

# "SPORT TOURISM IN IRAN" OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES

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## Abstract

### Background:

Today the tourism industry has developed to a large extent around the world, and through this way many countries could have overcome their economical problems such as low level of per capita income, unemployment, and lack of foreign currency incomes. In 1996 the direct and indirect tourism incomes were about 444 billion dollars equal to 35% of the world's exports; so foreign currency income from tourism industry is increasing every day. In away that tourism income is four times as much as in 60s; and in 1998 it has reached 10% of world income and so it created 204 million job opportunities.

Regarding the above issue, due to the variation of climate from one point of view and the existence of famous historical and cultural monuments from another point of view, Iran is unique. However, it hasn't been able to take advantage of its potentials.

The study on tourism situation in Iran and its foreign currency incomes, shows the fact that Iran is one of the ten most important countries from the view point of historical and ancient places, but it only allots less than 1/1000 of its income to the tourism industry. Especially Iran has many tourist attractions which needs walking, travelling in desert, mountain climbing, skiing, boating, horse and camel riding for visiting.

### Objective:

This paper introduces Iran's various sport tourism attractions meanwhile investigates the opportunities and threats in developing this industry in Iran, it also presents approaches for improving the current sport tourism situation in Iran. So, the main objective of this research is the investigation of sport tourism situation in Iran via reviewing researches which have been conducted in this field.

### Methods:

This research is conducted by reviewing researches which have been performed in Iran's provinces with sport tourism attraction like Isfahan, Kerman, Fars, Yazd, Ardabil, Hormozgan, Hamadan and Khuzestan provinces. So, the main data in those researches collected from tourism experts of cultural inheritance and tourism organization, experts of sport in Physical Education, and active tourism centers' directors in provinces as mentioned above.

### Results:

The significant results which were gathered by reviewing researches in this matter, can be divided as follows:

- The current opportunities for improving sport tourism in Iran
  - 1) Variation in ecologic environment in Iran like plateaus, deserts, mountains, sea and lakes as well as different degrees of temperature until 40 degrees between north-western and south of Iran.
  - 2) Hot water springs in mountains for hydrotherapy.
  - 3) Historical and ancient places which are difficult to pass for visiting.
  - 4) Variation in local sport games and traditions among different provinces.
  - 5) Iran's strategic location in the Middle East because it is neighboring with many countries like Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea area, Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### • Iran's current threats in sport tourism

- 1) The lack of educated experts in sport tourism.
- 2) Deficit in desirable and qualified sport and well-fair services in sport tourism places.
- 3) Shortage in advertising and introducing these places via mass-media in and out of Iran.
- 4) The lack of safe and restful transition system.
- 5) Distrust of private investors to invest their capital in developing sport tourism industry in Iran.

### Conclusion:

The results of this review study on researches that have been done about Iran's sport tourism has shown that Iran has many potentials in developing sport tourism but some obstacles that are mentioned above don't permit it to develop. So, regarding the collected data, the following practical approaches can be presented for improving the current sport tourism situation in Iran:

1. The usage of national and international mass-media to introduce Iran's sport tourism attractions.
2. The attraction of private investors' participation to investigate in places which are potentially capable of sport tourists' attraction.
3. Educating experts in P.E faculties with sport tourism specialty.
4. Increasing the public knowledge about tourism and specially sport tourism and its economical benefits in schools and Universities.
5. Improving public services in places which have potentials for attracting sport tourists.

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