Iranian Sport Tourism Development Model

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The tourism industry is one of the most important industries of the new century, which is very dynamic and profitable. Sports tourism is an essential part of this industry. The research aimed to identify and categorize the sports attractions in Iran and to design a development model for the sports tourism industry.

Methodology: The research method was Grounded-Theory, with a systematic approach. The sampling method was theoretical sampling. In addition to studying literature, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 35 experts, including 19 faculty members of Iranian universities and 16 travel and tourism agency professionals, to achieve theoretical saturation.

Findings: In the first part of the research, the results showed that there are 11 types of sports attractions in Iran. The second part of the research showed that identifying and analyzing sports attractions, marketing, planning, and organizing to welcome tourists are the essential measures necessary for developing sports tourism. The development of sports tourism in section tourist welcoming is related to the development of the entire tourism industry and requires investment, planning, and organization. Marketing, providing necessary services, and creating distinct and exciting experiences for tourists and satisfying them are the key variables to success in the development of the industry. All these works require the cooperation and coordination of people and organizations in the sovereign, government, public and private sectors.

Originality: We have identified and categorized the types of sports attractions in Iran and presented a comprehensive development model for the development of the sports tourism industry.

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1. Introduction

The tourism industry is known as the sunrise industry in the 21st century. It will cultivate tourism as a strategic pillar industry that promotes the realization of better, faster, better, and more rapid economic and social development. And develop it to realize the prosperity of the people and alleviate poverty, and make the people more satisfied Modern service industry (Liang, 2020). There is a causal relationship running from tourism incomes to economic growth, which supports the premise that tourism benefits economic growth (Arslanturk, 2012) and then economic growth helps the development of the tourism sector, and the development of the tourism industry again helps the economic growth (Demiroz & Ongan, 2005). The tourism industry accounted for 10.3%, 5.3%, and 6.1% of the world's GDP in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively. This is while the share of the tourism industry in Iran's GDP was 5.8%, 3.1%, and 4.1%, in Turkey, it was 11.0%, 5.1%, and 7.3%, and in the United States, it was 8.8%, 4.8% and 5.5% (WTTC, 2022). According to this information, although Iran has many historical, natural, and cultural attractions, the tourism industry has not developed well. Therefore, it is necessary to look for a solution for the development of this industry in Iran.

Sports tourism is one of the fastest-growing market segments in the tourism industry and is receiving increased attention for its cultural, social, environmental, and economic impacts on destinations (Hritz & Ross, 2010). Sports tourism refers to travel away from home to play sport, watch sport, or visit a sport attraction, including both competitive and non-competitive activities (Delpy, 1998). Sport and tourism can play a significant role in the bringing together of communities. Sports tourism can create jobs for rural areas and prevent the increase in migration from rural areas to cities (Elahi et al., 2021; Jamieson, 2014). Ever since the field of sports tourism gained a lot of interest in the 1990s, there has been a consensus among scholars that there are two types of sports tourism: active and passive. In active sports tourism, the tourist physically participates in related activities or sports, such as rock climbing and adventure tourism. In stagnant or event sports tourism, the tourist is a spectator of the sports event, like the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup (Gibson et al., 2018). Sports events are a place-making tool in tourism (Ziakas, 2020). Although hosting sporting events has received considerable attention, the critical connection between sporting events and urban development has been highlighted. Also, most studies have focused on mega sporting events, and the controversy around the benefits of hosting mega sporting events is also increasing (Lu, 2021).

However, some cities and regions have been prosperous in leveraging sports events for tourism gain over time, and some have not (Sant et al., 2019). The social impacts of a large-scale sport tourism event can be economic benefits, community pride, community development, economic costs, traffic problems, and security risks (Kim et al., 2015). Even a small-scale sports event consistent with a community's infrastructure and human and cultural capital may be a viable form of sustainable tourism development (Gibson et al., 2012). Small-scale sporting events may have more positive consequences for the host community than large-scale events regarding economic and social impacts. The research results show that for each euro invested in Small-scale sporting events by the public administration, a financial return of €18 has been estimated (Duglio &

Beltramo, 2017). Research results show that active sports tourism is growing strongly. For example, sport heritage in the light of tourism has been developing dynamically (Malchrowicz-Mosko & Munsters, 2018). Surf tourism is a rapidly expanding market segment of the broader sports tourism industry (Martin & Assenov, 2012). Adventure tourism, including hiking, snorkeling (soft adventure), mountaineering, rock climbing, wilderness trekking (challenging experience), etc., are other types of active sports tourists (Janowski et al., 2021).

Holding sports events and creating different types of physical activities is the core of the sports industry (Khosromanesh, Khabiri, Khanifar, et al., 2019), which has additional trustees in Iran (Shariati et al., 2021). Many people, organizations, and companies also work in the supporting sector of this industry, which plays a vital role in its development (Alidoust Ghahfarokhi et al., 2021). The result of sports tourism requires multilateral cooperation between local officials, tourism agencies, and sports organizations (Wäsche, 2015). Therefore, sports organizations can maximize the tourism outcomes of significant events (Kennelly & Toohey, 2014). Excitement and safety are essential for sports event tourists (Uvinha et al., 2018). Holding exciting sports events requires sponsoring and financing, which is an important challenge for the organizers (Khosromanesh, Khabiri, Alidoust Ghahfarokhi, et al., 2019). Many people, organizations, and institutions play a role in cultural orientation (Khosromanesh et al., 2018) and culture can create constraints for the development of sports tourism (Hudson et al., 2010). All the socio-demographic characteristics significantly influence the sport-active tourist when choosing between a domestic and foreign tourism destination. This affects the type of accommodation chosen and the level of expenditure while traveling (Valek et al., 2014). The first touchpoint for potential tourists is the information shared by the destination. Although information search behavior is critical and reviewed from a general tourism perspective, less is known about sports tourism (Yamashita, 2022). Place images also influence the travel decisions of adventure tourists. For example, tourism marketers in places with high mountains should focus on adventure opportunities and place image dimensions that play a role in adventure tourism travel decisions (O'Reilly et al., 2022).

As mentioned above, there is a need to further define the epistemic boundaries of sports tourism for the 21st century (Van Rheenen et al., 2017). Most empirical research in sports tourism has been studied from an inductive perspective with a qualitative approach in Western countries. It has primarily focused on active sports tourism (Takata & Hallmann, 2021). Due to the shortage of sports tourism, not much theorizing has been done in this field (Gibson, 2017). Thus, substantial research gaps in sport tourism remain to be explored (Huggins, 2013). Overall, sports tourism is significant for job creation, alleviating poverty, and economic growth. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the types of sports attractions and provide a conceptual model for developing sports tourism. Using the Grounded Theory methodology (systematic approach), this work sought to identify the types of sports attractions in Iran and provide a conceptual model for the development of sports tourism in Iran. Our findings will introduce the sports attractions in Iran that can be a destination for international tourists. Also, a tourism development model in the sports industry will be presented, which can be used by researchers, managers, officials, and tourism agencies.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study Design

Considering that the research aimed to identify the types of sports attractions in Iran and provide a conceptual model for the development of sports tourism in Iran, the ground theory method used a systematic approach. In the systematic approach, which Corbin and Strauss support, there are three main stages of open coding: axial coding and selective coding. In the grounded theory method, everything can be considered data, including interviews, past papers, and observations. The sampling method in grounded theory is theoretical sampling. Data collection and analysis are done simultaneously until the researchers obtain theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). According to the instructions of Corbin and Strauss in this research, the emerging data determined the direction of the study, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with specialists in sport tourism, the tourism industry, sport management, and travel and tourism agencies. The initial questions were designed based on paradigm coding and according to the purpose of the research. By formulating the initial questions, we sought to identify causal conditions, central phenomenon, contextual conditions, and intervening constraints, action/interaction strategies, consequences, but at the same time, open and selective coding were also done.

2.2. Participants

In the research process, 19 faculty members of Iranian universities and 16 travel and tourism agency professionals were interviewed. The characteristics of the interviewees are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the interviewees.

Specialty	Number	Education			Academic rank		
		Bachelor	Masters	PhD	Assistant professor	Associate professor	Professor
Sport management	8	-	-	8	6	1	1
Sport tourism	6	-	-	6	6	-	-
Tourism industry	5	-	-	5	3	1	1
Travel and tourism agencies professionals	16	7	5	4	-	-	-
Total	35	7	5	23	15	2	2

2.3. Materials and measures

Participants were briefed on the study and listened to an interview script read by the facilitator, which outlined the requirements of a successful discussion, such as staying on topic. The initial questions were informed by previous research and relevant evidence from personal experience. These initial questions were:

1. Why do tourists choose Iran's sports attractions as their destination? Or do not choose?
2. What capabilities are there in Iran to become a sports attraction?

3. What are the sports attractions of Iran?
4. What are the barriers to the development of sports tourism in Iran?
5. What are the roles of government, marketing, media, and culture in developing sports tourism?
6. What are the consequences of the development of the sports tourism industry?

A digital voice recorder (Lander PCM Recorder) was used to record interviews, and a compatible PC was required for data transference from the writer to the computer to enable data transcription.

2.4. Research procedure

We conducted semi-structured interviews with eight sports management specialists, five tourism industry specialists, six sports tourism specialists, and 16 travel and tourism agency professionals. Interviews were conducted with sports management and sports tourism specialists while reviewing past papers to identify different types of sports attractions in Iran. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with tourism industry specialists and travel and tourism agency professionals to design a development model for the sports tourism industry. First, preliminary coordination was done with them, and an interview was scheduled. The discussions took about three months. To better understand the conditions, 96 papers related to sports tourism in Iran were published in the magazines Sport Management Journal, Contemporary Studies on Sports Management, Sport Management and Development, Strategic Studies on Youth and Sports, Sports Business Journal, Research in Sport Management and Motor Behavior journal and Sport Management Studies were specially reviewed.

2.5. Data collection and analysis

By the grounded theory method, data collection and analysis are done for each interview, and this cycle continues until theoretical saturation is obtained. The data analysis method was constant comparisons. Comparisons were made at the concept level. To be more specific, data were broken down into manageable pieces. Each piece of datum was examined closely. If data in the new interview was conceptually like data from the past discussion, it was coded using the same conceptual name. Still, we were asking this: What else is being learned about this concept? This enabled us to elaborate on a concept in terms of its properties and dimensions, extending our understanding of the concept. In addition to making comparisons along conceptual lines, we continued to ask theoretically based questions that led to further theoretical sampling. The research was a continuous data collection process, followed by analysis and memo writing, leading to new questions and more data collection. In this approach, the original questions are modified repeatedly, considering what is being discovered during the analysis. While the initial question is vital in setting the study's parameters, it is not as important as the questions during the investigation intended to keep the analysis and the research moving forward. This entire data collection and analysis process was continued until we had satisfied that we had acquired sufficient data to describe each category or theme fully in terms of its properties.

And dimensions and that we had accounted for variation (what Corbin and Strauss named conceptual saturation) (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Analytical strategies of Strauss and Corbin were also used for data analysis, which are:

  – Questioning
  – Making comparisons
  – Thinking about the various meanings of a word
  – Using the flip-flop technique
  – Making use of life experience
  – Waving the red flag
  – Looking at language
  – Looking at emotions that are expressed
  – Looking for words that indicate time
  – Thinking in terms of metaphors and similes
  – Looking for the negative case
  – Using other analytical tools.

No software was employed in the analysis. The researchers carefully analyzed all the interviews and data according to the instructions of Corbin and Strauss.

2.6. Triangulation

Triangulation is one of the methods of better understanding qualitative data and a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study. Triangulation involves other parts of research. Data and investigator triangulation are two primary forms of triangulation in qualitative research: data triangulation for correlating people, time, and space, and investigator triangulation for connecting the findings from multiple researchers in a study (Denzin, 2017). There is a direct link between data triangulation and data saturation; the one (data triangulation) ensures the other (data saturation). In other words, data triangulation is a method to get to data saturation.

In this research, to data triangulation, experts in various fields of the sports industry, tourism industry, sports tourism, and travel and tourism agencies professionals were interviewed. Also, for investigator triangulation, after conducting each interview, data analysis was done by all the co-researchers. In addition, at different stages of the research, there associate Professors of sports management at the University of Tehran, Kharazmi University, and the University of Zanjan were asked to analyze the data (as secondary coders). All researchers and associate professors engaged and discussed coherence and transparency regarding the research process by describing critical elements and themes during data analysis. Finally, all assistant professors agreed with the pieces concluded and stated that the findings were sufficient and had reached the point of saturation. Therefore, triangulation has been done carefully, and the results have high reliability and validity.

3. Results

Considering that the purpose of the research was to identify and categorize the types of sports attractions in Iran and to design a development model for the development of the sports tourism industry, the findings are presented in different tables of open and selective coding, as well as the figure in which the designed model is shown.

Table 2. Open coding (types of sports attractions in Iran).

Row	Themes	Subcategories	Concepts
1	Sports events	Mega sports event	Olympic and paralympic games, world cups (various sports), asian games, solidarity games of islamic countries,
		International sports competitions	World leagues (example: volleyball world league), asian champions league, asian continental sports leagues, asian championship, world championship, grand prix competitions, commemorative sports competitions (such as the takhti cup), friendly international sports competitions
		National championships	The national championship, student sports olympiads, national olympiads
		National and provincial professional sports leagues	Persian Gulf league, azadegan league, basketball league, volleyball league, futsal league, wrestling league,
2	Visiting sports venues	Visiting sports complexes	Azadi sports complex, aftab enghelaba sports complex (athletics), samen sports complex of mashhad
		Visiting football stadiums	Azadi football stadium in tehran, imam reza stadium in mashhad, naqshe jahan stadium in isfahan, ahvaz martyrs stadium, pars stadium in shiraz, yadgar imam stadium in tabriz
		Visiting indoor stadiums	Azadi indoor stadium with 12,000 seats in tehran, pirizi indoor stadium in shiraz, shahid beheshti indoor stadium in mashhad, rezazadeh indoor stadium in ardabil,
3	Mountaineering and rock climbing	Mountaineering	Mount damavand, mount sabalan, mount sahand, oshtorankuh, kal-qedvis peak in dena mountains, ghashmastan peak in dena mountains, hozdal peak in dena mountains, pazan pir peak in dena mountains, shirbad mountain, kuh-e shah, hazaran: a massif of the central iranian plateau, alam peak (iranian alps), shahankue mountain, neshaneh peak, mount taftan, stratovolcano, mount bazman, stratovolcano, martain and miniature mountains of nehbandan
		Rock climbing	Rock climbing walls of abqad valley, the rock-climbing walls of the akhlamd valley, junqan rocks, tang-e darkesh varkesh rocks, samovar stone in alamkuh, bisotun wall, lajvar big wall, mount yafteh wall, tezerjan wall, pole khab wall,
4	Ski resorts	Snow ski resorts	Dizin ski resort, pooladkaf international ski resort in sepidan, tochal telecabin and resort, shemshak ski resort & complex, darband sar ski resort, abali ski resort, shirbad ski resort, fereydounshahr ski resort (the highest ski resort in iran), afus ski resort, khoshka ski resort in urmia, chelgard ski resort (kuhrang) in shahr-e kord, alvares ski resort in ardabil, kakan ski resort in yasouj, sahand ski resort in tabriz, tarik darreh ski resort in hamadan, papaei ski resort in zanjan, payam international ski resort in marand, khor ski resort in karaj, shazand ski resort, ski resort saqqez

Row	Themes	Subcategories	Concepts
		Grass ski resorts	Dizin grass ski resort, soffeh grass ski resort in isfahan, fandoqloo grass ski resort in ardabil
5	Riding	Car racing tracks	Speedway racing tracks, car rally tracks, hill car race & climb driving & slalom driving, motorsports relief fund tracks, karting tracks,
		Motorcycle tracks	Motorcycle endurance race tracks, motorcycle road race tracks, speed motorbike racing tracks, rally motorcycle tracks, motocross tracks
		Horse riding tracks	Equestrian complex of gonbad-e kavus, nowruzabad equestrian and polo complex, bam riding club, chitgar riding track, caspian equestrian club in kermanshah, stars hanging club in rasht, ferdowsi equestrian club in mashhad, sooran riding club in mashhad,
6	Water-based sports	Boating (kayak, canoe, canoe polo, dragoon boat, rowing, slalom, rafting)	Tehran's azadi lake, shourabil lake, balikhlou river in ardabil, soha lake in namin mountains in ardabil, germi gilarlu-lake-mughan in ardabil, chitgar lake (khalij-e fars) in tehran, anzali lagoon, sangachin championship base in anzali, zarivar lake in marivan, chalidarreh tourist complex in mashhad
		Surfing and diving	Surfing on the beaches of chabahar, diving centers in kish, diving centers in qeshm,
		Indoor recreational watersports	Mojhaye khorushan water park in mashhad, absar water complex in isfahan, bandar abbas water park, padideh-e shandiz water park in mashhad, water waves land in mashhad, aftab shore park in mashhad,
7	Training camps	Team sports training camps	Football camps, volleyball camps, basketball camps
		Individual sports training camps	Athletics camps, wrestling camps (wrestling house), weightlifting camps, martial arts camps
		Water-based sports camps	Jounoub recreational sports camp (bandar lengeh), babolsar beach-water sports camp, astara beach camp, bandar abbas beach camp, martian mountains camp of chabahar free-trade zone,
8	Sports medicine centers	National sports medicine centers	Iran football medical assessment and rehabilitation center (ifmarc) of iran football federation, national olympic academy assessment center
		State sports medicine centers	Sports medicine research center in tehran university of medical sciences, sports physiology research center of baqiyatallah university of medical sciences, sports medicine research center of islamic azad university of najaf abad, sports medicine research center of hamadan university of medical sciences
		Private sports medicine clinics	Iranmall medical assessment and rehabilitation center (ifmark), sports medicine department of ketab football academy, raspina sports medicine center, monali sports medicine clinic, rasa sports medicine group, say one sports medicine complex, west tehran sports medicine clinic, energy sports medicine clinic in megamall, fitfight club sports medicine clinic, afra sports medicine center
9	Scientific sports centers	Academic centers	Research laboratories of faculty of physical education and sports sciences of the university of tehran, research laboratories of faculty of physical education and sports sciences of kharazmi university, research laboratories of sports sciences research institute
		Private sports scientific consulting centers	Movement behavior counseling centers, sports psychology counseling centers, physiology, and anthropometric counseling centers, correctional movement counseling centers

Row	Themes	Subcategories	Concepts
10	Sports heritage	National sports museum of noc	Introducing the history of sports in iran, the world, the olympics, and paralympics; submitting sports heroes and pioneers; displaying medals, trophies, and torches; displaying summer and winter sports, tools, equipment, sports clothes, etc.
		Astan quds razavi sports museum	Medals donated to astan quds razavi museum, showcase of pahlevani and zoorkhaneh rituals
		Private sports museums	Tabatabai sports museum
11	Sports goods and equipment	Sportswear	Selling all kinds of sports shoes, selling all types of sports clothes
		Sports equipment	Selling all kinds of sports balls, selling bodybuilding equipment,
		Sports supplements	Selling all kinds of sports supplements,
		Sports medical equipment	Selling all kinds of sports medical equipment, selling all types of laboratory sports equipment

Table 3. Open coding (influential factors in the development of sports tourism).

	Themes	Subcategories	Concepts
1	Sports attractions	Active sports tourism	Mountaineering and Rock climbing, Ski Resorts, Riding, Water-Based Sports, Training camps
		Passive sports tourism	Sports events, Visiting Sports Venues, Sports Medicine Centers, Scientific sports centers, Sports Heritage, Sports goods, and equipment
2	Marketing	Identifying and analyzing sports attractions	Identifying existing sports attractions, identifying potential sports attractions, analyzing existing and possible interests, and determining the sports attractions needed by the target markets
		Identifying and analyzing target markets	Identifying existing target markets, identifying potential target markets, Analyzing existing and potential target markets, Determination of target markets according to existing and potential sports attractions
		Advertising	Direct advertising (Creating attractive content for advertising in different languages, Using Out-of-home advertising in the target market, Advertising on the national televisions of the target countries, using virtual platforms based on the presence of the target market on these platforms, using social media influencers of target markets, Attending international tourism exhibitions, etc.), Indirect advertising (Promoting sports attractions via inducted-Films, inviting political figures to visit sports attractions, inviting famous athletes to visit sports attractions, inviting favorite artists to visit sports attractions)
		Marketing research	Identifying the apparent needs of sports tourism in the target markets, Identifying the hidden needs of sports tourism of the target markets, Identifying the tendencies and interests of the target markets, Identifying and analyzing competitors in target markets,
		Survey and evaluation	Surveying the experiences of previous tourists, to evaluate the level of satisfaction of earlier tourists about security, excitement, culture, attractiveness, costs, transportation
		Branding	Planning to position Iran's sports tourism brand, intending to promote Iran's sports tourism brand, planning to develop Iran's sports tourism brand
		Website of Iran's tourist attractions	Providing comprehensive information about Iran's tourist attractions in different languages, two-way interaction with foreign tourists, providing information about security, culture, religion, prices, and

	Themes	Subcategories	Concepts
			history to tourists before traveling to Iran, informing about betting capacities on horse riding,
3	Planning and organizing for welcoming sports tourists	Security and safety	Coordinating with the police to ensure the life, financial, sexual, and psychological security of tourists; Allocation of a particular phone number for the police for foreign tourists (proficiency in different international languages), providing road security, having freedom and security in privacy, providing guidance and counseling to tourists,
		Accommodation	The existence of sufficient and suitable hotels, the presence of convenient inns, the fact of appropriate ecotourism places
		Transportation	The existence of appropriate national and international airports, the presence of subways in big cities, the existence of railways, the existence of safe roads, the presence of cruise ships on the beaches, the fact of enough airplanes, trains, trams, wagons, taxis, and buses
		Coordination with the ministry of health	Coordinating with the Ministry of Health to provide timely medical services to tourists, determining a particular contact number for answering and advising tourists
		Creating a culture of welcoming tourists	Using national media to promote the culture of welcoming tourists, Using the provincial media to promote the culture of accepting tourists, using tribal heads to promote the culture of welcoming tourists, using reference people to promote the culture of welcoming tourists
		Human resources training	Training the police to ensure the security of tourists, Training ambassadors and employees of Iranian embassies in target market countries, Training tourist guides, Training drivers of linear and non-linear taxis, Training managers and employees of hotels, guesthouses, and inns, and public training through the national media
		Enact special rules and regulations for the tourism industry	Passing the necessary criminal laws for those who disturb the security of tourists, approving laws facilitating the provision of services to tourists, approving protective laws required to ensure the safety of tourists, supporting laws encouraging investment in the tourism industry
		Differentiating sports attractions	increasing the quantity and quality of attractive sports events, using famous players from the target market countries in professional sports leagues of Iran, comprehensive media coverage of engaging sports events, increasing the quantity and quality of active sports tourism attractions
		Private sector development	Identifying and introducing sports tourism product packages with customers to investors, persuading capitalists (especially sports heroes) to invest in the sports tourism industry, Meaningful support for investors, increasing investment security in the tourism industry, providing tax and insurance discounts and significant facilities to start-up or small private units
		Using international relations	Using international agreements, Activating Iranian embassies in target market countries to promote tourism marketing programs, Removing international travel restrictions to Iran
4	Creating attractive experiences	Feeling safe and secure	Police advise tourists, The existence of a direct telephone line between tourists and the exceptional tourist police, Immediate and effective presence of the police in case of tourists' need, support tourists by the general public, Support the tourists by culture
		Enjoying	Experiencing excitement, experiencing fun, experiencing entertainment, getting to know new information, a variety of entertainment experiences, having multiple choices of entertainment

	Themes	Subcategories	Concepts
		Hospitable	Proper interaction of people with tourists, adequate interaction for government officials with tourists, appropriate interaction of tourism workers with tourists,
		Receiving timely and appropriate services	Providing suitable banking services, providing travel services, providing convenient hotel services, providing communication services with the country of origin (Internet and telecommunications), proper transportation, helpful advice and guidance, providing appropriate medical services
5	Viral dissemination of experiences by previous tourists	Direct dissemination of experiences	sharing travel pictures and clips in virtual space, expressing travel experiences in virtual space, expressing travel experiences with friends and family
		Republishing experiences	Re-sharing travel pictures and clips in cyberspace, Re-expressing travel experiences in virtual space by others, Re-expressing experiences by people around and acquaintances to others,
6	Destination brand	Brand positioning	Awareness of Iran's sports attractions, the significant value of traveling to Iran, Distinctiveness of traveling to Iran
		Brand promotion	The competency of Iran's sports attractions, increasing trust in Iranians, increasing the attractiveness and fun of Iran's sports attractions
		Brand development	Increasing tourist attractions in the destination, improving services in the goal
7	Target markets	Current markets	Iraq, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Armenia,
		Potential markets	Russia, China, Germany, the United States of America, CIS countries, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, France, Italy, India, Brazil, Argentina, Japan

Table 4. Examples of selective coding.

Example quotes	Open coding	Selective coding
"Security is an important issue. When tourists visit Iran, their security must be ensured in every way, especially ladies. With the bad propaganda against Iran at the international level, if someone in Iran harasses tourists, the tourist will soon associate negative propaganda against the Iranian people in his/her mind. The Iranian police should have a plan to ensure the security of tourists, consider a dedicated telephone line for tourists and respond to tourists in common international languages and give them advice." P02	Coordinating with the police	Planning and organizing for welcoming sports tourists
"It is also imperative to have safe trips on the country's roads. If a few tourists are killed in road accidents, it will harm the destination's brand. Road trips within the country should be safe for tourists" P11	Providing road security	
"It is necessary to have 5-star hotels in big cities to accommodate tourists from wealthy countries such as Russia, Germany, China, France, etc. We should have enough 5-star hotels, four-star, three-star, two-star, and one-star hotels, inns, and local rental houses in medium-sized, small cities, towns, and villages. It is not possible to take the tourist to the city of Si-Sakht for mountaineering but not have a place to stay" P22	Accommodation	
"If we want to host the Asian Nations Cup, we must have enough 5-star hotels in the host cities such as Tabriz, Mashhad, Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Ahvaz," P01		
"Suppose we host the Asian Football Nations Cup and many people from Japan, Saudi Arabia, China, and other Asian countries entered Iran. Transportation is critical; coordination must be made beforehand, and a fair	Transportation	

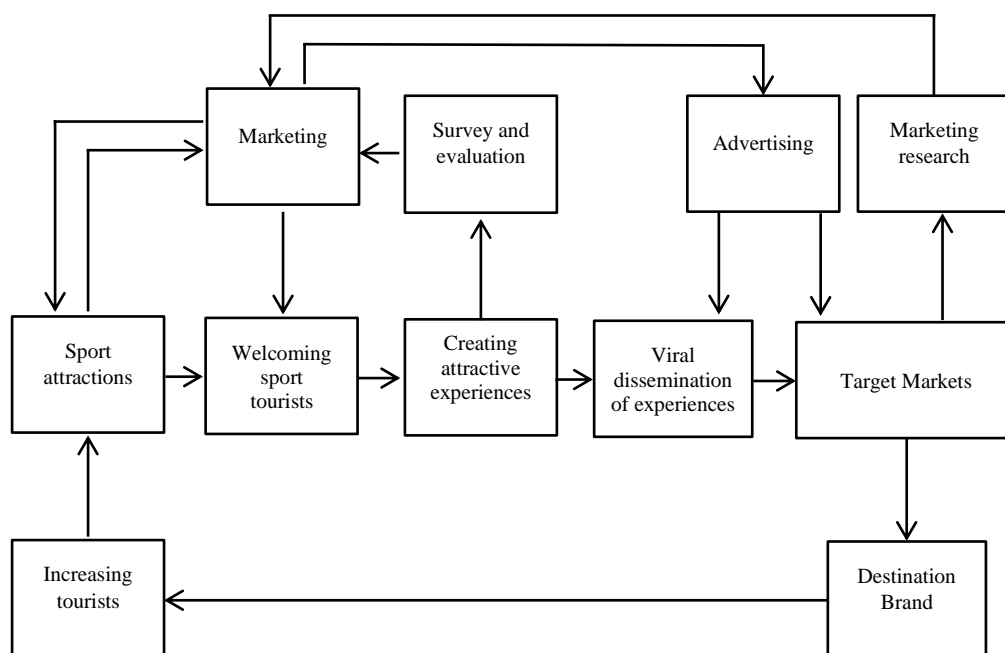| Example quotes	Open coding	Selective coding
number of buses and taxis for transportation. Sports tourists should be considered," P04		
"Our most important weakness in developing the tourism industry is that we have not done proper marketing. We not taken advantage of marketing science and new technologies." P08	Marketing	
"First, we must know Iran's existing and potential sports attractions well, categorize and analyze them, analyze their capacity and attractiveness, then enter into other stages of marketing" P06	Identifying and analyzing sports attractions	
"Current sports tourists should be surveyed to find our strengths and weaknesses, and this work should be done permanently. A permanent survey of former tourists is one of the basic marketing principles in the tourism industry." P19	Survey of current sports tourists	
"The target markets should be identified and analyzed, now, the United States, Germany, Russia, and China are the biggest markets in the tourism industry, but we have a small share of this market, almost nothing! These markets should also be worked on. At least we should have a larger share of the tourism market of China and Russia because we have good diplomatic relations with these countries; currently, Iraq has become the biggest tourism market for us, but the same number of Iranians also travel to Turkey, but Turkey receives three times as many Iranians from Russia and one and a half times as many tourists from Germany, … Analysis of target markets should be done well," P16	Analysis of target markets Identifying and analyzing competitors in target markets,	Marketing
"The destination brand and the mentality that is formed in the target market about Iran's sports and tourism attractions will determine the number of future tourists in Iran, so special attention should be paid to the destination brand" P17	Branding	
"Advertising is an important part of marketing efforts, although it is not all marketing. Social networks, websites, and creating attractive content should be used well in advertising" P18	Advertising	

Figure 1. Development model of the sports tourism industry.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The research aimed to identify and categorize the sports attractions in Iran and to design a development model for the sports tourism industry. In the first part of the research, the findings showed that there are 11 types of sports attractions in Iran, which are: Sports events, Visiting Sports Venues, Mountaineering, Rock climbing, Ski Resorts, Riding, Water-Based Sports, Training camps, Sports Medicine Centers, Scientific sports centers, Sports Heritage, Sports goods, and equipment. There are many attractions for each of these sectors in Iran, examples of which are given in Table 2, which can be considered as a brief introduction to the essential sports attractions in Iran. Identifying and introducing destination sports attractions to tourists is the starting point of sports tourism (Yamashita, 2022). Exploiting these tourist attractions requires planning, organization, and many continuous actions. As the findings showed, sports events are only one of the attractions of sports tourism. Domestic and international competitions and leagues in the fields of football, volleyball, futsal, basketball, and wrestling are among the most important sports events in Iran; of course, success in them requires the cooperation of many people, organizations, and institutions (Seifpanahi Shabani et al., 2022). The development of the sports goods and equipment industry (Khabiri et al., 2020), sports museums, sports medicine centers and laboratories, and sports camps are other sports attractions that have not yet reached sufficient maturity.

Also, in some sports attractions, Iran has strong competitors to attract tourists to the region. Still, in some cases, due to its geographical location, there is a very high capacity

to attract tourists, such as adventure sports attractions. Incidentally, adventure tourism has grown exponentially recently (Janowski et al., 2021). In general, Iran has excellent potential for developing active sports tourism, and even in the short term, it can grow significantly in this sector. Iran's high capacity in nature, historical, health, and adventure tourism can also help the development of sports tourism.

The second part of the research showed that identifying and analyzing sports attractions, marketing, planning, and organizing to welcome tourists are the most critical measures for developing sports tourism. Of course, marketing and preparations for welcoming tourists include many actions, summarized in Table 3 and Figure 1. In realizing the market needs of tourism, the critical role belongs to marketing, which through its activities, primarily through marketing mix, should identify and differentiate tourism products (compared to the competition) and thus implement its strategic objectives. Marketing in tourism has its characteristics that derive from the fact that the product in tourism is a service. Besides, the invisibility of a product gives even more importance to tourism marketing (Ciriković, 2014; Ganjkhanloo et al., 2021). Tourism marketing seeks to make tourist destinations better places to live in and better places to visit (Font & McCabe, 2017). Marketing sports tourism requires sport and the host destination to be cross-leveraged to optimize the quality of experiences that the sports tourist obtains. Cross-leveraging sports and goals are facilitated when vertical and horizontal alliances are formed among sports and tourism providers (Harrison-Hill & Chalip, 2005). Destination marketers in adventure tourism settings should understand that the key to successful destination marketing is to develop destination loyalty among Non-decision makers by satisfying their expected destination attributes while at the same time providing extraordinary experiences that exceed the expectations of the decision maker (Sato et al., 2018).

Marketing research is an integral part of marketing. Knowing the profile and surveying the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of tourists is considered an essential part of tourism marketing. The shape of the adventure tourist will be beneficial for planning sustainable tourism (Rojo-Ramos et al., 2021). Most characteristics demonstrated in previous conceptualizations of the "adventure tourist" have changed. These changes are significant and should be considered in general discussions of the current state of adventure tourism, as well as in marketing and management strategies and the future development of adventure tourism operations (Giddy, 2018). Advertising is another essential part of marketing, and destination marketers must be aware of the importance of designing tailored advertising messages for different tourists (Fallah Kazemi & Atghia, 2021; Jiang et al., 2020). Digital marketing, viral marketing, and influencer marketing are new marketing methods that should be used well along with traditional methods. Digital media, content, and mobile advertising are among the trends in digital marketing and, thus, allow countries to market their attractions to tourists in this digital era (Mkwizu, 2019). Influencer marketing has also impacted all industries, including travel and tourism. Many destination management organizations leverage online personalities' influence for diverse purposes, including attracting visitors to their destinations (Femenia-Serra & Gretzel, 2020).

Tourism development is not only marketing and advertising; it should be prepared to welcome tourists with proper planning and organization to create extraordinary experiences by providing appropriate service packages. The tourism industry is highly dynamic, and while it can grow explosively and become the number one industry in any country, it can also disappear quickly. The dynamism and extraordinary profitability of the tourism industry have led to intense competition between countries in this field. Therefore, preparation for welcoming tourists and creating unique experiences (Sato et al., 2018) is crucial in addition to marketing (Ciriković, 2014). The basic requirements of welcoming tourists include security and safety (Uvinha et al., 2018), accommodation, transportation, a culture of welcoming tourists (Hudson et al., 2010), health services, financial services, and telecommunication and Internet services. To provide these infrastructures and requirements, a lot of investments should be made, and a lot of coordination should be done between the government, the public, sports organizations/institutions, and the private sector (Wäsche, 2015). Employee and service environment are the most important criteria that affect service experience. Therefore, tourism factories and international tourist hotels must invest resources in training and managing employees to equip them with the specialized knowledge needed to deliver a high-quality service experience (Hsieh & Chuang, 2020). Enjoyment and excitement (Uvinha et al., 2018) are other factors in creating extraordinary experiences in sports tourism, which sports marketers should pay special attention to in designing sports attractions.

Viral dissemination of content plays an essential role in the success of destination marketing and branding in the tourism industry. Social media has become a relevant content dissemination channel in recent years, and each user can potentially reach others. Therefore, marketers are looking for ways to encourage customers to share their content on social networks (Dafonte-Gómez et al., 2020). Suppose sports tourism marketing campaigns work well and provide distinct and exciting experiences to sports tourists. In that case, these experiences are expected to be shared by tourists on social networks and spread virally in target markets (Bampo et al., 2008). Finally, success in destination branding (brand positioning, brand promotion, and brand development) in target market countries will increase visitors and tourists to the destination country (Kaushal et al., 2019).

In conclusion, tourism is one of the most important industries of the new century, which is very dynamic and profitable, and sports tourism is an integral part of this industry. The development of sports tourism in section tourist welcoming is related to the development of the entire tourism industry and requires investment, planning, and organization. Marketing, providing necessary services, and creating distinct and exciting experiences for tourists and satisfying them is the key to success in the development of this industry. All these works require the cooperation and coordination of people and organizations in the sovereign, government, public and private sectors.

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الگوی توسعه صنعت گردشگری ورزشی ایران

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چکیده

هدف: صنعت گردشگری یکی از مهمترین صنایع قرن جدید است که بسیار پویا و سودآور است و گردشگری ورزشی قسمت مهمی از این صنعت است. هدف پژوهش شناسایی و دسته‌بندی انواع جاذبه‌های ورزشی در ایران و طراحی مدل توسعه برای صنعت گردشگری ورزشی بود.

روش: روش‌شناسی تحقیق، گرندد تئوری، رویکرد سیستماتیک بود. روش نمونه‌گیری از نوع نمونه‌گیری نظری بود و به منظور دستیابی به اشباع نظری، علاوه بر مطالعه متون تخصصی، با ۳۵ نفر از متخصصان شامل ۱۹ نفر از اعضای هیئت علمی دانشگاه‌های ایران و ۱۶ نفر از فعالان آژانس‌های مسافرتی و جهانگردی، مصاحبه‌های نیمه ساختاریافته انجام شد.

یافته‌ها: در بخش اول تحقیق یافته‌ها نشان داد که ۱۱ نوع جاذبه ورزشی در ایران وجود دارد. یافته‌های بخش دوم تحقیق نشان داد که شناسایی و تحلیل جاذبه‌های ورزشی، بازاریابی، برنامه‌ریزی و سازماندهی برای استقبال از گردشگران از مهمترین اقدامات لازم برای توسعه گردشگری ورزشی است. توسعه گردشگری ورزشی در بخش استقبال گردشگران با توسعه کل صنعت گردشگری مرتبط بوده و نیازمند سرمایه‌گذاری، برنامه‌ریزی و سازماندهی است. بازاریابی، ارائه خدمات لازم و خلق تجربیات متمایز و هیجان انگیز برای گردشگران و جلب رضایت آنها رمز موفقیت در توسعه این صنعت است. همه این کارها مستلزم همکاری و هماهنگی افراد و سازمان‌ها در بخش‌های حاکمیتی، دولتی، عمومی و خصوصی است.

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: نویسندگان در این مقاله انواع جاذبه‌های ورزشی در ایران را شناسایی و دسته‌بندی کردند و یک الگوی توسعه جامع برای توسعه صنعت گردشگری ورزشی ارائه کرده‌اند.

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