

Investigating the causal and underlying conditions affecting the provision of sports services to female spectators in Iran

Investigar las condiciones causales y subyacentes que afectan la prestación de servicios deportivos a espectadoras en Irán

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate the causal and underlying conditions affecting the provision of sports services to female spectators in Iran. The qualitative research method was applied in this study. The statistical population included the chief executive officers and the board of directors of the league and federations of football, volleyball, and basketball, senior managers of sports stadiums, female spectators attending the official women's competitions, female spectators having a history of attending the stadiums and sports halls during the official male competitions, and academic experts in field of sports management who were familiar with the sports events; the theoretical sampling method was used in this research. In this study, 32 elite individuals were interviewed through 32 semi-structured interviews until achieving the theoretical saturation. Data collection tool included the semi-structured interviews. The results indicated 7 main causal conditions including the financial support, facilities, cultural issues, management resources, management approaches, benefits of the provision of services to female spectators, and social issues. Also, based on the results, the underlying conditions were classified into the 2 categories of the nature of spectators' presence and the nature of sport.

Keywords: Sports Services, Women, Athletes, Spectators

RESUMEN

El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo investigar las condiciones causales y subyacentes que afectan la prestación de servicios deportivos a las espectadoras en Irán. El método de investigación cualitativa se aplicó en este estudio. La población estadística incluía a los directores ejecutivos y la junta directiva de la liga y las federaciones de fútbol, voleibol y baloncesto, gerentes superiores de estadios deportivos, espectadoras que asistían a las competiciones oficiales de mujeres, espectadoras que tenían un historial de asistencia a los estadios y pabellones deportivos durante las competiciones masculinas oficiales y expertos académicos en el campo de la gestión deportiva que estaban familiarizados con los eventos deportivos; El método de muestreo teórico se utilizó en esta investigación. En este estudio, 32 individuos de élite fueron entrevistados a través de 32 entrevistas semiestructuradas hasta lograr la saturación teórica. La herramienta de recolección de datos incluyó las entrevistas semiestructuradas. Los resultados indicaron 7 condiciones causales principales que incluyen el apoyo financiero, las instalaciones, los problemas culturales, los recursos de gestión, los enfoques de gestión, los beneficios de la prestación de servicios a las espectadoras y los problemas sociales. Además, según los resultados, las condiciones subyacentes se clasificaron en las 2 categorías de la naturaleza de la presencia de los espectadores y la naturaleza del deporte.

Palabras clave: servicios deportivos, mujeres, atletas, espectadores

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Introduction

Dealing with the women's issues (issues related to the presence of women in the society) is one of the most fundamental issues of any civilization and society. Despite all studies conducted on the women's issues and the family, this subject is still worth of debate and expansion into the new areas. The current status of the world and the Islamic world require presenting a comprehensive model in accordance with the time and space requirements to respond to the current needs of societies (Afroog et al., 2012). The issue of women's role and performance in the present-day societies is among the major issues which need to be taken into consideration due to their sense of ability and authority in the society. However, sometimes their pivotal presence in the active arena is turned into a passive position and they are given an instrumental role in interactions. A major issue here is that what effective measures have been taken in contemporary societies to design a model for women? Whether women are model-oriented and passive, or they themselves have been able to be a model on the basis of their beliefs, principles, rules, and values in line with the religion and nationality.

The current conditions governing the world are such that, on the one hand, the attitude of nations towards Islam and the issues of women in Islamic countries, especially in Iran, are shown unrealistic and distorted, and on the other hand, the enemies of Islam and Iran are trying to present patterns of women in the global arena, and especially to promote the rich Iranian culture and the freedom of women's participation in society to Islamic countries. Therefore, it is very important to have a precise and systematic look at women's issues and to study these issues and plan in this regard. We believe that true Islam has the capacity for the active presence of women in the social arenas in the best and most complete way and it presents a comprehensive model of women. The current conditions of the world and the Islamic world also require providing a comprehensive model that meets the requirements of time and space in order to respond to the current needs of societies (Bannar & Emami, 2015). Sport is one of the most important institutions of the modern industrial societies, which most of the population of each country deals with it in various forms. As a social phenomenon, it is also affected by different issues of societies and covers various groups including the athletes and spectators (Sheikhi, 2002). In the current situation, sport is regarded as a human and educational issue and is rapidly expanding among all sections of society (Ehsani, 2003). Given the influence of spectators on the feel of pride and motivation in athletes, there is a view that the presence of female spectators in the sports fields would have a positive impact on the athletes and spectators. It seems that with the presence of women and families in the sports events, it is possible to greatly increase the level of social monitoring and control at the stadiums; as the sub-culture of hooliganism would not have the opportunity to express itself in confronting with the culture of honor. This can be helpful to keep the environment of stadiums safe and sound. Hence, given the current conditions of Iran in the world, various dimensions and barriers of the women's presence at the stadiums should be examined and necessary measures are taken in this regard to eliminate them (Gharehkhani, 2007).

Also, the strong interest of women in watching tournaments, as well as the influence of the presence of female spectators on the observance of ethical issues by athletes and spectators and the impact of seeing sports competitions on the creation of a better mood and morale in women, is a good reason for investing in this field with the goal of developing culture and creating conditions commensurate with the values of the Islamic society at the stadiums. Research shows that women's position is very high both in the Iranian culture and tradition and in the teachings of Islam. In the national culture of Iran, many speeches and behaviors, that are considered normal in the absence of women, are usually proceeded with caution and even abstention in a group where women are also present. Pudency and modesty of men in the presence of women is a customary national identity of Iranians, which is known as the "cultural shyness". The presence of women as spectators in the stadiums is likely to prevent immoral behaviors of men. Although this theory seems to be difficult for testing, it is not easy to skip it. Unfortunately, today in some competitions, especially in football, the use of very ugly words and offensive language by spectators are increasingly commonplace, so that sometimes thousands of spectators use the most outrageous words for even more than a few minutes. This behavior is likely to be repeated in the presence of a few thousand women. (Rahmaninia et al., 2006).

Loveloc et al. (2001) defined the quality of service in terms of the benefit, that is, quality of service is the judgment of the viewer or participant about the superiority of the sports services or service components; whatever the perception of spectators or participants is close to the superiority level, their evaluation of the quality of the service would be better. Customer satisfaction is a judge about the sport services or service components; the desired level of satisfaction, which is related to the desirable performance, is higher than the satisfaction level of the spectators or participants. What is simply acceptable and maybe the key point here is the difference between these two types of evaluation; that is, while satisfaction depends on the experience, the quality of service is not dependent on the experience; one needs to experience a sports product to be content with it or not, but experience is not necessary for the concepts of quality. There are still few researches on the evaluation of the quality of services in the spectator sports environments. Furthermore, it should be taken into account that spectator sports environments are different in terms of the nature of participation (active and passive) (Alidoosh Qahfarkhi et al., 2012).

Various variables such as the cultural, social, economic, managerial, civil, and legal factors in this field should be considered and analyzed. Women comprise half of the population, and enriching their leisure time by watching men's sports competitions, especially at the championship level, would significantly affect the well-being of the community. Women's

entry into sports halls has long been discussed, but no thorough measurement has yet been done on this issue, and the presence of women in stadiums and modeling the sporting services in this stratum is not taken seriously. Hence, the study seeks to investigate the underlying and causal conditions challenging women's entry into stadiums. Therefore, the main question of the present research is that what are the effective causal and underlying conditions in sport services for the female spectators in Iran?

Methodology

The present research is applied in terms of purpose and is among the field research types. The present research was conducted qualitatively, because of the less known or unknown nature of the studied subject, the existence of rather different processes, the existence of unknown variables and inadequacy of quantitative research in covering the subject in this study. Qualitative study can be used to understand and explain social phenomena from data obtained by interviews, documents, observations, etc.

In order to implement this research, in the first stage (comparative study), the present study was conducted as a desk study and attempts were made to use data from the program documents such as the strategic document of the country's sports development system and the theoretical studies to describe and analyze research related to sports services to female spectators. The analyses conducted by the researcher in the first stage led to the promotion of knowledge and development of a guide for interviews for the second stage. In the next stage (qualitative interviews), the grounded theory was used to build the proposed model of the research.

The statistical population comprised the directing managers and the board of directors of the league and the football federation, volleyball and basketball, senior managers and experts of sports stadiums, female spectators at the official women's competitions and female spectators who had a history of attending the sports stadium and halls during the official competitions of men, as well as the academic experts and commentators in scientific field of sports management who were familiar with sporting events. The samples were selected by theoretical sampling method. In the present study, 32 elite individuals were interviewed through semi-structured interviews in 32 sessions to achieve theoretical saturation. Table 1 indicates examples and interviews conducted among them.

Table 1. Details of Research Interviews

Occupational and Social Status	Number of interviews
Directing managers and the board of directors of the league and the football federation, volleyball and basketball	6
Senior managers and experts of sports stadiums	4
Female spectators at the official women's competitions	9
Female spectators who had a history of attending the sports stadium and halls during the official competitions of men	7
The academic experts and commentators in scientific field of sports management who were familiar with sporting events	6
Total	32

The first part of the study (desk study) investigated the research pertaining to the research subject and identified the underlying and causal conditions. Through qualitative interviews, these cases were considered as interview guides. In the second part, qualitative interviews with academic elites and scholars were used for the data collection process. During the interview, information was recorded using various recording methods such as note taking and recording the interview on the audio or video tape.

Immediately after the completion of the interview, detailed notes were taken about the interview process. In this research, in order to record the data from the interviews, in addition to writing down the outline, the researcher recorded the interview using a special recording device with the consent of the interviewee. The potential participants were contacted for interview, and those willing to participate in interviews were interviewed at their desired time and place. In this regard, an interview manual was first sent to individuals that included the title, purpose and general interview questions to get interviewees acquainted with the subject.

In the qualitative method, the terms of acceptance, transferability and confirm ability were used to assess the validity. The data and findings of the qualitative method should be acceptable and reliable, which involves collecting real data. In the present study, the methods of Parger and Pitney (2009), including multiple data sources, multiple analysts and multiple methods were used in order to increase the acceptability of research data. In the present study, we improved multiple data sources in order to increase the acceptability of the results by selecting sample individuals from different strata (confirmed by the research group) and using written and authoritative sources. In the present study, with the

participation of research colleagues and experienced people in the qualitative research (considering their research background), we improved multiple analysts to increase the acceptance of the results during interviews and data analysis. Eventually, in order to improve the multiple methods in order to increase the acceptability of the results, interviewing techniques, libraries and Internet searches were used to collect the maximum data during the research. Transferability of the research results indicated that the results are generalizable to other groups and environments. Through numerous reviewing of interviews and extracting the maximum and non-repetitive content, the research attempted to improve the transferability of the results.

The confirmability of the results of the qualitative research is realized when other researchers can clearly follow the research path and actions taken by the researcher. One way to realize this issue is that the researcher explains exactly the whole process of research and the direction of his decisions during the research in the report, which was practiced during this research. Also, in the process of research advancement, we attempted to avoid the maximum presence of the colleagues of the research group despite limitations, namely, lack of time or lack of access. In order to analyze the research data, the literature was first reviewed. Then, by collecting statistical samples, the data collection framework was developed. In the next step, the researcher entered the research field, and arranged the data and analyzed the data of the first case. Then repeating the theoretical sampling was conducted until reaching the required level. Eventually, at the end of the research analysis, we reviewed the literature and theoretical foundations of the subject.

Research Findings

Causal conditions indicate the importance of the main studied phenomenon (providing sports services to female spectators in Iran). In this research, after investigating the experts' opinions and conducting research interviews, 7 causal conditions were identified, namely, financial support, facilities, cultural issues, management resources, management approaches, the benefits of providing services to female spectators and social issues. There are also significant underlying issues in providing sports services to female spectators in Iran. Certain conditions that affect the strategies and this research considered the internal factors affecting the main phenomenon and strategies as underlying conditions. Underlying conditions were categorized in two general areas. These classes include the nature of the spectators' presence and the nature of the sport. Figure 1 indicates the effective causal conditions and underlying conditions in sports services for female spectators in Iran.

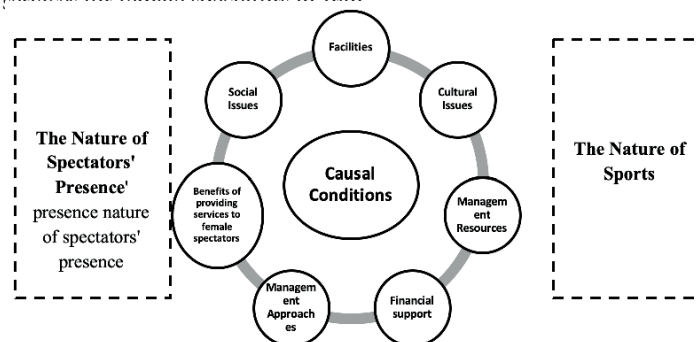


Figure 1. Effective Causal and Underlying Conditions in Sports Services to Female Spectators in Iran

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the present study indicated that effective causal factors influencing the provision of sports services to women in Iran included 7 factors, namely, the financial support, facilities, cultural issues, management resources, management approaches, the benefits of providing services to female spectators, and social issues.

Regarding the attraction of spectators and providing services to them, especially in professional sport, some issues such as financial issues are affective which can also affect other areas of sport. Chi and Liu (2009) pointed out that facilities in each sport are affected by financial issues. Also, Ahmadi et al. (2016) pointed out that approaches and management resources are significant issues in attracting spectators. Moreover, Torkfar et al. (2010) pointed out that while developing standard management approaches, appropriate management resources lead to the development and presentation of services to the spectators. Also, Emamomic (2010) pointed out that the nature of the sport is one of the issues that determine the need to develop and pay attention to providing services to spectators in different groups. Such attention indicates that the results of the present study are consistent with the results of research conducted by Chi and Liu (2009), Ahmadi et al. (2016), Torkfar et al. (2010) and Emamomic (2010).

Due to the lack serious programs, providing services to female spectators in Iran requires different factors and areas, thus, the present research determined a number of different dimensions that need serious attention. Management and financial resources, as well as attention to some cultural and social issues, lays the groundwork for the conditions

and infrastructure in the sport of the country to provide services to female spectators. This makes female spectators to meet their needs in benefiting the sport space and persuades them to attend the stadiums.

The results of the research indicated that the effective underlying conditions of sport services to female spectators in Iran were categorized in two general areas. These categories include the nature of the spectators' presence and the nature of the sport and some research pointed to this issue. Sayor et al. (2017) pointed out that sport is one of the most significant issues that encourages all groups to watch and see. Kheiri and Ghorbani (2017) also determined that the presence of spectators is one of the essential requirements of sport, which has made it possible to plan the attraction of significant spectators.

In addition, the nature of sport itself has become an effective underlying factor for providing services to female spectators. Schneider and Bristho (2007) point out that sport has become the most significant and essential industrial concern in the world nowadays, such that it could attract all people in every situation. This issue can also be a significant underlying factor in the success of sports in issues related to spectators. Thus, it can be stated that the results of this study were consistent with the results of the research conducted by Kheiri and Ghorbani (2017), Schneider and Bristho (2007) and Sayor et al. (2017).

The increasing expansion of sport in the society has made sports effective in all aspects of societies, to the extent that Demil and *Bucardo* (2014) stated that sport has profound effects on all aspects of the world. Countless attractions of sport, as well as the many benefits of doing sports or even the presence at sports, for some reasons, including spectators, have made sports to have increasing effects on individuals. Moreover, the high potential of sport has led many companies and business organizations to select sport as a significant field in their business activities. Therefore, the nature of sport has caused issues of attracting spectators and the provision of services to them as a significant economic issue for clubs, communities, companies and organizations. Therefore, the nature of the sport and the nature of attracting spectators were able to act as an underlying factor for effective delivery of services to female spectators.

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