

## STUDY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPORT SERVICE QUALITY PERCEPTION WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SATISFACTION OF SPORT TOURISTS IN ISFAHAN PROVINCE

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**Abstract:** This study aims to investigate the relationship between sport service quality perception with economic development and satisfaction of sport tourists in Isfahan province. Reliability of questionnaire was estimated and obtained by Cronbach's alpha for the whole questionnaire. Data analysis was performed in both descriptive (frequency and frequency percentage) and inferential statistics (multiple correlation coefficient, simultaneous regression analysis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Pearson correlation coefficient) using SPSS software. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between sport service quality with economic development and satisfaction of sport tourists in Isfahan province.

**Keywords:** service quality, economic development, satisfaction, sport

### 1. Introduction

Iran needs to use all its potential and existing facilities and capabilities in order to create a comprehensive and sustainable development as well as making new sources of revenue instead of relying on oil supplies. One of these potential existing facilities is tourism in the country, because Iran has a special position in the world in terms of tourist attractions. Iran is one of the most spectacular countries in the world and it is among the first ten countries in the world in terms of tourist attractions and it is in the ranking of top five first countries in the world in terms of tourism diversity and among the three first countries in the world based on crafts diversity (site of Iran tourism information, 2009). Isfahan province is the most attractive regions in Iran and has the first rank in attracting tourists and the number of tourist monuments and landmarks. Isfahan has been considered an appropriate place for the onset of manifestations of Iranian culture and civilization for a long time due to favorable natural conditions, located in the geographical center of the country and the possibilities to communicate with other parts of the country (Zirakbash, 2006, p131). Having beautiful landscapes and abundant and unparalleled tourist attractions lead to ask this question whether background of economic growth and development of this province and therefore country can be provided by development of tourism industry in this region based on capacities of this province?

In recent years, tourism has become a competitive industry and countries have become more amenable to new approaches and innovation in this industry in order to earn more money. Performing sport competitions such as Olympic is one of the new ways to attract tourists and indicating culture of a country to the world. Among them, participation in the active and passive different sport movements through organization of economic-commercial factors from the origin country to the destination country and happened travels are called sport tourism which has been turned to the one of the main subsets of tourist, in recent years (Hadavi et al, 2011).

Estimations indicate that more than 70 million people, in 2004, have traveled in order to participate in sports, especially, watch these tournaments (Mojtabavi, 2008). The studies show regions where have access to the sea, beaches and mountains with a variety of climates can be an appropriate place for the development of sports tourism. Regions with steppes and extensive plains and warm climates are proper for the

development of sports such as golf, baseball and polo, etc. Regions with mountains and snow are favorable for the development of mountain and winter sports such as skiing and mountaineering, etc. There are various forms of tourism. Sports tourism is one of them and it has the highest growth among different sectors of tourism (Ehsani et al, 2010). Sports tourism, as tourism in general, has different definitions from different viewpoints of experts. These definitions have many similar and opposite aspects which make a problem for getting a special concept. Gibson offers one of the definitions in the field of sport tourism: Sports tourism is a leisure travel that people leave their settlements in order to engage in physical activities, watch physical activities and .... It must be understood that the quality of service and product play the main role in satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the clients. Therefore, leading and sublime organizations always are seeking to get ensure about their clients' satisfaction (Salehi et al, 2011). Customers' satisfaction is associated closely with the measurement of service quality. Satisfaction is feeling or attitude with which is encountered after receiving services. However, a review of existing literature on the subject suggests that understanding the relationship between customers' satisfaction and perceived service quality is still a challenging issue. The research current believes that customer satisfaction generally comes from the quality of received service. In addition, it should be noted that high clients' satisfaction and high perceived quality of service cause to return clients and customers. Mohammadpour express sports tourism as: Sports tourism is considered as a part of tourism which has been existed by combination of sport and tourism and it being turned and is growing quickly as a big and independent industry. Khatibzadeh knows quality of services and satisfaction of tourists as important issues in tourism policies, with emphasis on satisfaction and return willingness of sport tourists that addressing these issues lead to develop tourism and sport tourism. Karimi, about the challenges of tourism development, considers creating job opportunities, reduction of poverty, improvement of living standards of the population and development of infrastructures as the impacts of tourism in the cities. Because Isfahan province has a great capacity in the field of tourism attraction in general and tourism associated with sporting events in particular and effective factors on sport tourists' satisfaction and presence of sport tourists in the international sport events has not been identified in Isfahan and none of the researchers pay attention to the economic development that can be obtained by presence of sport tourists, thus, the researcher plans to investigate the relationship between perceived service quality with the economic development and satisfaction of the sport tourists of Isfahan province and investigate factors which cause to increase tourists' satisfaction and economic development of Isfahan province.

The researcher wants to answer to the following questions: Is there a significant relationship between the perception of service quality and economic development? Is there a significant relationship between the perception of service quality and sport tourists' satisfaction?

### 2. Method

The present study is applied based on its aim and it is descriptive, of correlational type, based on data collection, because the relationship between the perception of service quality and economic development and sport tourists' satisfaction in Isfahan province has been studied using questionnaire without manipulation in testees' comments. According to the aim of this study which is investigating the relationship between the perception of service quality with economic development and sport tourists' satisfaction in Isfahan province, the method is descriptive - correlational of survey branch which is collected by documentary method of the

theoretical foundations and survey method is used to collect data and information.

The study population consisted of all people as sport tourists who take part in sport-recreational events or activities in Isfahan province during considered time interval who include 50 footballers and 350 karates by inquiry of department of Isfahan Physical Education. The sampling method is holistic. Due to the limitation of the statistical population, all persons who travel to Isfahan province during considered time interval to participate in sport-recreational events or activities are considered as statistical samples who are 50 footballers and 350 karates. Researcher-made questionnaire (study instrument) was given to them. This questionnaire consists of two parts. First part includes 5 questions about demographic characteristics of respondents and second part consists of 16 items about effective factor on satisfaction about how service is provided and service quality in Isfahan.

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaire questions in triple areas

Area	Number	Question No.
Perception of quality	9	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Economic development	4	10, 11, 12, 13
Tourists' satisfaction	3	14, 15, 16

In order to evaluate the basic components of the research, the five-point Likert scale has been used because this fact that each of the components includes a number of items. In this scale, the weights of 1 to 5 are given to answers arbitrarily. The questionnaire indexing is based on above as follows: (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree)

For validity, the content validity of preliminary questionnaire was approved by the respectable supervisor professor and some professors of faculty after considering their views. Its reliability was studied by Cronbach's alpha test. The results of alpha test indicate that the obtained amount for the whole questionnaire is 0.959 that shows questionnaire has high reliable items. Alpha amounts for dimensions of questionnaire are as following:

Table 2. Alpha amounts for questionnaire dimensions

Variables	Number of items	Alpha amount
Perception of quality	9	0.918
Economic development	4	0.915
Tourists' satisfaction	3	0.838
Total alpha	16	0.959

Descriptive and inferential statistical indexes have been used in SPSS software environment in order to analyze data. In descriptive statistics level, frequency, average percent and standard deviation have been used to describe collected realities. Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis have been used in inferential statistics.

### 3. Results

The results of demographic questionnaire showed the highest percent of respondents' age (50.8) is in the group below the twenty-year-old age and the lowest percentage of respondents' age (1.3) is in the group of forty years old and more.

The highest percentage of respondents' educational major is non-physical education (66.8) and the lowest of them is physical education (29).

The highest percentage of respondents' educational license is under-diploma (35.8) and the highest one is master degree (3.8).

The highest percentage of presence in sport events related to the group is 1 to 2 times (34.5) and the lowest one related to the group is 6 to 12 times (14).

The highest percentage of respondents is single (68.5) and others are married (28.8).

Also, variable of "quality of perception" has the mean of 31.39 and standard deviation of 9.382 which the lowest score of the answer is to this item of (responsible for performing these competitions supplies the needs of tourists) with the mean of 3.31 and the highest of them is the item of (tournaments are held at the appropriate time) with the mean of 3.65.

Variable of "economic development" has the mean of 14.46 and standard deviation equal to 4.341 which the lowest score of the answer is to this item of (these tournaments are effective in creating new jobs in the sport fields) with the mean of 3.5 and the highest of them is the item of (performing these tournaments cause to increase shopping in Isfahanheld at the appropriate time) with the mean of 3.64.

Also, variable of "tourists' satisfaction" has the mean of 11.12 and standard deviation of 3.83 which the lowest score of the answer is to this item of (in general, I am satisfied with the holding of this tournament) with the mean of 3.51 and the highest of them is the item of (I think making decision for presence in these tournaments is correct) with the mean of 3.77.

The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test show that data distribution of three variables is normal.

Table (3). Normality test of study variables' data

components	Perception of quality	Economic development	satisfaction
mean	31.39	14.46	11.12
standard deviation	9.382	4.341	3.836
Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	0.115	0.126	0.174
significance level	0.09	0.10	0.156

### 3.1 Study findings with separation of hypotheses

The first hypothesis is: there is a significant relationship between perception of sport service quality and economic development and sport tourists' satisfaction in Isfahan province. The results indicate that the best predictor of the perception of sport service quality has been satisfaction in the first step and the economic development in the second one among the studied variables in the regression. According to the results of stepwise regression, the relationship between perception of sport service quality and economic development and sport tourists' satisfaction in Isfahan province has been significant. Therefore, in the first step, coefficient of satisfaction component explains 61.9% of variance of sport service quality perception and, in the second step, coefficient of economic development component explains 72.9% of variance of sport service quality perception. Observed F has been significant in  $p < 0.01$  level. Thus, regression is generalizable to the statistical population.

For one unit increase in satisfaction component, beta coefficient increases the perception of sport service quality to 0.472 units and for one unit increase in economic development component, beta coefficient increases the perception of sport service quality to 0.457 units.

The equation of the main hypothesis is presented as follow:

The perception of sport service quality = (0.472) satisfaction + (0.457) economic development

The first subsidiary hypothesis is: there is a significant relationship between the perception of sport service quality and economic development in Isfahan province. The results show that the correlation coefficient between the perception of sport service quality and economic development in Isfahan province is significant. That is, there is a significant relationship between the perception of sport service quality and economic development in Isfahan province ( $r=0.782$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). According to coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) 1.6 percent of the variance, perception of sport service quality and economic development has been common. Therefore, the first hypothesis is that there is a relationship between the perception of sport service quality and economic development is confirmed.

The second subsidiary hypothesis is: there is a significant relationship between the perception of sport service quality and sport tourists' satisfaction in Isfahan province. The results show that the correlation coefficient between the perception of sport service quality and sport tourists' satisfaction in Isfahan province is significant. That is, there is a significant relationship between the perception of sport service quality and sport tourists' satisfaction in Isfahan province ( $r=0.786$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). According to coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) 1.6 percent of the variance, perception of sport service quality and sport tourists' satisfaction has been common. Therefore, the second hypothesis is that there is a relationship between the perception of sport service quality and sport tourists' satisfaction is confirmed.

#### 4. Discussion

The main hypothesis: Due to the significance level ( $p<0.05$ ) which is equal to 0.001 and the coefficient value of (0.61) and according to the results of inferential test relating to the first hypothesis, about the test of study the relationship of "perception of sport service quality with economic development and sport tourists' satisfaction in Isfahan "was confirmed.

The findings of this part were consistent with the results of Khosravi's (2005) study. The results of Khosravian's study shows that among making security, informing people, correct propaganda, coordinating organizations related to tourism affairs, expanding transportation, security has greatest impact on the growth of tourism industry development. But it was not consistent with the Taji's (2005) study. He writes: tourism play a poor role in the economic and social development of villages of this region, despite their very high capacities for tourism.

Also, the Salehi's (2005) findings are consistent with his results and indicate that economists know the tourism industry as the third dynamic and growing economic phenomenon. Also, it is consistent with Hanygan's (1994) studies. He concluded that income and employment was got by tourist were increased and areas which have position and archaism have high development.

In general, the results in the area of the relationship between the perception of sport service quality with economic development and sport tourists' satisfaction indicate that sport service quality can cause to develop economic and tourism can increase occupation and help to develop economic. Also, service quality and sport security can cause to satisfy tourists and thus attract them. The results indicate that sport service quality is an

effective dimension on economic development and satisfaction of tourists.

First hypothesis: According to the significance level ( $p<0.05$ ) which is equal to 0.001 and the coefficient value of (0.78) and according to the results of inferential test relating to the second hypothesis, about the test of study the relationship of "perception of sport service quality and economic development in Isfahan province" was confirmed.

The findings of this part were consistent with the results of Firouzj'ai's (2005) study. His results show that tourism has positive economic social effects and consequences such as creating jobs, increase of income levels and increase of awareness level of people.

But the results of the current hypothesis were not consistent with Valadi's (2008) study; Valadi's results show that 52 percent of villagers considered tourism was ineffective in their lives.

It is also consistent with Kiaipoor's (2010) findings. His results indicate that the process of creating the tourism phenomenon and tourism industry development which in fact present travelling as a commodity causes to tourism industry is defined by various components in different dimensions. Attractions and facilities are two important components in the formation of tourism industry in rural areas.

Also, it is consistent with Zeitonali et al., (2011) studies. They also concluded that there are a significant relationship between the development of sport tourism development and income and creating job.

It is consistent with Rahimian's (2011) findings. She points out that one of the most prosperous industries in the world and the main body of economy for some countries is sport tourism that is an important source of foreign exchange and financial earnings, producing economy and creating job opportunities.

The study was also consistent with Um and Crompton (1992); their results show that also it was consistent with Hanygan's (1994) results; his income and employment resulting from tourism have been increased and the growth of areas with position and archaism in tourism have become more.

In general, the results of these researches, about the relationship between the perception of sport service quality and economic development, show that sport service quality, and lower costs, life security which can be related to economic development and also better sport service can cause to improve economy.

The results of this research indicate that the perception of sport service quality is impressive on economic development.

Second hypothesis: According to the significance level ( $p<0.05$ ) which is equal to 0.001 and the coefficient value of (0.78) and according to the results of inferential test relating to the third hypothesis, about the test of study the relationship of "perception of sport service quality and tourists' satisfaction in Isfahan province" was confirmed.

The findings of this part were consistent with the results of Khatibzadeh's (2010) study. His results show that tourism has positive economic social effects and consequences such as creating jobs, increase of income levels and increase of awareness level of people. Results of his studies show that there is a significant relationship between "sport tourism service quality" and "satisfaction" and "sport tourists' desire to return". Also, "competition quality" has a significant relationship with "sport tourism service quality". Therefore, it can be said many factors which influence on sport tourism service quality, sport

tourists' satisfaction and willingness to return should be considered.

It is also consistent with Levan B.'s (2012) findings. The results of his research show that entry of sport tourists causes officials of sport tourists do something that leads to be welcomed by sport tourists such as bikers, climbers, and the riders.

## 5. Conclusion

Generally, the results of these studies in the area of the relationship between perception of service quality and the sport tourists' satisfaction indicate that possibilities, their quality, reduction of tourism costs, geographical location and so on cause to make satisfaction and thus attract sport tourists.

The results of this research indicate that the perception of sport service quality is one of the dimensions which is effective on sport tourists' satisfaction.

Today, the services are mentioned as the heart of making value. Other services are not limited to banking services, health and educational services, but the most products that are purchased have some elements of services. In fact, the most goods rely on service-based activities in order to create excellence and competition. When a customer buys an item, he/she purchases not only goods but also comprehensive package of services. For example, television is along with other services like delivery, insurance and guarantees. In recent years, the services sector has been faced with great interest. Initially, economists paid little attention to service. But gradually realize the importance of services so that Marshall mentioned in the late 19th century a person who provides a service similar to a person who produces a tangible product and this service can offer utility to the recipient. In fact, in Marshall's view, what a producer of agricultural products does is valuable like what a farmer does. The west world has experienced service economy for more than two decades. Today, all manufacturers of goods offer several services to their clients.

Sport tourism is a service industry and it is mainly affected by the quality of offered services. Quality of service is considered as a key concept in organizations related to tourism. Also, quality of services is directly associated with the return of tourists and results in more profits for organizations.

Acceptance of sport centers with combination of the attraction of the destination and hierarchy has many management applications. Researchers in various countries such as Spain, Australia, India, Greece and South Africa, etc. have studied various natural-sport attractions of that country and investigated about the most important natural-sport attractions in their countries that have more diversity and extension and perhaps cause to attract more sport tourists to those countries. They have studied the effect of this kind of sport tourism, too.

Qiu mentions that some countries in North Africa such as Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and other countries in the continent such as Kenya and South Africa have substantially increased duration, season and revenue of tourism using the opportunities for exploiting sport tourism based on natural-sport attractions.

Sport tourism is an industry that has emerged from the combination of two tourism and sport industries. In other words, sport is one of the important activities of tourists during tourism. Although the tourism industry and sport are both important issues but their interaction is not considered in the past. Travel and tourism industry is considered as the biggest and most renowned industry in the world.

Quality is not only related to private companies and organizations. According to several reasons, maintaining and increasing market share, attracting visitors, more profits, and many destinations, are up to date quality tourism policy, in particular, those that operate in competitive markets (due to price sensitivity and in the high level of replacement). In general, the characteristics of tourism as an

intangible service (intangible), heterogeneity (heterogeneity), imperishable, simultaneous production and consumption, the contradictory nature of tourism experience make significant challenges in the successful implementation of procedures and quality management policies. Human Factors in services, particularly the behavior of service providers in the field of customer's expectations, is one of the essential aspects of high quality management whose control is still hard.

Because of today human spiritual-mental need to entertainment in nature and sports which can be performed in a natural area, with scheduled planning and using the talent of the different regions and considering different conditions, we can step in development of economic aims and creating and job and make appropriate environments for tourists. Planning about these aspects and guiding sport tourists to these attractions will be very useful and prevent wasting time, resources, budget and human and material resources.

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