

SPORTS TOURISM AND ITS ROLE IN DEVELOPING TOURISM DEMAND-GULF CHAMPIONSHIP 25 AS A MODEL

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Abstract

The research aims to highlight the role that sports tourism can play in developing tourism demand in Iraq by moving toward hosting international sporting events to advance this sector, which can achieve the desired economic growth. Hosting sporting events motivate the government to work hard to develop sports infrastructure and tourist and hotel facilities to make the event meet the expectations of visitors. So we decided to highlight the Gulf Championship 25 in Basra and the benefit comes from its experience, which is considered a successful experience despite the governorate's lack of infrastructure services, whether in the field of roads and transportation, as well as the hotel sector and entertainment services.

The research found that the sports tourism in Iraq, despite the natural capabilities that has and despite the efforts made to upgrade the sector, did not meet the required level compared to neighboring countries, which requires decision-makers to work hard to upgrade the tourism and sports infrastructure to host international sports tournaments because they play a major role in develops the economy and marketing the country, as well as encouraging Gulf and Arab capital to invest and trying to enter into a partnership between Iraqi and Gulf investors, which will achieve a real and inevitable change for the advancement of sports tourism in Iraq.

Keywords: Sports Tourism, Tourism Demand, Tourism Developments.

Introduction

Sports tourism is one of the most important dimensions of tourism development and one of the important methods of promoting and marketing the country, it is also a source of getting currencies because the product of tourism activity is the value of selling tourism services to sports or non-sports tourists from other countries who pay in foreign currencies, As well as the local tourists who use the Sports, hotels, facilities. To satisfy their tourist, cultural, and entertainment desires, etc. It is also considered an important source of foreign income contributing to national income. Football is the most popular sport in the world at the national and international levels, and today football, with this popular power that it possesses, plays an important role in advertising. Promoting the host countries participating in international football tournaments that are watched by a large number of people, and organizing such tournaments is a great profit for Iraq. Because, at present, organizing such large sports tournaments can make significant contributions to the economy on the economic, social, and political levels.

Sports festivals and tournaments will be one of the methods that the tourism sector can develop and get out of the current situation it is going through against the backdrop of the

events that Iraq has witnessed recently, where Tourism security is the first step in promoting and marketing tourism movement. The extent to which the state enjoys security stability determines its share of tourism movement rates. In this research, we will discuss the reality of the 25th Gulf Championship in Basra and the most important economic, social, and political impacts of it.

Research Question:

Despite the historical depth of Iraq and the natural, economic, and geographical environment it possesses, in addition to its sporting heritage within the Middle East region, it lacks to organize official tournaments for various sports that attract tourists, and this leads us to several questions, the most important of which are:

1. Why did the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the responsible boards not care to highlight and promote this type of tourism?
2. Does Iraq enjoy stable security that enables tourists to practice sports tourism?
3. Does Iraq have sufficient sports facilities to hold international tournaments for various sports?
4. Does Iraq have sufficient hotel facilities and tourist and entertainment complexes to accommodate tourists during the tournament period?

Research Importance:

The importance of the research is to study the reality of sports infrastructure in Iraq and work to support this field, which contributes greatly to the development of sports tourism in particular and the tourism industry in general and thus works to stimulate the economic market movement by creating investments in the field of sports and tourism infrastructure, which In turn, it affects tourism development.

Research Objective:

The research aims to

1. Highlighting the role of sports tourism in developing tourism demand.
2. Highlighting the role of sports tournaments in achieving the economic, social, and political development goals.
3. Coming up with proposals that can promote interest in important types of sports, which count as important tourist attractions.

Theoretical framework

Definition of Sports Tourism: Tourism is no longer limited at present to visiting ancient archaeological places left by ancestors or natural landscapes, waterfalls, etc. There has begun a new global trend to link tourism and sports in a way that serves each other, as most people prefer to spend their vacations and free time practicing sports activities or watching them In different countries and learning about the traditions, culture, and lifestyle of these countries through tourist tours, this comes up with new type of tourism other than traditional tourism which is sports tourism, it defined as the temporary movement of an individual from his

residence country to another country to participate in sports competitions or as an audience, and the various activities that accompany it. (Tianxiao Cao,2023, P3). This type of tourism has appeared and spread in many countries, especially developed countries with a high income and standard of living that have good sports and tourism infrastructure, and the most important types of sports tourism are the following:

1. **Attend a sporting event:** This tourism considers international sporting tournaments and events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, as well as major professional team tournaments.

2. **Attend and contribute to a sporting activity:** this includes athletes and their families, and their fans who travel to participate in sporting events, which leads to encouraging develop sports tourism.

3. **Visit famous places that host sports tournaments:** travel to famous places that host major tournaments or are famous for being the cradle and center of well-known sports, and a source of attraction for its athletes and fans. (Glebova E 2012, P213)

The importance of sports tourism:

It is summarized as follows:-

1. Sports tourism contributes to diversifying the sources of the national economy and reducing dependence on oil.
2. Providing facilities and services to satisfy the needs, desires, and inclinations of tourists to increase the number of beneficiaries of sporting activities in the field of sports tourism and investing in leisure time.
3. Activating domestic and foreign tourism during recessionary seasons.
4. It helps in increasing financial flows in foreign exchange, pushing the wheel of economic development, developing productive and service sectors such as industry, transportation, and communications, and developing resources in sports federations. (Nazha, Latresh , 2018,P:34)
5. The social importance of sports tourism is to reduce unemployment, improve the citizen's standard of living, create new job opportunities, and increase national income.
6. It helps citizens to communicate with foreign peoples and share their society's cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles.
7. Providing many job opportunities in the hosting area for young people. (Gang Liu, 2024, P131).

The economic impacts of sports tourism

The sports system is closely linked to tourism all over the world, and thus sports have a main role in supporting the economies of countries, and supporting many economic sectors, in addition to the fact that the sports sector has become a marketing sector through which tournaments can be marketed that bring financial and economic benefit to the hosting country, as Attending sporting events is very profitable for the country in which it is held, such as a Barcelona and Real Madrid football match that can attract more than 85,000 people

on that day, and the average of spend is 200\$ per day, which is (17 \$Million), same thing with World Cup matches, or the African, Asian Nations Cup. Which results in positive direct and indirect economic impacts, which we will discuss briefly (Henderson J. 2014, P 283)

A. **The impact of sports tourism on national income:** Tourism does its activities through its service units represented by hotels, restaurants, transportation... etc., which in turn intersect the elements of production and transform them into a group of services sold to tourists, this spending on services and goods related to the sporting event leads to a transfer Money from the pockets of tourists to the pockets of the owners of these services and goods who work in them, and this transfer of money branches out into another series of spending, such as workers' wages, the purchase of raw materials, etc. There is no doubt that the increase in tourism leads to more spending on Consumer goods, especially during sports tournaments, whether local or international, and this greater spending will lead to higher savings rates due to increased incomes resulting from increased spending, which activates these industries and services related to the tourism industry, whether directly or indirectly, which results in that spending expanding the scope of work in these industries and related services related to the tourism industry.(Muqrane, A, 2018, P195)

B. **Impact on the public budget:** The process of hosting incoming tourists involves obtaining foreign currencies from them by granting them entry visas. Thus, tourism is an important source of earning foreign currencies, which supports the balance of payments. In this regard, a balance must be taken into account between the foreign currency revenue generated by tourists coming for tourism on the one hand, and the amount spent in foreign currencies on importing production requirements used by tourist establishments on the other hand. The result of the difference between revenue and spending is what determines the role of tourism in the balance of payments. If returns exceed, there is a surplus in currencies, and the positive role arises, and if spending exceeds, there is a deficit, and the negative role arises. Tourism can also be an important financial source for the state treasury through the revenues generated by the fees collected from tourists and visitors for the services provided to them, especially if the tourist or visitor is convinced that these funds will also be spent to develop archaeological, historical and sports sites and their affiliated service institutions. Taxes and fees imposed on tourism-related projects are an important source of the state budget. (Arabi Triki, 2017 P:104)

C. **Redistribution of income and revitalization of urban development:** Development projects are often implemented primarily in large and densely populated cities, and this has come over small cities and rural areas. While city residents enjoy all the necessities of modern life, residents of small cities and rural areas suffer severe shortages in this area, leading to unequal distribution of development and income. However, this does not apply to the tourism sector. In Iraq, for example, archaeological and historical sites and sacred religious shrines are distributed in large and small cities, so you can find them in Baghdad, Karbala, Samarra,

and Kufa. Here comes the role of sports tourism in redistributing income through exceptional government spending to prepare for hosting tournaments. The best evidence is the government spending allocated to Basra Governorate and the accompanying development of tourism and sports infrastructure transportation routes and other projects related to sports marketing, as the Iraqi Council of Ministers decided to allocate financial support for the tournament hosted by the city of Basra, for the period From the sixth to the 19th of January 2023, and (33 \$ million) was allocated to meet the requirements of the tournament and encourage investment in the governorate. (Zaki , D,2017, P:33)

D. Political and social impact: If successful tourism has a positive impact on the economic aspect, On the other hand, it may achieve political goals if political decision-makers so desire. The movement of people within one country opens up a wide scope for acquaintance and dialogue, and contact between people of different nationalities will inevitably gain them a level of understanding, perception, and exposure to other people's cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles, and all of these work to build bridges between peoples of disparate cultures. Not only between individuals but also between different organizations and governments, which will generate friction and change in the social and cultural environment (Saudi, 2017, P:10). Tourism activity is very sensitive to political and security conditions, and whenever political and security stability is achieved, political and diplomatic relations between countries become strengthened, tourism activity revives and tourism demand rises. Tourism activity also plays an important role in international relations, and it is one of the trends. Modern technology was used to reduce the intensity of conflict and international disputes, and it became a symbol of peace between countries. (Temo Becker 2020, P:142), and about the establishment of (25) Gulf Arabs in Basra, in addition to being a sporting event, it is also a political event, as the tournament comes after the international ban on Iraqi stadiums was lifted, which reflects Iraq's return to its normal state after a series of bloody events, and also reflects the state security that Iraq is going through, and the tournament will open the door for Iraq to host more major sporting events in the coming era.

Hosting sporting events Requirements: The requirements necessary to host sporting events are as follows:

1. Natural potential: The natural potential lies in the water, air, and land ocean, the most important of which is the moderate climate, bright sun, dry weather, rivers, lakes, and mineral springs, in addition to the historical archaeological tourism components that can attract the largest number of tourists during their attendance at sports tournaments.

2. Material Capabilities: The material capabilities are represented as:-

A- Investment: which is related to financing sports and tourism projects (such as tournaments, sports events, and the prizes awarded), which places these tournaments in the ranks of international tournaments, and also works to attract international investments to invest in the field of sports tourism, and prepare appropriate capabilities for it. (Fazele, Homafar, and others, 2011, P:35)

- B- Infrastructure: It is related to sports or tourist facilities, including integrated sports villages in places close to tourist areas, hotels equipped with sports facilities, and places of entertainment and recreation.
- C- Equipment and devices: These are related to sports equipment and training equipment and their maintenance and storage areas to get the most benefit from them.
- D- Marketing: It is linked to advertising the sports events so that the largest number of tourists and athletes can be obtained.(Souad Olbani, 2018, P: 76)

3. Human capabilities: The human element is the main driver of all production elements, as the facility's ability to achieve its goals depends on the efficiency and effectiveness of the people in their performance of the work, and providing the facility with material requirements does not achieve the goals without the presence of an effective workforce capable of performing, this requires the need for the correct management to manage sporting events, which contributes to achieving a workforce characterized by the ability to innovate and create with skills to achieve a competitive advantage in competing with neighboring countries in managing sporting events. (Zarotis , G.,2021, P:79)

4. Set a Marketing strategic plan: It includes

- A. Making training programs for Tourism and sports leaders.
- B. Set an advertisement to raise awareness of popular participation in implementing the strategy.
- C. Use international experts in the field of sports tourism to implement the strategy.
- D. Holding conferences with international tourism companies, sports federations, and businessmen to discuss the most important methods to develop the sector.
- E. Preparing specialized teams in the field of health care and physical therapy.
- F. Encouraging investment with Gulf countries to finance such projects, "the official sponsor.
- G. Establishing sports cities near archaeological areas to encourage tourists to visit them while they are in sports tournaments. (Nazha, Latresh , 2018,P:34)

Filed Study

Basrah: An Iraqi city located in the far south of Iraq on the western side of Shatt al-Arab, and it is the administrative and political center of the Basra Governorate. Its population reached 3,305,192 people according to 2023 estimates. Basra is also the main port of Iraq, In April 2017, the Iraqi Parliament recognized Basra as the economic capital of Iraq on November 28,) the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation announced that the city of Basra in Iraq will host the tournament from 6-19 Jan 2023, The Iraqi Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities announced the preparation of hotels in Basra Governorate to receive delegations and fans of the (25) Gulf Championship, which began on January 6, 2023, and which is preparing to receive Arab guests and Iraqi fans from all governorates, the number of which reached (36) hotels, in addition to four (five-star) hotels designated for the participating teams and other sports personnel. Likewise, Their prices are different from other hotels, and the overnight stay prices for these hotels are not the same, as they vary from (300 – to 150) dollars, among

the most famous hotels in Basra are the Basra International Airport Hotel, Castle Hotel, Horizon Hotel, Manway Pasha Hotel, Shams Hotel Basra, Movenpick Zeinat Al-Hayat Hotel, Grand Millennium Hotel) in addition to the presence of first-class hotels and apartments, the prices of which range from (30 - 80) dollars. In addition to that, which is important, the Iraqi people, especially the Basra citizen, who is known for his generosity and hospitality. The running out of reservations or the high prices of hotels and accommodation are an obstacle to tourists. Basra has opened its heart and home to the coming masses amid many initiatives bearing the title "Hosted by Basrawi." This matter may not be available in many countries, but the Iraqis are accustomed to it and are proud of it, in addition to The most important tourist places that Basra is famous for, such as (Basra Cultural Museum, Al-Nakhil Tourist Resort, Shatt Al-Arab Corniche, Imam Ali "peace be upon him" Mosque, the house of the poet Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab, Al-Watan Commercial Street).

(Almaliki, Dhidan, 2023, The Sports City in Basra also includes a main stadium with a capacity of 65 thousand spectators. It bears the name "The Trunk of the Palm" due to its design inspired by the trunk of the palm tree. It also includes a secondary stadium with a capacity of 10,000 spectators called Basra Stadium (Al-Fayhaa Stadium), in addition to the Olympic Port Stadium, which has a capacity of 33,000 spectators. The success of the tournament will reflect positively on the economic and investment situation in Iraq in general and Basra in particular because through it many investors noticed during their visit to preserve the economic and investment reality in Iraq after the local government in Basra carried out many vital projects represented in the construction of roads and bridges and the reconstruction of the Corniche." Shatt al-Arab and many tourist places to receive the tournament's guests Table (2) below shows the numbers of hotels and tourist facilities according to Statistics of the Tourism Board / Department of Tourism Facilities.

Table (1) The total number of tourist facilities in Basra Governorate

City	Hotels	Restaurants	Cafes	Cinemas	Conferences rooms	Lacquer store	Disney Lands	Travel Agencies
Basrah	36	58	20	N/A	15	N/A	5	77

Source: Tourism Board, publications of Tourism Facilities Department for the year 2023

Figuar (1) The total number of tourist facilities in Basra Governorate

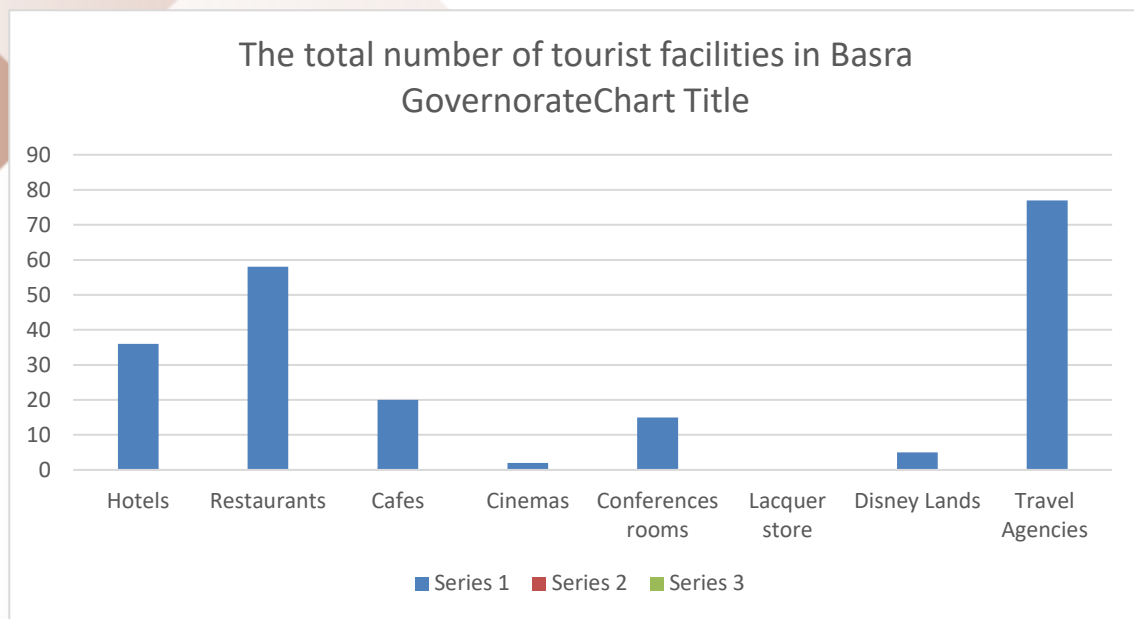


Figure (1) The total number of tourist facilities in Basra Governorate

Source: Made by researcher depending on table (1) statistics.

According to the table above there is a clear shortage in the number of hotels, restaurants, and proper transportation roads to accommodate tourists, and this was observed during the days of the tournament.

Results:

1. There is no cooperation between the relevant Boards to provide data and statistics that can develop the tourism industry.
2. Sports tourism contributes to promoting the country's tourism and spreading its culture, customs, and traditions.
3. Iraq enjoys security and safety that allows sports tournaments to be held and tourists are encouraged to visit it.
4. Sports tourism contributes to reducing unemployment, improving the citizen's standard of living, and creating new job opportunities
5. Iraq's lack of modern sports and hotel facilities that befit the reputation and history of Iraq and accommodate the number of tourists.

Recommendations:

1. The necessity of providing data and statistics related to the number of tourists to know the contribution of the tourism sector to the national income and to prepare the necessary studies to develop the sector.
2. Working to encourage heritage industries in Iraq and trying to display them to guests in special trade exhibitions.
3. It is important to encourage Gulf and Arab capital to invest in Iraq and try to enter into a partnership between Iraqi and Gulf investors.
4. It is necessary that the hosting of any sports competition be accompanied by sending invitations to some Gulf businessmen, informing them of the investment opportunities

available in Iraq, and giving them the necessary reassurances to maintain the security of their investments.

5. Establishing a coordination and cooperation council that brings together various actors to properly manage tournaments of a public nature.
6. Improving the efficiency of the infrastructure (road network and means of transportation) leading to the tourist and sports area.
7. Providing parking places for cars and buses transporting tourists to relieve pressure on the road and enable them to enjoy travel.
8. Integrating the local population of the region into organized improvement, clearing, and afforestation processes by involving them in the process of preserving the environment.
9. Exploiting social media to promote the importance of preserving the environment and spreading the culture of tourism through sports practice

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