The Role of Restriction in Motivation of Winter Sports Tourists in the Alvares Ski Resort in Ardabil Province

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Abstract

Background: Winter sports tourism is a key economic factor in many mountain regions worldwide. Motivation has a very strong effect on the behavior of tourists. Therefore, motivations act as travel stimuli, and in contrast, restrictions are factors that prevent the participation and presence of tourists in related activities. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of restrictions in motivating winter sports tourists to Alvares ski resort in Ardabil province.

Method: This research is descriptive-type and in terms of purpose, it is practical, also, the field research is used in this study. The statistical population of this study is all sports tourists and ski tourists in Ardabil province and the statistical sample based on Morgan sampling table. 370 people were selected as the statistical sample. In this study, in order to analyze the data, statistical methods of frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation and simple regression test have been used.

Findings: The results show that in general, the restrictions have a significant effect on the motivation of tourists (P = 0.01).

Conclusion: As a result of reducing tourist restrictions, both directly and through its relationship to the level of motivation of tourists, ski resort managers should be considered to retain and attract customers.

Keywords: Restrictions, Motivations. Winter tourism, Sport Tourism, Alvares Ski Resor.

Introduction

The roots of commercial ski tourism began in early twentieth-century mountaineering, with non- or low-commercial cross-country (Nordic) skiing as the precursor to commercial down-hill (Alpine) ski tourism (X He and JM Lui, 2020). As international mass tourism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, the foundations of the contemporary ski tourism industry were established as many new ski areas were built and smaller ski areas expanded (Hudson, 2015). Entry barriers into this market were comparably low, as ski lifts were technologically simple and cheap, and because government actively supported improved transportation access and ski tourism development as a labor-intense economic strategy in disadvantaged mountainous regions. Demand grew quickly in this era of significant economic growth and increased leisure time. This favorable market situation together with several snow abundant winters in major markets of Western Europe and North America fostered the development of new ski areas in – from today's point of view – climatically suboptimal locations. In the 1980s and 1990s, growth in the number of ski areas and skier visits slowed and the markets matured. Intensifying competition and higher customer expectations forced ski areas to invest in comfort (e.g. high speed lifts, chair lifts, or gondolas instead of surface lifts) and to improve the reliability, quality, and season length of the snow product (e.g. slope grooming, snowmaking). These large capital investments and increased operating costs altered the market and forced many small ski areas to close. For example, the number of ski areas in the US declined from 622 in 1987–1988 to 481 in 2007–2008 (NSAA, 2017). Snow-deficient winters in the 1980s and 1990s furthered the diffusion of snowmaking and many ski areas began to diversify into four-season destinations to increase revenues and support expanded accommodations and vacation real estate. Today, ski tourism in historically leading markets has matured, with stabile (e.g. US, Canada, France) or declining demand (e.g. Switzerland, Japan) in many countries. In contrast, profound changes in the economic situation in emerging markets such as China and Eastern Europe have led to new markets with high growth rates (Vanat, 2017).

Skiing is one of the main activities of winter tourism. As the main product of snow and ice tourism, ski tourism, together with hot spring tourism and golf tourism, is one of the world's three major themed vacation leisure tourism activities. In Europe, the benefits of snow and ice tourism mainly come from ski tourism, which has even become a pillar industry of the national economy in some countries (Tuppen 2000). Ski tourism can be incorporated into the field of sports and natural tourism because people want to participate in sports activities in the natural environment of snowy mountains (Mauri and Turci 2018). Ski tourism is highly participatory and experiential, making tourists' activity time relatively long, which leads to increased tourism consumption. Compared to traditional sightseeing tourism, ski tourism is a high-consumption tourism activity. For example, participating in ski sports requires a certain expense in terms of equipment, and resort skiers need to bear higher dining and accommodation costs. Skiing also has a high revisit rate, many repeat customers and a high rate of repeated consumption. As a sport, skiing can entice many people to become lifelong enthusiasts.

Ski tourism is very important not only for the regional economy of tourist-intensive areas but also for the national economy (Vanat 2018). In many mountain destinations, the tourism sector drives the socio-economic

growth and development of local communities (UNWTO 2018). World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimated that there were around 27 million skiers in 2003 (Vanat, 2020). The 2017/18 snow season was the fourth-best snow season since the new millennium (Sancho Esper and Rateike 2010). On the basis of the above background, it is clear that the original motivation of the skier and the skier's feeling after skiing are important to understand whether the skier is interested in continuing to participate. This information also helps assess the strengths and weaknesses of the ski industry. The main purpose of this study is to analyses the role of restriction in motivation of ski tourists of Alvares ski resort in Ardabil province and build models to better understand their decisions and behaviors. The study results can guide the marketing strategies of ski resorts and the development planning of local tourism sectors.

Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

Restriction: Restrictions are undesirable factors that range from unpleasant travel experiences to serious threats to the health and lives of travelers (Sonmes & Graf, 1998). Leisure restrictions are the most important factors that can prevent, reduce or modify participation or have a negative impact on the quality of leisure experience (Tae, 2007). Restrictions are factors that prevent a tourist from doing tourism. Constraints are divided into several factors, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, kinship, and friendship.

Motivation: the importance of motivation in tourism knowledge is enough that the study area of travel incentives, foundation and basic, forms tourism studies and these studies are an integral part of tourism development (Wahab, 1975). Motivation has become a metaconcept, and it is like a stimulant in the

behavior of travel that determines the different aspects of the tourism behavior (Devesa et al, 2010).

Winter tourism: Winter tourism, especially ski tourism, has found a special place in the mountainous regions of developed countries today, and due to its many fans and economic reflections to raise local jobs and increase economic prosperity, as a strategy of economic growth and development, it is on the agenda of world regional development programs (Janbaz Ghobadi et al., 2014). Many factors determine the skier's choice of a particular destination, including internal factors, such as personal characteristics, personal motivation, and opinions and evaluations of other customers; and external factors including the characteristics of the destination (Pearce 2005), and the condition of the slope, skiable kilometers and weather forecast (Cristobal-Fransi et al. 2018). The motivation for travel must be considered when promoting destinations and dividing target markets, because motivation drives people and is thus very important when choosing a destination (Sancho Esper and Rateike 2010). Many authors have contributed to the concept of defining tourism motivation, a concept created by introducing psychological motivation to tourism science (Murphy, 1986). Mansfeld (1992) believed that improving tourism motivation theory and measurement models can help scholars better understand tourist choices and tourism behaviour. Alexandris et al. (2009) studied the motivation of Greek skiers. They investigated the motivation, participation and loyalty of professional skiers and obtained a seven-dimensional motivational scale by using cluster analysis. Fakeye and Fakeye and Crompton (1991) studied a winter resort in Texas and showed that the dimensions of tourist motivation are composed of seven factors.

Since the 1970s, scholars from various countries have studied tourism motivation and come up with a series of theoretical frameworks and conceptual models, such as push-pull theory, self-centred-anisotropic-centred theory, escape-seek theory, the tourism career model and Maslow's demand hierarchy model. Among the numerous tourism motivation theories, push-pull theory has been widely used in the study of tourism destination selection and decision-making processes.

Intrinsic motivation, the motivation to push, is an inherent desire for out-of-town travel, while extrinsic motivation, the motivation to pull, is the external attraction to people travelling (Dann, 1981), so the theory explains why people participate in tourism due to both internal and external factors. Particularly noteworthy is that the driving factors impel people to travel, while the pulling factors promote destination selection (Uysal and Jurowski 1994). Caber and Albayrak (2016) used push-pull theory to study the motivation of rock-climbing tourists and proved that motivation is an antecedent of overall satisfaction. For tourists who participate in rock climbing, the push motivations include risk taking, challenge, catharsis, recognition, creativity, and physical setting; pull motivations include climbing novelty seeking, destination novelty seeking, climbing tourism infrastructure, non-climbing sport and leisure activities, and reclusiveness. The motives of rock climbers vary according to tourists' experience. The results of the study confirm that Dann (1981) push-pull framework is suitable for understanding the motivation of climbers. Other research also supports the fact that understanding the motivations created by pushing and pulling can help us improve destination attractiveness and competitiveness.

Oh et al. (1995) pointed out that if you want to market a destination effectively, you have to understand the push and pull motivations and the relationship between the two. They surveyed five cities in Australia to look for people who had already travelled abroad or will travel abroad in the next few years. Through their investigation, they identified several dimensions of pushing and pulling. The pushing aspects obtained were knowledge/intellectual, kinship/social interaction, novelty/adventure, entertainment/prestige, sports, and escape/rest.

Kim et al. (2003) surveyed the motivations of tourists in six national parks in South Korea. They found that the pull motivations consisted of key tourist resources, information and convenience of facilities, accessibility and transportation. In addition to the above factors, other scholars also used: satisfy conceit, gain knowledge, maximize benefits, evade punishment, realize self-worth, social adjustment (Fodness 1994); relaxation, knowledge, adventure, prestige, family reunion, sports (Cha et al. 1995); self-actualization, self-esteem, recognition/status, belonging, physiological requirements; and attractiveness of the destination area (Chon 1989) as push and pull factors for tourists. Therefore, the present study is based on the push-pull factor as the theoretical basis for research.

Badri and Vossoughi (2009) used teak method to locate a ski resort in Ardabil province and their results show that Ardabil province has many potential points for the construction of a large ski resort in Ardabil province (Alvares) according to the criteria Used in the wrong place.

Naderian et al. (2009) in their study entitled "women's sports participation Barriers and that relationship with motivation" concluded that intrapersonal barriers (lack of interest, ignorance, personal psychological problems) have a negative relationship with motivation

and through it can Affect the level of participation in sports.

Bensebordi et al. (2012) studied the relationship between motivation and satisfaction of ski tourists in Tehran and concluded that there is a negative and significant relationship between the limitations and satisfaction of ski tourists. Among the dimensions of tourist constraints, the dimension of intra-individual constraints was a stronger predictor of tourist satisfaction.

Tseng (2006) studied "Motivation, Satisfaction, and restrictions of Participants in Sports Activities." The results of his research showed that there was a positive correlation between customer motivation and their satisfaction.

Goy et al. (2016) studied "conceptual model of factors influencing interest and decision-making in participating in sporting events" which includes factors of attraction such as demographic factors, motivational entertainment, travel motivations, mediators such as attractions and final factors such as Motives for attendance.

Shape1. Conceptual model of research
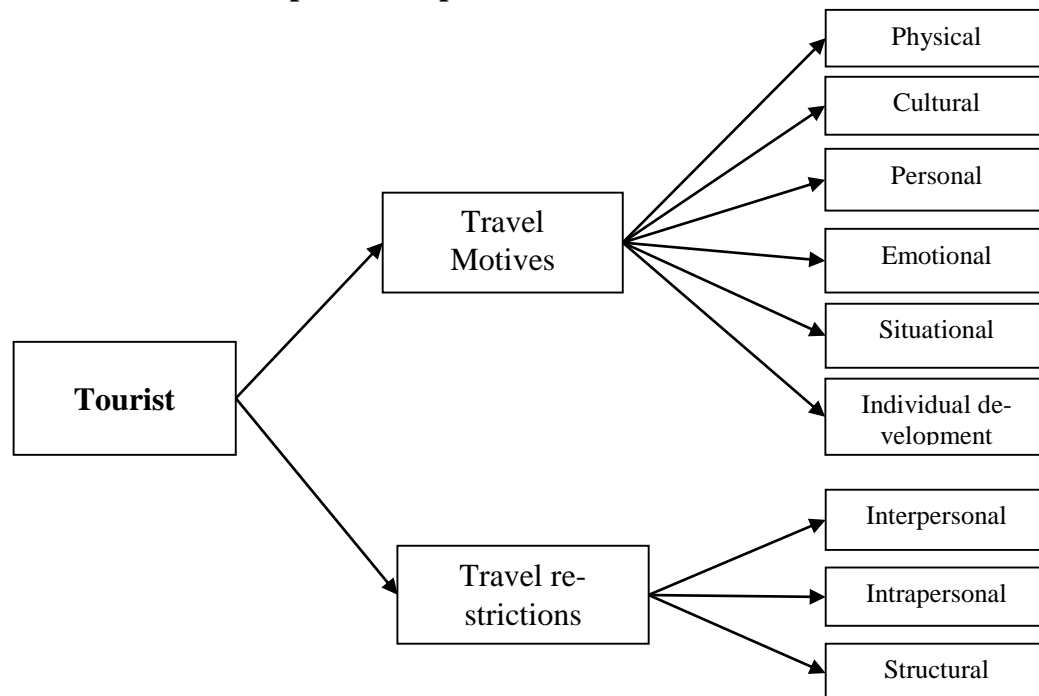
Source: Swarbrook and Horner models (2005) & Crawford and Goodby (1987)

Materials and Methods
Considering that in this research, the researcher seeks to find the role of restrictions and motivations of sports tourists by using people's opinions about the Alvares ski resort, therefore the research method is descriptive and in terms of purpose, it is practical

Which deals with a deep and realistic description and examines the relationship between the variable using appropriate descriptive and inferential methods. The statistical population of this study is all sports and ski tourists in Ardabil province and the statistical sample based on Morgan sampling table with 370 people were selected as a statistical sample in

our study. Questionnaires were distributed from those who participated in skiing once. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by several management professors and supervisors. Cronbach's alpha method was used to achieve the reliability of the questionnaire. Data collection tools were used through his questionnaire designed in 2008, and all questions were based on a 5-point Likert scale (bad, very bad, average, high, very high). The questionnaire were designed based on two main variables of restrictions and motivations the restriction variables of the questionnaire has four main components: intrapersonal constraint with 5

items, interpersonal constraint with 5 items, friendship and kinship constraint with 4 items and structural constraint with 4 items and the motivation variables has six components: gain experience with 4 items, health with 3 items, peace with 3 items, self-discovery with 4 items, professional skills with 3 items and interpersonal communication with 4 items. The method of analyzing research data is descriptive and inferential. In the descriptive level: frequency, mean and standard deviation and in the inferential level: regression test by SPSS software were used to perform calculations.

Figure 1. Geographical location of the study area in Ardabil province and Sarein
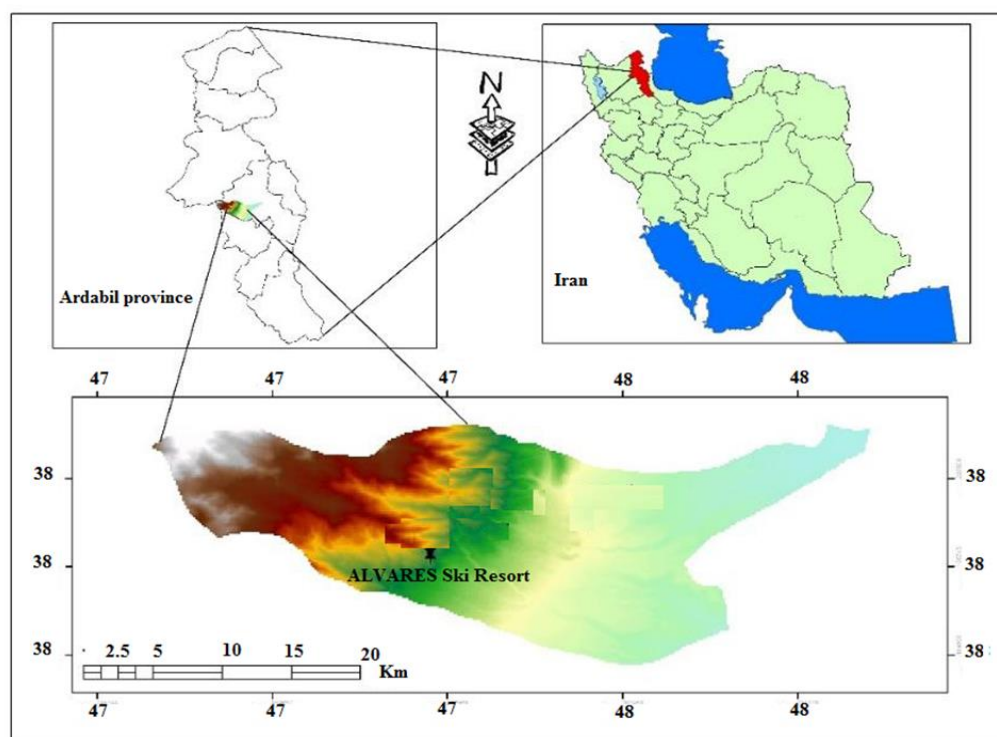
Source: Asghari & Nezafat (2020)
Asghari & Nezafat (2020)

Case Study

Alvares ski resort is the biggest ski resort in Iran which is located in Ardabil province. Of

course, the uniqueness of the Alvares resort is not especially because of the skiing fa-

cilities, but because of the location of the re-sort. Alvares ski resort is located on the high slopes of Sabalan and near the Alvares village. The village of Alvares is one of the oldest villages in the area, which used to be the summer-quarter of the Shahsevans.

This ski resort is located 12 -km away from Alvares village and 24 -km away from Sarein. Since it is located at an altitude of3200 -meters above sea level, it is full of snow during autumn and winter and is used for about six to eight months of the year. It also has facilities for climbing mountains such as lifts and tele siege. Alvares village is located in the foothills of Sabalan Mountain and is one of the most beautiful villages around Sabalan and Iran. The flow of water and abundant springs, especially the Min-bolagh spring, which is famous for its trout, the clean air, the greenery of the surrounding pastures, make every viewer excited and pon-der. The Tribes of the region, especially in spring and summer, give a surprising beauty to the rural atmosphere of Alvares.

Results

The general findings of the study show that 51% of the respondents are Female and 49% are Male. The average age of the respondents is from 26 to 30 years and according to the respondents, the average education in the bachelor's degree is 52% and the average job of the students is 33%.

Table 1. General characteristics of the tourists

Value	Item		Value	Item	
39 percent	18 to 25	Age	51 percent	Female	Sex
42 percent	26 to 30				
13 percent	31 to 40		49 percent	male	
4 percent	41 to 50				
2 percent	51 and older				
33 percent	Student	Job	34 percent	Diploma	Education Level
8 percent	Employee		52 percent	Bachelor	
25 percent	Self-employ-ment		13 Percent	MA	
33 percent	Other		1 percent	PHD	

Source: Research Findings

Table (2) shows the average and standard deviation of tourism restrictions. As the research findings show, the average obtained in all components is higher than the conceptual average (3). The highest average is related to the limitation of friendship and kinship with an average of 3.75. Thus, it seems that the respondents face with intrapersonal, interpersonal, kinship and structural restrictions for using Alvares ski resort. In most components, tourists have a low motivation to use the Alvares ski resort. The highest motivation of tourists to use the Alvares ski resort with an average of 3.08 is related to gaining professional skills. The lowest average

is related to interpersonal communication with an average of 2.44.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of research sample responses

Total mean index	Total std.dev index	Mean	Std.dev	Factors	Variables
0.468	3.51	0.716	3.25	Intrapersonal constraint	**Restriction**
		0.775	3.40	Interpersonal constraint	
		0.861	3.75	Friendship and kinship constraint	
		0.375	3.45	Organizational constraint	
0.476	2.70	0.715	2.80	Gain exprience	**Motivation**
		0.736	2.69	health	
		0.802	2.57	peace	
		0.744	2.64	Sefl-discovery	
		0.891	3.08	Professional skills	
		0.676	2.44	Interpersonal communication	

Source: Research Findings

In inferential findings, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to normalize the data. Due to the normality of data distribution, regression test was used to test the research hypotheses.

Table 3. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality of the variables

Sig.	Value of K-S test	Variable
0.33	1.43	Restriction
0.34	1.939	Motivation

Source: Research Findings

Since Sig $\geq$ P (p= 0.05) and Sig value for all variables is greater than 0.05 and also Zks $\geq$ Zα, so Hypothesis H$_1$ is rejected and Hypothesis H$_0$ is confirmed, so it can be concluded that the population distribution is normal for all variables in the present study. Interpersonal constraint affect the motivation of winter sports tourists at Alvares ski resort in Ardabil province.

Table 4. Results and regression coefficients to predict the motivation of tourists based on intrapersonal constraints

Model	Sum of squares	DF	Mean squares	R²	F	R	Durbin-watson	Sig.
Regression	7080.270	1	7080.270	29.49	0.272	0.074	1.93	0.01
Residual	787.89676	368	243.687					
Total	96864.057	369						
Predictive varibles	**B**		**SE.**	**β**		**T**		**Sig**
Constant	84.7547		3.779	-		22.429		0.001
Intrapersonal limitations	-1.23		0.227	-0.272		0.431		0.001

Source: Research Findings

The results of regression coefficient, as shown in Table 4, confirm that intrapersonal constraints at a significance level of 0.01 explain about 2.27% of the variance of tourists' motivation scores. In other words, the amount of beta shows that with each unit of change in intrapersonal constraint of 0.227, there is a change in the motivation of tourists. Also, regression coefficients show that the value of the Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.931, which indicates the independence of variables and the lack of self-correlation and proves that intrapersonal constraint can predict the motivation of winter sports tourists of Alvares ski resort in Ardabil province. Interpersonal constraint affect the motivation of winter sports tourists at Alvares ski resort in Ardabil province.

Table 5. Results and coefficients of Regression to predict the motivation of tourists based on interpersonal constraints

Model	Sum of squares	DF	Mean squares	R²	F	R	Durbin-watson	Sig.
Regression	11792.511	1	11792.511	51.01	0.349	0.122	1.992	0.01
Residual	85071.545	368	231.173					
Total	96864.057	369						
Predictive varibles	**B**		**SE.**	**β**		**T**		**Sig**
Constant	91.66		3.846	-		23.774		0.001
Interpersonal restrictions	-1.458		0.204	-0.349		-7.142		0.001

Source: Research Findings

The results of regression coefficient, as shown in Table 5, indicate that interpersonal constraints at a significance level of 0.01 explain about 34.9% of variance of the tourist's motivation scores. In other words, the beta value shows that with each unit of change in interpersonal constraints -0.349 changes occurs in the motivation of tourists. Also, the value of

the Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.992, which

indicates the independence of variables and the absence of self-correlation and proves that interpersonal constraints can predict the moti-vation of winter sports tourists in Alvares ski

resort in Ardabil province.

Kinship and friendship constraints affect the motivation of winter sports tourists at Alvares ski resort in Ardabil province.

Table 6. Results and coefficients of Regression to predict tourist motivation based on kinship and friendship constraints

Model	Sum of squares	DF	Mean squares	R^2	F	R	Durbin-watson	Sig.
Regression	8261.351	1	8261.351	34.312	0.292	0.085	2.008	0.01
Residual	88602.705	368	240.768					
Total	96864.057	369						
Predictive varibles	**B**		**SE.**		**β**		**T**	**Sig**
Constant	85.316		3.09		-		23.640	0.001
Restrictions on friendship and kinship	-1.374		0.235		-0.292		-5.858	0.001

Source: Research Findings

The results of regression coefficient, as shown in Table 6, confirm that the kinship and friendship constraints at a significance level of 0.01 explain about 29.2% of the variance of tourists' motivation scores. In other words, the beta value shows that with each unit of change in the kinship and friendship constraints -0.229 changes oc-curs in the motivation of tourists. The

value of the Durbin-Watson statistic is 2.008, which indicates the independence of variables and the absence of self-corre-lation, and proves that kinship constraint can predict the motivation of winter sports tourists in Alvares ski resort in Ardabil province.

Structural constraints affect the motiva-tion of winter sports tourists at Alvares ski resort in   Ardabil province.

Table 7. Results of regression analysis to predict the motivation of tourists based on structural constraints

Model	Sum of squares	DF	Mean squares	R^2	F	R	Durbin-watson	Sig.
Regression	4790.646	1	4790.646	19.147	0.229	0.049	1.994	0.01
Residual	92073.411	368	250.199					
Total	96864.057	369						
Predictive varibles	**B**	**SE.**		**β**	**T**		**Sig**	
Constant	78.487	3.254		-	24.122		0.001	
Structural constraints	-1.034	0.236		-0.222	-4.376		0.001	

Source: Research Findings

The results of regression coefficient, as shown in Table 11, indicate that structural constraints at the significance level of 0.01 explain about 2.22% of the variance of tourists' motivation scores. In other words, the beta value indicates that with each unit change in structural constraints -0.222 changes occurrs in the motivation of tourists. Regression coefficients also show that the value of the Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.944 which indicates the independence of variables and the absence of self-correlation and proves that structural constraint can predict the motivation of winter sports tourists in Alvares ski resort in Ardabil province.

Discussion

This study conducted a questionnaire survey and quantitative analysis of tourists at the Alvares Ski Resort in Ardabil province during the winter of 2019-2020. This research mainly aims to understand the motivations of ski tourists and the important components of such motivations and then explore the relationships among participation motivation and related constraints. From a theoretical point of view, this study strengthens the literature on skiing and tourism. The results have educational and management implications for the tourism and skiing industry.

The aim of the present study was to determine the effect of restrictions on the motivation of sports tourists in Alvares ski resort in Ardabil, which shows that there are various factors that the marketing management of sports tourism should pay attention to. The results of descriptive statistics showed that out of a total of 370 selected samples / questionnaires, 49% were male and 51% were female in the age groups of 18 to (older than) 51 years. In addition, the age group of 26 to 30 years has the highest frequency with 42%. Occupationally, 33% for student is the highest rank. In terms of education level, the highest frequency is present with 52% of people with a bachelor's degree and the lowest frequency is with 1% of people with a doctoral degree.

Identifying the limitations of ski slopes and trying to overcome them can be of great help in attracting tourists interested in this sport. The results showed that friendship and kinship constraints with an average of 3.75 was the most limited for ski tourists. Restrictions of friendship and kinship are the constraints that are created for tourists due to the lack of suitable companions and the lack of family support in carrying out activities. Families

are the reason for this restriction of tourists. This result shows the need for the attention of the track managers to provide the necessary facilities for the presence of all sections of the community on the ski resort and to hold group tours for tourists. The research findings also show that most of the components of tourists have low motivation to use the Alvares ski resort. However, the most motivation for tourists to use the Alvares ski resort with an average of 3.08 is related to gaining professional skills.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that most of the tourists in the ski resort are seeking an environment to deal with their sports. Therefore, improving professional skills is the first motivation for tourists to refer to ski resorts. In this case, the tourists who are doing skiing as a profession often seek to promote the level of their skills, which shows the importance of managers and sports managers. The results of this study are consistent with the results of different studies such as Tseng (2006), Zhang et al. (2012), Kuscer (2017), Vossoughi (2009), Bensebordi et al. (2014) and abbasi (2017). Nowadays, people are looking for new experiences in their fields. Based on this result, it can be said that paying attention to the needs of tourists and providing their demands and identification their motivations and also with the removal of tourism restrictions interests for skiing will increase. However, it appears to be more important to managers because in today's competitive world it is important to retain customers for the long term.

In general, it can be said that reducing tourist restrictions is directly related to the level of motivation of tourists, therefore, that should be considered by ski resort managers to retain and attract customers. Therefore, holding various training courses for tourists to increase their ability and interest Skiing can be effective in reducing intrapersonal constraints. Holding group tours, providing recreational services and suitable resorts can also be effective in reducing interpersonal and structural constraints of tourists. Also, proper information about training courses, tours and services can be effective in reducing kinship constraints and Help tourists from different regions.

This research is conducted in the context of winter sports tourism, especially for leisure skiers. From the perspective of foreign development experience, the ski industry has its own development rules. It may take many years for Ardabil's ski industry to mature further. For Ardabil, we want to be full of hope for the ski industry, but we also need to be patient. Finally, it is worth discussing that the global tourism industry is basically at a standstill right now, which puts great pressure on tourism practitioners. So far, the tourism industry has suffered huge economic losses, but at the same time the epidemic is also a reminder of the need to be prepared for emergencies. Many travel companies have introduced different travel practices, such as handing out distance caps to tourists. Tourists' behavior0 has also changed, with stricter disinfection and a focus on public hygiene. With the outbreak of COVID-19 and the closure of the 2019-2020 season in most of the ski areas, maybe this heralds a better tomorrow (Vanat 2020).

Although this study provides practical and theoretical implications, given the author's limited capabilities and resources this study still has the following limitations.

Firstly, the research model was tested in a specific environment. As the research came from a single empirical study, the results may not be generalized. Therefore, the model should be generalized further. Secondly, the Tourism Motivation Scale and Satisfaction

Scale were established on the basis of the literature review, and so further research is necessary. Future research can be designed according to the ski resort itself. Furthermore, because tourists' motivations and responses may be different, Hall et al. (2016) indicated that different groups will have different motivations, and the measurement structure should be further explored and improved.

Finally, owing to the rules of the questionnaire survey, the scope of this survey selected respondents over 18 years old. To determine the trend in younger skiing groups, future research could include customers that are below 18, who will be the main participants in the ski resort in the future, and longitudinal research can be conducted to better understand the situation of tourists.

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