |
| 0/022 | 1.28 | 0/017 | Lack of applied short-term and long-term programs of sport and tourism |
| 0/027 | 1.57 | 0/017 | Not use of academic potential of the country to grow the sport |
| 2/417 | - | 1 | Summation |

Conclusion

According to the results of Friedman test, various local and natural attractions for holding tours and various sports competitions, historic buildings and primeval places, to hold various sports competitions in different leagues framework, native economic potential for investment in tourism, various climates in different seasons of the year for holding different sports events have been recognized as the most important strengths of Mazandaran province in sports tourism, respectively. It is associated with the results of the researches by(Yar *et al.*, 2010; Honarvar., 2005; Visia *et al.*, 2012;Razavi *et al.*, 2011;Shojaee *et al.*, 2013).In this regard, (Shojaee *et al.*, 2012).determined various climates as the most important strengths of Mazandaran province sporty tourism. (Ebrahimzadeh and Aghasizadeh., 2010),determined existence of primeval places, sport-fun Attractions, to have sand coasts and natural attractions as strengths in their research. So, because Mazandaran province has natural attractions, ancient

Research Article

buildings and places, and mentioned factors, it must use a schematization, specialists, and private sector participation in attracting sports tourists to reach to its real position in the field of tourism and to comply sports tourists' requests in order to being introduced as the best sports tourism hub.

Also, the results of Friedman test have shown that lack of doing scientific marketing by experts' help and modern technology in the field of sporty tourism, lack of applied short-term and long-term programs of sport and tourism, lack of communication infrastructure, lack of professionals in different positions and not use of academic potential of the country to grow the sport are the most important weaknesses of Mazandaran province in sports tourism, respectively. It is associated with the results of the researches by Yar *et al.*, 2010; Karshenas., 1998; Baher., 1998 and Razavi *et al.*, 2010) In this regard, (Yar *et al.*, 2010) performed a research about sports tourism analysis of Esfahan province according to SWOT model and determined lack of doing scientific marketing by experts' help and modern technology in the field of sports tourism, lack of professionals, lack of international standards, and lack of private sector participation and so on as weaknesses. To improve tourism industry, having information is the first condition. We should have enough exact information about tourism, expectations and tourism thoughts. Also, we should know the technology in order to answer tourists' requests. Having information about competitors is necessary. We must know that what they do and how they do. Also, training of manpower is necessary in order to set exports and knowledgeable personnel in their positions. To pay attention to the communications infrastructure and proper infrastructure of rails and roads can cause the increase of sports tourists' attraction to province. Therefore, due to the existence of weaknesses in sports tourism, officials and managers must provide needful conditions for Private Corporation's entrance to sports tourism and overcome denoted weaknesses with their help. They can make these conditions by better planning and management, the needful cooperation with the organizations and universities of the country and partnership with them and the use of expert marketers and knowledgeable persons.

Evaluation matrix of internal factors showed that according to the final score of Mazandaran province sporty tourism, weaknesses have higher priority than strengths. So, suggested strategies must emphasis on strengths reinforcement. Therefore, internal weaknesses must be removed by strengths reinforcement. So, we can attract massive investments by removing available weaknesses and threats through investment in different sections and sports tourists' attraction. In a summation, we can declare that the result of sporty tourism is making memories and position in tourists' mind. Therefore, if we modify country macro policies (revision in law) and adjusting the rules so that comply the requests and needs of tourism, it will cause to the attraction of sporty tourists. So, we can hope for the economic and cultural development of Mazandaran province through strategic planning for the development of sports tourism with the aim of increasing the number of tourists and then increasing the quality of services. Strategic planning as a systematic way for making decisions and performing proceedings for the development flow guidance of a system and helps planners foundation to reach to the goals of sporty tourism development. Therefore, the managers must provide the opportunity of enjoying positive dimensions of this industry through efforts to prepare and making valuable the sporty tourism attractions in potentials areas.

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