

A SURVEY STUDY TO IDENTIFY A SUITABLE SITES FOR SPORTS TOURISM IN SELECTED SITES OF TIGRAY REGION, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to identify the Suitable Sites for Sports Tourism and areas for hosting sport events. The samples were taken from the different sports tourism areas such as in Axum, Humera, Mekelle, Wukro and Gheralta (Hawzen) towns includes all age levels (from 18 to 40 years and above). From each area the researcher selected randomly 50 subjects from each area totally 250 samples were considered for the study. The sample were divided into two groups named expertise group and customers group.

The researcher built a theoretical model consist of different sports tourism factors such as Sports Events, Sports Facilities, Culture & Social factors and Geographical Factors. The data were collected by using a standard questionnaire and analyzed with percentage and frequency. The results were shown that Mekelle sites place a significant value in both expert and customer groups (91%) in all the factors and could be suitable site for sports tourism.

Keywords: Tourism, Sports Tourism, Suitable Sites.

INTRODUCTION

According to Gammon, S. & Robinson, T (1997) Sport tourism is a complex phenomenon that is not only a simple sum of sport and tourism. Both similar and different from sport and tourism individually, sport tourism is multi-faceted and exists under a variety of forms and names Andersson et al., (2004). Participants travel to take part in sport, to watch sport, and to visit sports-related attractions. Depending on different participation (active or passive) and motivation factors, sport tourists encounter various experiences as the ultimate value they are seeking (Pralhad, C.K. & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). The experience of travel to engage in or view sport-related activities as an important market In order to compete in the growing sport tourism market, it is crucial for communities to develop a profound understanding of the benefits and impacts of sport tourism, of the process of bidding for events, possible sponsorship opportunities and other elements involved in the planning and hosting of a successful sport event Chang & Gibson (2011). Sport tourism refers to the experience of travel to engage in or view sport-related activities Cheung et al., (2016).

Tigray region is blessed with beautiful landscapes, which are suitable for a range of outdoor activities, including walking, mountain and rock climbing, Mountain Bicycle, trekking, and caving Deery et al., (2012).

Tourism products are places that have attraction as a supporting factor as attracting tourists to visit the tour and have adequate facilities such as access to travel, recreation and many things that make tourists interested in coming to the place Gammon & Robinson (1997). One part of the attraction destination is the cultural tourist attraction that encompasses cultural villages Tigray region is one of the second largest cities in Ethiopia is rich in a variety of tourism destination, with natural and environmental conservation, Facilities constitute facilities and infrastructure that support the operation of tourism objects to accommodate all the needs of tourists, not directly encourage growth but develop at the same time or after developing attractions (Spillane,1994; Rosita, Marhanah, & Wahadi, 2016)

In addition to these economic impacts that are relatively easy to measure and are widely assessed, hosting sport events can also generate a broad range of other indirect or non-monetary effects like improvements of country or destination image (Cheung et al. 2016; Hallmann and Breur 2010), Gammon & Robinson (2003). Many authors argue, however, that non-economic impacts are underestimated because they are difficult to measure and manage (Deery et al. 2012; Getz & Page 2016; Taks et al. 2015; Wise and Peri'c 2017a). This is especially true for social and cultural impacts which, as a relatively new emphasis, have only in recent years become the focus of attention Getz & Page (2016). Sport events can increase sport participation; enhance the quality of local life, social cohesion, social capital formation, euphoria, pride, and patriotism of the host community; and generate interest in a foreign country or culture (Gibson et al. 2014; Kim and Petrick 2005; Kim et al. 2015; Prani'c et al. 2012; Reis et al. 2017).

Tigray region is one of the major city in Ethiopia and the field of sports and winning sports medal The city has great Olympian athletes in different sports that the majority of those are active in the professional sports and most of them are medalists in Tigray are and international events. The city has a lot of sports potential which gives natural resources abundant Gibson et al., (2014).

The economic benefits of tourism and natural and geographical landscapes and their characteristics are remarkable. In fact, "sports tourism" is an industry has been emerged from the combination of two industries: "tourism" and "sport" Hallmann & Breuer (2010). Sports and Tourism has made the world a small place that can further promote the understanding between cultures, tolerance, and world peace, eventually Kim & Petrick (2005). The increasing popularity of sports-related travel and active lifestyle has led the people to get interested in sport even in the travel. Therefore, this study was aimed to identify the challenges and practices of sport tourism development in Tigray region Kim et al., (2015).

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

Tigray is the northernmost of Ethiopia's federal states located at 12o12'--- 14o32'N latitude and 36o30'--- 40o30'E longitude. Excluding Mekelle city, the state capital, there are six administrative zones: comprising a total of 47 weredas (districts) and 673 tabias (sub---districts). As per to the central statistics authority (2007), the total land size of the region is 54,572.61 km², and accounts for about 11% of the country Lenskyj, (2012). Tigray has a total population of 6.2 million which is about 8% of the total population of Ethiopia, (49.2% male and 50.8 female), 85% of which live in the rural areas. Tigrigna is the official working language of the region. Sahonga and Kunaminga are also spoken by the respective communities Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004).

Population and Sampling

The samples are taken from the different sports tourism areas such as in Axum, Humera, Mekelle, Wukro and Gheralta (Hawzen) towns includes all age levels (from 18 to 40 years and above) Reis et al., (2017). From each area the researcher selected randomly 50 subjects from each area totally 250 samples were considered for the study. The sample are divided into two groups named expertise group and customers group Ritchie et al., (2009).

Tools Used For The Study

To collect data, a self-made questionnaire was used and Cranach’s alpha coefficients of all the tested variables are above 0.60 which suggesting the composite measure is reliable Rosita et al., (2016).

The questionnaire consisted of two sections; the first section in questionnaire presents general personal information about a respondent, the gender, age, educational level, and personal income Taks et al., (2015). The second section includes questions to measure the independent and dependent variables based on Events, Tourism Facilities, Cultural and Social and Geographical Factors, affecting the sports tourists’ attraction in Tigray. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was analyzed using the instrument was measured by the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient Figure 1.

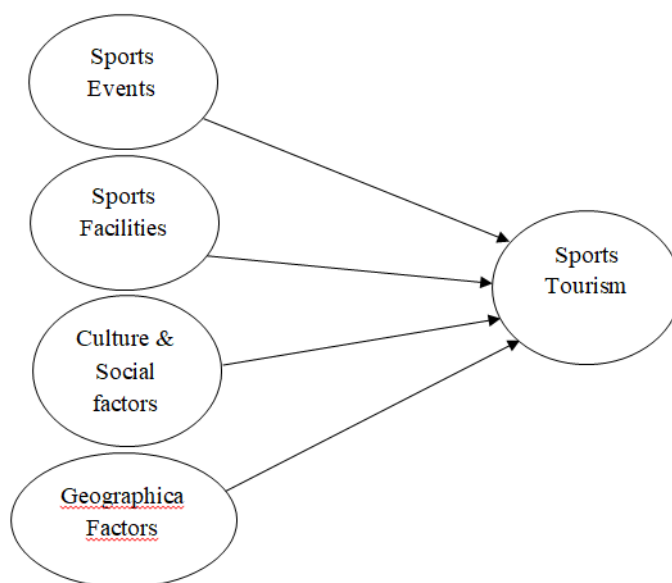


FIGURE 1
RESEARCH FORM OF SPORTS TOURISM IN TIGRAY REGION

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are two important measures to determine the quality and usefulness of the primary data. It is used to verify the reliability and solidity of the questionnaire Weed & Bull (2012). The summary of the questionnaire was formulated, and then it was reviewed by different academicians. The reliability of the instrument was measured by the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient Wise & Perić (2017). Further, some scholars (e.g. Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) suggested that the values of all indicators or dimensional scales should be above the recommended value of 0.60 Table 1.

Table 1 REPRESENTS THE RESULTS OF CRANACH’S ALPHA FOR THE INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES		
Factors	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha Value
Sports Events	8	0.64
Sports Facilities	5	0.62
Culture & Social factors	7	0.68
Geographical Factors	8	0.66

Cranach’s alpha coefficients of all the tested variables are above 0.60 which suggesting the composite measure is reliable Table 2 & Table 3.

Indicator phases		Axum	Humera	Mekelle	Wukro	Gheralta/ Hawzen	
Gender	Male	30	30	30	30	30	
	female	20	20	20	20	20	
Total		50	50	50	50	50	Total 250
Age	18 < 25	05	04	03	03	05	
	26 < 35	15	16	17	17	15	
	36 < 45	15	14	15	15	15	
	46 above	15	16	15	15	15	
Total		50	50	50	50	50	Total 250
Educational Level	Diploma	10	12	10	09	14	
	Bachelors	20	16	15	22	19	
	Masters	15	20	18	17	14	
	Ph.D	05	02	07	02	03	
Total		50	50	50	50	50	Total 250

Factors	Expert group					Customer group				
	<i>Axum</i>	<i>Humera</i>	<i>Mekelle</i>	<i>Hawzen</i>	<i>Wukro</i>	<i>Axum</i>	<i>Humera</i>	<i>Mekelle</i>	<i>Hawzen</i>	<i>Wukro</i>
<i>Sports tourism Sites</i>										
Sports events	15%	20%	25%	24%	13%	20%	22%	23%	21%	14%
Sports Facilities	20%	21%	22%	18%	19%	21%	20%	21%	20%	18%
Culture & Social factors	16%	22%	24%	18%	20%	18%	21%	23%	20%	18%
Geographical Factors	23%	12%	20%	14%	19%	21%	20%	16%	22%	21%
Overall percentage of overall factors in different sites	74%	75%	91%	74%	71%	80%	83%	83%	83%	71%

DISCUSSION

Based on table 3, Indicates that results from expert group related to sports events most of the experts preferred Mekelle (25%) as a priority followed by Hawzen, Humera, Axum, Wukro similarly in the customer group preferred Mekelle as a priority followed by Humera, Hawzen, Axum and Wukro. Sports events tourists' behaviors and level of interest differ from person to person as well as from place to place as a heterogeneous, depending on the tourism type and intention. One can only be sure that sport is the primary drive and common

characteristic of these tourists the common is that expert and customer group are similar in this factors concern.

In sports facilities factors the expert group preferred Mekelle (22%) as a priority followed by Humera, Axum, Wukro, Hawzen, similarly customer group preferred Mekelle as a priority followed by Humera, Hawzen, Axum and Wukro Tourist facilities (accommodation unit, restaurant, activity facilities, and information service) positively and significantly contributed to satisfaction of the visitors visiting to different sites however the expert and customer group suggest that Mekelle sites could be provide a better facilities than all other tourism sites in Tigray region

According to Culture & Social factors the expert group suggest Mekelle (24%) as a priority followed by Humera, Hawzen, Wukro, Axum similarly customer group suggest Mekelle as a priority followed by Humera, Hawzen, Axum and Wukro Sport tourism is considered the most important types of tourism, the spectrum because it satisfies the desire of tourists from two sides, such as culture and social Mekelle has a mixed of both culture and social with love and integrity. Based on Geographical Factors the expert group recommends Axum (23%) as a priority followed by Mekelle, Wukro, Hawzen, Humera, similarly in customer group they recommend Hawzen as a priority followed by Wukro, Axum, Humera and Mekelle.

CONCLUSION

As overall comparison of different factors and different tourist sites in Tigray region, Mekelle sites place a significant value in both expert and customer groups (91%) in all the factors. Hence it is urban area with various accessibility to organize any sports events followed by sports facilities with the strong background of cultural and social impacts that attract more tourist in that specific sites hence other sites are progressing in development through various public and None Governmental Organizations(NGO) projects all the development are in pipeline. Therefore the expert group and customer group has a low percentage level in all other sites regarding the study factors concern.

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