



Segmentation of the Iranian Mountaineering Tourism Market Based on Demographic Characteristics and Travel Motivations

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Abstract

The overall objective of this study was to segment the Iranian mountaineering tourism market based on motivations and demographic characteristics. This study was applied research based on its objectives and a survey in terms of data collection method. The data collection tool was a researcher-made electronic questionnaire including two sections of demographic characteristics and motivations within the framework of a five-point Likert scale. The statistical population of the study consisted of mountaineers in Iran who spent at least one night in the mountains and were considered active tourists. Participants were selected voluntarily using non-probability sampling from among the members of mountaineering groups and clubs. The sample size was estimated to be between 195 and 390 people based on the number of questionnaire items, and finally 309 questionnaires were examined. Descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and cluster analysis were used to analyze the data. The results of confirmatory factor analysis identified five main components for the motivation variable, including psychological, environmental and extrinsic, exploration and learning, social, and physical motivations. The segmentation based on motivations showed four clusters, and the individuals in each cluster differed from each other in terms of education level, average monthly income, type of sports activity, information sources used, and all motivation subscales at a significance level of 0.05. The results of this study help policymakers,

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decision-makers, and planners in the field of mountaineering tourism to better understand tourists and engage in effective marketing in this field.

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Mountains, with their beauty and splendor, are among the most popular tourist destinations in the world and, after coastal areas, are the second most popular tourist attractions. Mountaineering tourism, as a type of adventure tourism, can be a key factor in economic and social growth. Iran has appropriate capabilities in this field due to its diverse climatic and natural conditions; however, the lack of sufficient knowledge and specific, written strategies for sports tourism marketing has so far led to neglect of this field and the loss of unique opportunities in adventure sports in the country. The organization of mountaineering tourism programs without considering the characteristics, demands, and needs of tourists in this field prompted the researcher to conduct a study aimed at segmenting the mountaineering tourism market based on demographic variables and motivations. In short, this study sought to answer: what are the demographic characteristics and tourism motivations of Iranian mountaineering tourists, and how can they be segmented based on the motivation variable?

Methods and Material

This study was applied research in terms of its purpose and descriptive-survey research in terms of the data collection method. The statistical population of the study consisted of Iranian mountaineers in the country who were members of mountaineering groups and clubs and spent at least one night in the mountain area and were considered active tourists. A convenience sampling method was used, recruiting participants either at trailheads or via an online questionnaire on social networks. The required sample size was estimated to be between 195 and 390 people based on the number of questionnaire items, using a rule of 5 to 10 participants per item, and finally 309 questionnaires were analyzed. The independent variables were demographic characteristics (including gender, marital status, occupation, age, level of education, average monthly income, experience in mountaineering tourism, number of times of mountaineering tourism per year, type of sports activity, level of mountaineering skill, and information sources used) and motivations of mountaineering tourists. The dependent variable of this study was the number of clusters obtained based on demographic characteristics and motivations of mountaineering tourists. The researcher-made questionnaire consisted of two sections to identify demographic characteristics and identify motivations for mountaineering tourism. In analyzing the questionnaire data, first a table of descriptive characteristics of the samples was prepared using descriptive statistics. Then, exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis and confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine questions related to tourists' motivations to enable their classification. The K-Means clustering method was also used to segment the samples. The statistical

methods of this study were generally descriptive and inferential statistics, and SPSS and PLS software were used in this regard.

Results and Discussion

Based on the results of confirmatory factor analysis, five main components were obtained for the motivation variable, including psychological motivations, environmental and extrinsic motivations, exploration and learning motivations, social motivations, and physical motivations. There was no significant difference in mountaineering motivations between men and women in different age groups, educational levels (except for psychological and physical motivations), between single and married individuals, and in different jobs. The results showed that, apart from physical motivations, other motivation subscales as well as total motivation scores differ significantly among individuals with different incomes. A study of the participants' motivations by type of sports activity indicated that the total motivation score was the highest in canyoning. Psychological motivations and exploration and learning motivations were significantly different among individuals with different levels of experience. These two motivations, as well as the total motivation score, were significantly different among individuals with different levels of mountaineering skill. Psychological motivations, exploration and learning motivations, and physical motivations also had significant differences based on the frequency of mountaineering tourism. Regarding the information sources used, it was also determined that the "other cases" group had the highest motivation score. The results of cluster analysis showed four clusters based on the scores of the five motivation subscales. Examining the demographic characteristics in each of these clusters indicated that individuals had significant differences in terms of education level, average monthly income, type of sports activity (canyoning), and information sources used (friends and acquaintances, and other cases). All motivation subscales as well as total scores also had significant differences in different clusters, and all pairwise differences of clusters were significant in terms of motivation scales.

Conclusion

Efficient management in sports tourism requires a proper understanding of the demand market segmentation. This is how the manager paves the way for achieving efficient marketing and development strategies based on proper and logical planning. In tourism market segmentation studies, even though demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, income level, etc. are often used as descriptive and primary variables, they do not have high predictive power. Therefore, marketing and tourism economics experts believe that the most important determining factors in tourists' behavior are their motivations for tourism trips. Accordingly, in the present study, two variables of demographic characteristics and motivations for participating in mountaineering tourism programs were used to segment the demand market to provide a better understanding of this group of athletes and provide services tailored to their needs and desires.

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Keywords: motivation, tourism marketing, market segmentation, mountaineering, tourism