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Identifying and Explaining the Effective Components of Sports Tourism in the Sublimity of Culture and Sportsmanship

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Abstract

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Sports tourism is one of the most attractive types of tourism that occurs in different regions and countries. This tourism type is effective in economic fields and extremely significant in cultural and sportsmanship contexts. To this end, the current research aimed to identify and explain the effective components of sport tourism in the sublimity of culture and sportsmanship, conducted through a mixed method. This research approach was sequential exploratory in two qualitative-quantitative phases, in which “thematic analysis” and “survey” methods were used, respectively. The first phase’s statistical population included experts in sport tourism, sport management, culture management, and sportsmanship, with 14 individuals participating in semi-structured interviews using a purposive sampling method. After determining the effective actors in this field, 32 experts responded to questionnaires using a systematic sampling method in the study’s second phase. According to the research findings of the first phase, the themes extracted from the semi-structured interviews comprised 39 fundamental themes, 15 organizing themes, and four global themes. Per the second phase of the study’s findings, all themes were approved by the experts, all determinants of the role of sport tourism in the sublimity of sports culture and sportsmanship. As a result, sports tourism, while creating macroeconomic benefits for residents and visitors, significantly contributes to the sublimity of sports culture and sportsmanship, where this category can strengthen the value and ethical attitudes in addition to creating recreational experiences.

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Background and Aim

Both sport and tourism are leisure activities and important elements that influence sports culture and ethics (Malchrowicz-Mosko & Munsters, 2018). Today, sports tourism is expanding rapidly on a global scale so that everyone can experience excitement and pleasure (Hua et al, 2013). In fact, sports tourism is now regarded as a lucrative sector of the tourism industry, which, in addition to attracting the attention of related stakeholders, accounts for a significant portion of tourists' income. People seek sports tourism due to the growth and popularity of event-based sports tourism and their awareness of the importance of leading active lifestyles (Hua & Chiu, 2013).

Sports tourism is one of the important and influential branches of the tourism industry, which in the last few decades has not only provided suitable conditions for obtaining foreign exchange resources and job creation but has also been involved in the development of culture and health of different regions (Rezai & Alimoradian, 2020). Since ancient times, certain sporting events and customs have successfully introduced and improved sports culture and sportsmanship (Kim & Chalip, 2004; Funk & Bruun, 2007). To this end, many people are familiarized with societies' culture and moral standards through sports tourism (Silk & Amis, 2005).

On the other hand, sports tourism pays special attention to cultures, economies, and sports experiences (Harvey, 1991; Silk, 2002). Sports tourism can initiate the revival and preservation of cultural traditions (Kapur, 2018). Even some scholars believe this tourism type can negatively impact the host nation's culture (Singh et al., 2016). Some experts believe that sport represents a unique type of cultural tourist attraction (Higham & Hinch, 2003). Consequently, it is impossible to comprehend modern society and culture without recognizing the significance of sports (Jarvie et al., 2013).

The subsequent strategy focuses primarily on economic fields, earning money, attracting tourists, and other aspects of sports tourism. Few studies have paid attention to value and moral issues, a significant theoretical gap in this field. The important point in this field is to pay special attention to the role of sports tourism in the sublimity of sports culture and sportsmanship, which has been neglected in numerous studies. It is expected that by identifying these components, the role and importance of this type of tourism can also be determined in this field.

On the other hand, to help sustain this type of tourism in the host society, it is necessary to identify this industry's main and effective components. Reviewing various research in this field reveals that most of the research focuses on marketing, sustainable destinations, and economic issues, among other aspects, and research that can identify these components in the fields of sports culture and sportsmanship has yet to be conducted. It seems that sports tourism can play a significant role in the sublimity of culture and sportsmanship. Consequently, this research aims to explain and identify

the effective components of sport tourism in the sublimity of sports culture and sportsmanship to fill the research gap where these effective components are identified and explained.

Literature Review

Travel behavior and patterns, transportation choices, seasonal demand, and socialization processes are all influenced by beliefs, especially in the context of tourism (Heidari et al., 2018). Tourists and visitors typically travel with their families or in organized groups, and their travel is highly seasonal and heavily influenced by events such as holidays, ceremonies, work schedules, sports, and other events (Lohmann & Hübner, 2011). The tourism sector is the main driver of economic, cultural, and social growth in societies. In recent decades, it has experienced continuous development and diversification and has become one of the world's largest and fastest economic sectors (International Labour Organization, 2022). Today, sports is one of the world's largest and most important industries, which, along with tourism, has spawned one of the most remarkable modern service industries, the sport tourism industry (Cho et al., 2019).

In recent years, sporting activities have increased touristic mobility on nearly all continents, and sports tourism has been gaining in popularity, especially as tourists frequently attend mega sports events (Malchrowicz-Mosko & Munsters, 2018, p. 25). People have different intentions and goals in sport tourism. Sports tourists travel primarily to attend their preferred sporting event (Gibson, 1998; Hua & Chiu, 2013). Sports tourism is where people plan to observe or participate in various sports events. This type of tourism focuses on sports (Kapur, 2018). Typically, sports tourists concentrate on sporting activities during their travels. Sports tourism is classified as physically and psychologically demanding events that typically occur in remote natural settings such as the sea, mountains, sky, space, and earth. Conventionally, only male tourists participate, as the event requires physical strength and risk-taking, thus preventing female participation (Humberstone, 2000). However, the understanding of sport and tourism has widened over the years, considering other dimensions such as sport as a motivation, experience with sport tourism activities, economic interests, and time and space (Van Rheeën et al., 2017). Sports tourism can serve as an attraction that provides tourists with an authentic experience of a destination (Takata & Hallmann, 2021, p. 26).

Many different opinions exist concerning the precise definition of sport tourism. The diversity of orientations in sports tourism is considerable, with most scientific definitions characterized by an emphasis on events (Schlemmer et al., 2020). Some scholars consider sports tourists to be only those who do sports during their tourism activities (Schwark, 2016). Sports tourism's commercial and traditional success provides economic, social, environmental, and cultural benefits to the local community (Chang et al., 2020, p. 216). A particular ambiguity arises from the fact that most definitions are very broad and define sports tourism as something that encompasses almost all possible

tourist activities, motivations, and experiences (Deery et al., 2004). Prior research on sports tourism has concentrated primarily on its effects and major sporting events.

Nevertheless, tourism has recently become popular in the event and leisure literature (Preuss, 2015), triggering several approaches and cross-connections and providing a “together-apart” relationship between event tourism, sports tourism, or recreational tourism (Deery et al., 2004). Although the impact of events is still controversially discussed in the scientific literature, events may be considered drivers of local tourism strategies and regional marketing concepts (Getz, 2008). In general, sports tourism is defined as the type of tourism that is related to sports and subsequent activities that take place in the form of leisure, organizational activity, and recreation, among others (Darabi et al., 2020; Herbold et al., 2020; Wäsche & Woll, 2010; Zauhar, 2004). Sports tourism activities are effective in sports tourism attractions and interact with non-sports tourism attractions (Ito & Higham, 2020, p. 270).

Several scholars believe that cultural and social issues effectively create social bonds in sport tourism (Karoubi et al., 2022). Sports, culture, and society exhibit a very deep relationship with each other (Jarvie et al., 2013). Tourism impacts people and social activities and thus can disintegrate local communities' social and cultural structures (Boo, 1990). Socio-cultural factors of sport tourism can enhance national heritage, individuality, uniqueness, and community spirit as local people can join together to promote their culture. Sports tourism can provide a means through which visitors can get to know people from other countries and cultures (Kapur, 2018). As evident, there are few theoretical foundations related to this field. Thus, it is necessary to identify and analyze this field's main components and indicators using qualitative methods. To this end, the main components are identified using the mixed method, and in the quantitative phase, a determination is made regarding their acceptability or rejection. Numerous studies have been conducted on sports tourism, but there is a paucity of research on the broader context of culture and sportsmanship. The existence of a theoretical gap in this field is one of the obvious gaps that must be addressed. This study aims to resolve this issue.

Materials and Methods

The current study employed a mixed method and was practical in terms of its intended purpose. The sequential exploratory approach of mixed research involved collecting and analyzing qualitative information and quantitative data, respectively. In the first phase of this study, the qualitative method of thematic analysis was used, and in the second phase, the quantitative method of surveying was employed. In the first phase, semi-structured interviews were used to obtain relevant codes, which were then converted into basic, organized, and global themes using the method of thematic analysis. In the second phase, the components and categories obtained in terms of experts were examined using the

quantitative method of surveying, and its validity was determined by measuring its components. Participants with different conditions and characteristics were interviewed and examined at each research stage. In the first phase, where the thematic analysis method was employed, experts in sports management, sports tourism, culture management, and sportsmanship possessed both academic training and executive experience in this field.

Purposive sampling, one of the qualitative sampling methods, was employed because the research's subject matter involved two specialized fields. Each of the central topics extracted was analyzed and evaluated by the experts at this research stage, and the number of samples was determined according to theoretical saturation achievement. Finally, approximately 14 experts participated and were identified using the purposeful sampling method. To guide the interview process using thematic axes, the participants discussed and researched this subject area, and during the interview, each participant was permitted to examine several questions and axes. In the second stage, which had a quantitative approach and was conducted to verify the validity of the extracted components, a quantitative survey method and a systematic sampling technique were used to select the relevant experts. The experts commented on the questionnaire tool's feasibility and validity of the extracted model and components.

Results

As explained in the research methodology section, the current research approach was mixed with a sequential exploratory approach performed in two qualitative-quantitative phases. This plan involved the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.

In the first phase, which consisted of online theme analysis, global, organizing, and fundamental themes were extracted. These themes were classified and identified using Attride-Stirling's triple methodology. In the second phase, experts were sent a questionnaire containing extracted themes; the results are listed in Table 2.

First phase: qualitative method of thematic analysis

In order to explain how to extract the themes, the steps taken are described below, and the desired model's themes are presented as categories in Table 2. The steps taken to extract the themes are then described, and the extracted themes are presented in Table 1 in the form of categories. The desired themes are extracted per the six main steps of this methodology.

In the first step, identification is performed through the data. During this stage, raw propositions were obtained using semi-structured interviews of experts - conducted online - which were used in line with the coding in stage 2. In the second step, initial coding was complete. Each proposition was coded using the research's thematic focus and the author's investigations and analyses, and the number of these codes, which were presented in the form of primary codes, was 78. These 78 codes

were then categorized into themes in stage 3. In the third stage, themes were searched. During step 2, primary codes were extracted and entered in the form of themes for categorization.

Step 3 entails the “searching for themes” procedure, which involves categorizing various codes as potential themes. Due to the large number of codes obtained from steps 1 and 2, codes were classified into themes more precisely. In the fourth step, themes were reviewed. At this stage, themes were reviewed or revised. As described in the third step, due to a large number of codes, themes may also be modified; therefore, the researcher must create and review a comprehensive set of themes. Two fundamental tasks were performed at this stage: reviewing and refining the themes. In the revision phase, the researcher reexamines the coded summaries until there are no remaining themes or propositions, and in the purification phase, the researcher evaluates the validity of the themes concerning the data set. Step 5 involved defining and naming themes. The “theme titles” were compiled at this point.

During the two stages of reviewing and refining the themes in the fourth stage, the themes presented for analysis were defined and reviewed again, and the researcher then analyzed the data contained within them. The findings were reported in step 6. The theme analysis method concluded with the final analysis and theme extraction, which occurred in the sixth and final stages. Table 1 displays the extracted themes. As described, the steps of the theme analysis method led to the extraction and categorization of related themes per Attride-Stirling’s (2001) basic, organizing, and global themes. This study identified 78 indicators by analyzing semi-structured interviews, from which 39 basic themes, 15 organizing themes, and four global themes were extracted.

In Table 1, global and organizing themes are listed separately. Notably, to avoid repetition of the content in the article, the basic themes were omitted, and only global and organizing themes were considered.

Table 1. Global, organizing, and basic themes

| Row | Global themes | Organizing themes |
|-----|--|--|
| 1 | Chivalry | Pahlavani (heroic) culture, respecting the rights of other people, self-devotion, ambition, and magnanimity |
| 2 | Empathy and altruism | Interaction and participation, encouraging fellow human beings, philanthropy, denial of racism |
| 3 | Belief in religious and value issues (sacramental) | Strengthening moral and religious beliefs, respect and adherence to values, ethical insight, and behavior |
| 4 | Spiritual health | Unity and oneness, sound and productive communication; exaltation of good feelings, inner and satisfying feeling |

The effective components of sport tourism in the sublimity of sports culture and sportsmanship in the form of global and organizing themes are shown in Table 1. Chivalry is one of the main components of sports, which has also found its way into other fields - such as sports tourism. Themes such as “pahlavani (heroic) culture; respecting the rights of other people, self-devotion, ambition, and magnanimity” were the main elements of this component. Empathy and altruism is the second overarching theme in this field. Organizing themes such as “interaction and participation, encouraging fellow human beings, philanthropy, denial of racism” were the constituent elements of this theme. Belief in religious and value issues was the third overarching theme in this field, and organizing themes such as: “strengthening moral and religious beliefs; respect and adherence to values; ethical insight and behavior” were the constituent elements of this theme. Many researchers believe that sports tourism can be effective in religious and value issues. Spiritual health was the fourth global theme, and themes such as “unity and oneness; sound and constructive communication; exaltation of good feelings; inner and satisfying feeling” were the organizing themes of this theme.

Today, the need for spirit recognition and development in the service industry and the tourism industry, in particular, is more apparent than ever before (Zargham Boroujeny, 2017, p. 64). Spiritual health is defined as an inner and satisfying feeling combined with constructive communication with oneself and others and a transcendent existence in each society’s specific cultural framework, which makes life and death meaningful. Spiritual health is considered a basic component in the framework of health dimensions, like other dimensions of health such as physical, mental, and social health; spiritual health is a decisive and effective factor. In addition, spiritual health is considered a protective factor in promoting health and preventing diseases, while spiritual health can be noted as a successful and helpful strategy for human life in all stages and areas of life, including stressful situations, disease, and even death. According to the studies, spiritual health is considered an important therapeutic factor in the process of treating patients (Steinmann, 2008).

Second phase: Quantitative survey method

During this stage of the research, the extracted codes were distributed to selected experts in the form of a questionnaire using a designed questionnaire and systematic sampling. In this phase, 32 experts responded to the questionnaire. The results were analyzed using PLS3 and SPSS software, and the relevant values were compiled in graphs and tables.

Average sample values, t-statistic, P-values, standard deviation, Coefficient of determination (R^2), Goodness-of-fit (GoF) index

In order to create content coherence and avoid word confusion, the researcher presented the results of the second research phase in Table 2.

Before examining the results of the structural equations, it was necessary to examine the initial and base values of the constructs. These values are listed separately for each construct in the table below. It should be noted that, in order to reduce the amount of text, additional diagrams have been omitted.

Table 2. Average sample values, t-statistic, P values, Standard deviation, Coefficient of determination (R^2), Goodness-of-fit (GoF) index

| Constructs | Average sample | Standard deviation | T | P value | R^2 | GoF |
|---|----------------|--------------------|--------|---------|-------|------|
| Chivalry | 4.672 | 0.331 | 1.221 | 0.001 | 0.62 | 0.56 |
| Empathy and altruism | 5.851 | 0.336 | 12.461 | 0.000 | 0.59 | 0.58 |
| Belief in religious and value-based beliefs (sacramental) | 4.321 | 0.456 | 9.870 | 0.001 | 0.67 | 0.61 |
| Spiritual health | 4.112 | 0.441 | 10.047 | 0.000 | 0.61 | 0.55 |
| Pahlavani (heroic) culture | 6.451 | 0.409 | 9.337 | 0,001 | 0.60 | 0.51 |
| Respecting the rights of other people | 5.446 | 0.335 | 8.147 | 0.000 | 0.64 | 0.61 |
| Self-devotion | 4.332 | 0.442 | 8.226 | 0.000 | 0.57 | 0.49 |
| Ambition & magnanimity | 4.789 | 0.446 | 2.227 | 0.000 | 0.44 | 0.50 |
| Interaction and participation | 4.233 | 0.470 | 5.446 | 0.002 | 0.51 | 0.48 |
| Encouraging fellow human beings | 5.333 | 0.341 | 8.341 | 0.001 | 0.49 | 0.58 |
| Philanthropy | 4.227 | 0.522 | 9.644 | 0.000 | 0.64 | 0.51 |
| Denial of racism | 5.338 | 0.439 | 6.334 | 0.000 | 0.57 | 0.60 |
| Strengthening moral and religious beliefs | 4.223 | 0.562 | 5.440 | 0.000 | 0.48 | 0.53 |
| Respect and adherence to values | 5.441 | 0.346 | 9.233 | 0.001 | 0.50 | 0.55 |
| Ethical insight and behavior | 4.709 | 0.447 | 10.457 | 0.000 | 0.46 | 0.60 |
| Unity and oneness | 4.114 | 0.547 | 7.709 | 0.002 | 0.52 | 0.52 |
| Sound and productive communication | 5.263 | 0.361 | 5.332 | 0.000 | 0.47 | 0.57 |
| Exaltation of good feelings | 5.346 | 0.468 | 6.413 | 0.000 | 0.60 | 0.52 |
| Inner and satisfying feeling | 4.563 | 0.508 | 9.651 | 0.001 | 0.43 | 0.47 |

Table 2 shows that the sample's standard deviation and mean are in good agreement and that all 19 constructs, i.e., global themes and organizing themes, have a significant relationship. To measure the fit of the structural portion of the models using the R^2 criterion, the R^2 value of all constructs should be calculated, and then the constructs with a weaker and lower R^2 value should be given more

consideration. As shown in Table 2, the R^2 values for all variables are greater than strong, and the value of R is 0.732, which is a high value indicating the model's strong predictive ability.

According to the quantitative and qualitative findings presented above, it is clear that the extracted components and indicators significantly impact the sublimity of culture and sportsmanship. In addition, from the perspective of the subject's experts, these items exhibit good validity and approval and are, therefore, acceptable.

Discussion and Conclusion

Advances in all aspects of human life, including sports and matters related to strengthening the body, which have significantly affected spiritual health, expanded globally, and employed numerous individuals as a business, the travel and tourism industry is now considered the largest and most diverse industry in the world. Sports tourism, one of the largest types of tourism, has attracted much attention to culture and sportsmanship. According to the research findings, the effective components of sports tourism in the sublimity of culture and sportsmanship are categorized into four global themes and 15 organizing themes. As a result, sports tourism can effectively improve sport culture and sportsmanship through the extracted themes. Themes such as chivalry, empathy, altruism, belief in religious and value issues (sacramental), and spiritual health are sports tourism's main components in the sublimity of culture and sportsmanship. As stated in the introduction, most of the research in the field of sport tourism has been conducted in the fields of economics, marketing, and others, and there is a dearth of research on sports culture and sportsmanship. This is one of the innovations of the present research.

Moreover, one of the important innovations of this research is the combination of the intriguing field of sports tourism with the values and ethical concepts adopted in this research. Focusing on sports tourism and its related concepts makes it possible to sublimate values and ethics such as culture and sportsmanship.

Sports tourism is adventurous and exciting leisure that people love best. These findings provide up-to-date and significant information about sports culture and sportsmanship. In addition, the results obtained from this study can potentially show the importance of cultural and sportsmanship issues raised in sport tourism, which until now, has received little attention. Concepts like culture and sportsmanship are spiritual or intangible issues and cannot be offset by material things. Consequently, many classes and societies are highly sensitive to these issues and require considerable attention. Sports tourism, along with leisure and recreation, can be effective in the sublimity of sports culture and ethics, and the main components of this field were identified and investigated in this research.

The present research results are consistent with several studies (Funk & Bruun, 2007; Jarvie et al., 2013; Karoubi et al., 2022; Malchrowicz-Mosko & Munsters, 2018). In order to obtain a better understanding of the topic of this research, future researchers can conduct research concerning sports tourism by considering the cultural and sportsmanship components of a region.

According to the results and findings of the current research, the following recommendations are made:

- Organizations and decision-makers in the field of sports tourism should provide conditions so that, in addition to tourists, the host community can also benefit from the valuable benefits of this type of tourism.
- Researchers and education and research centers in this field should host educational and explanatory courses so society can become acquainted with these concepts.

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