# Market segmentation of sport tourism in Iran for foreign tourists according to culture and modeling of target market

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## Abstract

Tourism is accounted as one of the paramount income producing industries in the economy of each country. Sport tourism, in the recent decades, is regarded as a new form of tourism (Mester and et.al, 2008), moreover, the sport events by themselves are a kind of tourists attraction source. Fajr international sport events are held since 1982 in Iran. In these events, the sport teams of a number of countries as sport tourists arrive Iran. So Iran, potentially, can be regarded as a tourist attraction place from the tourism point of view. Iran, having a suitable geographical position and historical tourism attraction, is placed at a high rank for holding sport events (Asadi and Esfahani, 2009). Yusef and et al. (2009) reported that holding sport events in Malaysia caused the attraction of sport tourists and high economic incomes. On the other hand, Doswell (1997) expressed that market segmentation is one of the methods to define the market and predict the customer behavior. Therefore, by finding suitable markets for holding Fajr international sport events, the host country- Iran- can act in such a way that not only do the number of foreign participants with a variety of cultural background is increased but also it can determine the target sport tourism market, by surveying and defining their viewpoints, and in this way, the conditions for the attraction of more tourists are provided. To do so, the present study aimed to segment Iran sport tourism market for foreign tourists based on the culture and modeling of target market.

**Key words:** Market segmentation, Sport tourism, Culture, Iran, Target market

## Methodology

The present study was a cross-sectional, descriptive, analytic study. The subjects included the foreign sport tourists from 53 countries who participated in 9 sport competitions. The questionnaires as the instrument of this research were distributed among the available sample of 710 participants. Then, out of this sample, 475 reliable questionnaires were returned. Finally, they statistically were analyzed and reported.

## Instrument

A questionnaire including 53 items was developed by the researchers. To make it comprehensible for the participants, it was translated into five languages- English, Russian, Arabic, French, and German, and distributed among the participants. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was examined and approved (=0/93).

## Data analysis

To analyze the data, the researchers applied descriptive and inferential statistics. Using factor analysis and Lisrel 8/80 software, they analyzed the questionnaires, and finally the target market modeling of sport tourism in Iran was presented, running SPSS Software ver. 16.

## Results

The results indicated that, in market segmentation of sport tourism in Iran, Anglo and Latin European and East European, Arab, South Asian and Confucius (Asian) and Central Asian Cultures were mostly interested in sport events such as shore and water sports, natural sports, desert and salt-desert, hunting, mountain climbing, winter sports, and flying attractions in order of importance. The results also revealed that four factors of exploratory analysis determined and predicted a high percentage (62.95) of sport tourism target market in Iran for foreign tourists.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of the present study show that maximum interest of tourists with different cultural background is in sport events. It seems that the degree of interest is the most significant factor in attracting the foreign sport tourists in Iran which can be influential in predicting their behaviors and, therefore, the holders can get aware of their needs and define the target tourist markets so that the country can benefit from holding these events economically, culturally, socially, and politically.

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