

ORIGINAL ARTICLE**Identifying Solutions and Consequences of Segmenting the Market of Sports Events in Iran based on Audience Motivation**Mohamad Rahimi¹, Ali Abolhoseini², Ahmad Mahmoudi³, Reza Aminzade^{4*}

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Extended Abstract**Introduction**

Nowadays, hosting sports events has received a lot of attention and the importance of sports events for urban development has been highlighted, but most studies have focused on large-scale sports events and there is increasing disagreement about the benefits of hosting large-scale sports events (Lu, 2021). Every year, many sports events are held in different parts of the world, and the media, politicians, industry owners and other national and international stakeholders have become interested in sports events due to the attractive nature of sports and the interest of people to watch these events (Watenbe, Gilbert, Aman, & Zhang, 2018). Although marketers of athletic footwear and apparel such as Nike and Adidas have pioneered their own versions of one-to-one marketing, the reality is that most marketing efforts for spectator sports and participation sports focus on different strategies designed to satisfy specific segments. They are designed from the market that has been determined as the target market. In other words, marketers of spectator sports and participatory sports rarely engage in mass marketing or one-to-one marketing. Now the question arises that how the market segmentation strategies that are expressed in the literature capture the essence of these two significant and heterogeneous markets. But instead of focusing on a spectator or participatory sport, it encompasses a broad market for each of these two categories of sports products. In other words, it will not only focus on the specific characteristics of soccer fans, but also on the characteristics and motivations of sports spectators regardless of which sport a person follows (Fullerton et al., 2013). Therefore, according to these cases, in this research, an attempt is made to identify the motivation of the spectators of sports events and competitions in Iran and other parts of the world, and provide solutions for the segmentation of the country's sports events market, and examine its consequences.

Methodology

This research is interpretative in terms of philosophy and inductive in terms of approach, and is cross-sectional in time and practical in terms of purpose. It was conducted using a qualitative method with a thematic (theme) analysis approach and with an exploratory nature. The thematic (theme) method is the most conventional and practical method of analyzing qualitative data and, in fact, is based on inductive analysis; that is, the findings are both the product of the goals that the researcher has set and the product of the analysis of what was heard (Mohammadpour, 2009). In our research, Brown and Clark's six-step method was used, which is one of the methods of qualitative content analysis and examining texts in a systematic and hierarchical manner in order to extract codes. the

statistical population consisted of all professors of physical education and sports sciences at national universities (specifically sports management and sports marketing), managers of sports events, experts and workers in the field of sports marketing and tourism, spectators and companies. Participants were sports events. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were used, the sampling method was purposeful, and the sampling continued until theoretical saturation was reached. During a process and interviews with 19 people, the interviews reached the point of theoretical saturation. Based on thematic analysis, the data were coded and analyzed. In the thematic analysis, the data obtained from the interviews with experts were coded according to the research topic.

Findings

As mentioned in the methodology section, the research findings were collected through semi-structured interviews with 19 experts and specialists in sports technology. The table shows the demographic characteristics of the study participants.

Table 1. The Demographic Characteristics

Percentage Frequency	Frequency	Groups	
31	6	Female	Gender
69	13	Male	
21	4	Under 30	Age
36	7	31 to 40	
43	8	Over 40	
15	3	Under 15	Work Experience (in years)
31	6	15 to 20	
27	5	20 to 25	
27	5	Over 25	
58	11	University Professors	Job
42	8	Other Specialists	
45	5	Assistant Professor	Academic rank of University Professors
36	4	Associate Professor	
17	2	Professor	
42	8	Master's Degree	Education
58	11	Doctorate	
100	19	the total	

Based on the findings related to the strategies for segmenting the Iranian sports events market based on the audience's motivation, 37 concepts, 7 sub-themes and 3 main themes were identified in the strategies section (motivational strategies, specialized strategies and macro strategies). In this regard, the first main theme, motivational strategies, included three sub-themes. The first sub-theme means providing special facilities, the second sub-theme includes paying special attention to the audience, and the third sub-theme is establishing proper security. The second main theme, i.e. specialized strategies, included two sub-themes. The first sub-theme is culturalization of the event and the second sub-theme was diversity in holding the event. The third main theme of macro strategies, which included two sub-themes. The first sub-theme was the correction of basic defects and the second sub-theme was the spread of meritocracy. Based on the findings related to the consequences of segmenting the market of sports events in Iran based on the motivation of spectators, 32 concepts, 7 sub-themes and 3 main themes were identified in the consequences section (growth and development of sports fans, improvement of the condition of sports spectators and development of sports events). In this regard, the first main theme, i.e. the growth and development of sports fandom, included two sub-themes of the development of fan status in sports and the increase in the attendance of spectators. The second main theme in the field of consequences is related to improving the condition of sports spectators, which has three sub-themes of personal and social development of spectators, increasing satisfaction with events and improving coping with personal problems. Finally, the third and last main theme related to consequences, development there were sports events, which were two sub-themes of the development of event services and facilities and the development of the sports industry.

Discussion and Conclusion

Organizations concerned with the subject can focus on the fundamental factors influencing the motivation of spectators in meeting the needs and desires of spectators, tourists and potential participants and use it as a diagnostic and logical criterion for segmenting the relevant market. Today, in the world of sports, competition is not only about winning championships and taking possession of the cup, but the circle of competition has been extended to various issues such as attracting spectators, the number of fans, spectators' satisfaction and satisfying their needs, because in fact, sports clubs and organizations gain their credibility from spectators and fans, and the two are necessary and indispensable to each other. By segmenting the sports consumer market, marketers can adjust market activities, modify pricing strategies and sports products, customize sports experiences for each segment and ultimately emerge as a market leader and be the undisputed leader in their path. Given that our country has very little experience in hosting major sporting events and, as a result, there was not enough information in this field, an attempt was made to use people who have experience attending major sporting events as managers and supervisors. It can be said that by dividing the sports events of the country based on the motivations of the spectators, it is possible to provide services and facilities according to their motivations and diversify the sports events, and finally, help the growth and development of event tourism and the country's sports industry.

KEYWORDS

Market Segmentation, Spectator Motivation, Sports Events Market, Sports Spectator, Sports Tourism.

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