

*Original Research*

## Reporters Without Borders and Tourism Industry in Southwest Asian Countries

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### Abstract

Governmental and non-governmental organizations and experts have focused on media freedom and reforms in the last two decades. The present study examines the impact of Reporters Without Borders on the profit of the tourism sector in selected countries in Southwest Asia from 2012 to 2018. It investigates this relationship using a dynamic panel data method and a two-stage generalized moment system (GMM). The obtained results indicate that with a unit increase in the Reporters Without Borders index, the income of the tourism industry increases by 1.062%. Also, for other control variables, it can be concluded that with an increase of 1 unit in the good governance index, tourism revenues increased by 0.784 percent, and also with a 1 percent increase in the official exchange rate, the gross domestic product Per capita and trade openness of tourism industry income increases by 0.005, 2.134 and 0.628 percent respectively. It is worth mentioning that all the obtained coefficients were significant and positive.

**Keywords:** Dynamic Panel Data, GDP Per Capita, Good Governance Index, Official Exchange Rate, Press Freedom, Trade Openness.

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## Introduction

Tourism is one of the most diverse and dynamic industries in the world. Many developing or underdeveloped countries rely heavily on the tourism and travel industry for income generation, employment, social development, and infrastructure.

Various studies (Cavalheiro et al., 2020; Khayrulloevna, 2020; Shariffuddin et al., 2021) note the beneficial impact of tourism-related activities on the economy. Tourism is a viable facilitator for economic growth and development (Brida et al., 2020; Detotto et al., 2021; Rheeders & Meyer, 2022; Aleksandrovna, 2022). The tourism sector is one avenue that can be used to improve economic growth and development. Tourism is competitive, interlinked, and globalized (Detotto et al., 2021). Tourism can assist in lessening poverty, improving income distribution, raising product and service demand, creating more tax revenues (Ren et al., 2019), and giving governments access to more foreign monetary inflows (Detotto et al., 2021). Shamai and Yousofi Babadi (2018) state that the improvement of the tourism sector, in conjunction with social and cultural progress, leads to an increase in the prosperity of a region's economy. Furthermore, tourism will strengthen the country's economic resilience, but success in tourism growth will be visible if its sponsors are effectively organized. (Wijaya et al., 2022). Aleksandrovna (2022) urges that tourism should be deemed as important as it contributes to employment opportunities, and due to it being interlinked, it provides benefits for various other sectors. As such, it is clear that the development of the tourism sector contributes positively to the development of the socio-economic environment.

In addition, tourism has recently emerged as an attractive and hot topic among academics, students, and researchers. The World Tourism Organization estimated that in 2017, 1.323 billion visitors left their country to visit the countries of interest, reaching 1.4 billion in 2018, with a growth of 6%. It is predicted that by 2030, there will be between 1 billion and 800 million tourists worldwide.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2023), tourism in most regions has improved from previous declines in arrivals and expenditure. Accordingly, in 2022, tourism arrivals reached 900 million globally, led by the Middle East and European regions (UNWTO, 2023). The UNWTO (2023) expected the tourism sector's arrivals of regions to recover between 80 and 95% of the pre-COVID-19 levels.

Also, in terms of the total share of travel and tourism in the gross domestic product (GDP) worldwide, it can be concluded that in 2022, the total share of travel and tourism in the global gross domestic product (GDP) will be 23% less compared to 2019. It was the year before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic started. Overall, the contribution of travel and tourism to the global GDP in 2022 was 7.7 trillion dollars. This figure is projected to reach \$9.5 trillion in 2023, five percent below pre-pandemic levels (Figure 1).

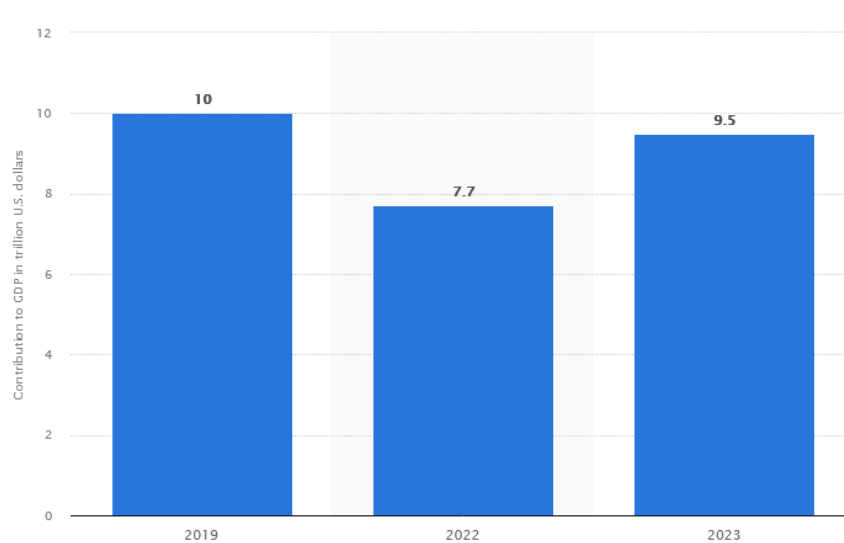


Figure 1. The total contribution of travel and tourism to gross domestic product (GDP) worldwide in 2019 and 2022, with a forecast for 2023 (in trillion U.S. dollars)  
 Source: Statista Research Department (2023)

One of the most important factors affecting the tourism industry that previous studies have not investigated is the role of the media and media freedom on the industry (tourism income). In this study, we aim to address the relationship between tourism development and income distribution by linking the arguments to a line of studies that examine the role of a country's media environment. Thus, we extend this discussion by examining the effects of media freedom on tourism development.

Press and media freedom closes the gap between government and people (Bazley et al., 2002), eliminates corruption, and fights religious bigotry (Jankov et al., 2002; Adam, 2002). It encourages political participation and stimulates economic growth (Roll & Talbot, 2003). The independent press benefits the public because it presents a true or more true picture of society and increases the accountability of the people's representatives (Leeson, 2008). The concept of freedom of speech is a controversial issue in the literature. After World War II, the first definition of free speech relative to the geographic structure of politics focused primarily on government-controlled press releases. However, many experts believe that in addition to complete independence, a free press also has the power to criticize, except for defamation and honor laws (Leeson, 2008; Adam, 2002). Based on the theories of media freedom, two components of press freedom can be stated below: 1) The relative absence of the clauses expressed in the media. 2) Relative absence of non-governmental restrictions.

A recent study by Gottfried et al. (2017) shows that the media affects people's attitudes towards the national government differently. Mickoleit (2014) documents that social media influences the policies of governments around the world. This is consistent with the view that the media can put controversial social issues about the tourism sector on the public agenda.

We argue that significant media heterogeneity through press freedom pressures the national government to distribute tax revenues equitably. A free media environment also

highlights exploitation in tourist areas and influences the government to provide better public services and create more open policy processes. Previous studies show that news media and press freedom influence government policies and responses to social issues (Hollander, 2014).

Besides the freedom of the media and the press, another important variable that can play a positive role in the development and growth of the tourism industry is the governance index. Good governance has been a dominant theme in public sector management in recent decades, and the role that government plays in the health of society is essential. Global surveys and data show that good governance is critical in emerging countries and has long been a cornerstone of development. The European Union states that achieving fair and sustainable social and economic growth requires transparent management and good governance in the country (Barnard, 2007; Minehir & Gamble, 2019).

Good governance is increasingly popular in law, politics, and economics. Scholars have devoted considerable attention to studying good governance, as it appears to have economic and political importance to economies (Akram et al., 2021; Baig & Zahra, 2020). Good governance produces outcomes that meet societal needs while maximizing the use of available resources. In addition, Siskavati et al. (2020) believe that good governance is a process by which the government performs public affairs and manages public resources. According to Adink (2019), good governance is a standard that the government must adhere to, which is one of the people's fundamental rights in their country. Detotto et al. (2021) state that good governance creates benefits through the following: (1) the first benefit is that it reduces transaction costs, enabling markets to be more efficient, and (2) Increasing technologies and maintaining political stability in conditions of rapid social transition" due to competent governance. As a result, good governance can be considered a source of development.

In previous studies, the Reporters Without Borders index and good governance have been conducted separately in the tourism sector. Thus, according to the existing gap in the current tourism literature, this research examines whether free media environments affect tourism development differently. Therefore, the significant innovation of the present research is that it examines the role of media freedom and good governance index on tourism revenues by econometric modeling of dynamic panel data. In addition, it should be mentioned that no research has been done regarding the current issue at the global level. However, in the following, some related studies will be reviewed.

Beha (2023) investigated the effect of good governance and quality of institutions on tourism development in a panel of 27 countries from the European Union from 2008 to 2021. The control variables used, which also represent the determinants of tourism, are GDP growth rate per capita, inflation, higher education, quality of the environment, and trade. Quality of institutions indexes are constructed based on indicators of government effectiveness, political stability, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and voice and accountability. To estimate the impact of selected determinants in tourism development, we used the Generalised method of the moments-GMM model. According to the results, there is a positive connection between the quality of institutions and tourism.

Shah (2023) examined the impact of effective governance on the tourism poverty nexus in six South Asian countries from 2002 to 2019. An econometric methodology included fully modified ordinary least squares (FMOLS) and dynamic ordinary least squares (DOLS) econometric models. The results confirmed the positive and significant impact of tourism development and the effectiveness of the government on poverty reduction. In addition, results confirm that governance quality and tourism development have complementary impacts on poverty reduction.

Detotto et al. (2021) postulate the importance of good governance by stating that the development of the private sector, households, and investors depends on a stable and predictable environment. In this respect, governance plays a crucial role. Various studies (Detotto et al., 2021; Gretzel & Jamal, 2020; Bichler, 2021; Maniatis, 2016) indicate that high-quality, strong institutions lead to economic growth and development. According to Nurman et al. (2021), good governance enables regions to develop and implement strategies for new market creation, ensuring price stability and efficient distribution of products. Tourism revenues could rise due to improved sector productivity and efficiency by solid governance (Detotto et al., 2021).

Studies related to media freedom and good governance: According to the review of the relevant literature, only one study has investigated this relationship. Stark et al. (2015) believe that free media, as a check and balance institution, plays an important role in fighting corruption. In addition, the global expansion of Internet connectivity and e-government increases the likelihood of exposing corrupt government officials. This cross-national study assesses the impact of media freedom, Internet access, and online government service delivery on corruption using secondary data from 157 countries. Freedom of the media, access to the Internet, and the provision of online government services have a significant impact on reducing corruption at the national level. However, although Internet access remained constant from 2003 to 2013, the effect of providing online government services only appeared in 2013. This research also explores the fundamental interaction between two Internet-related factors.

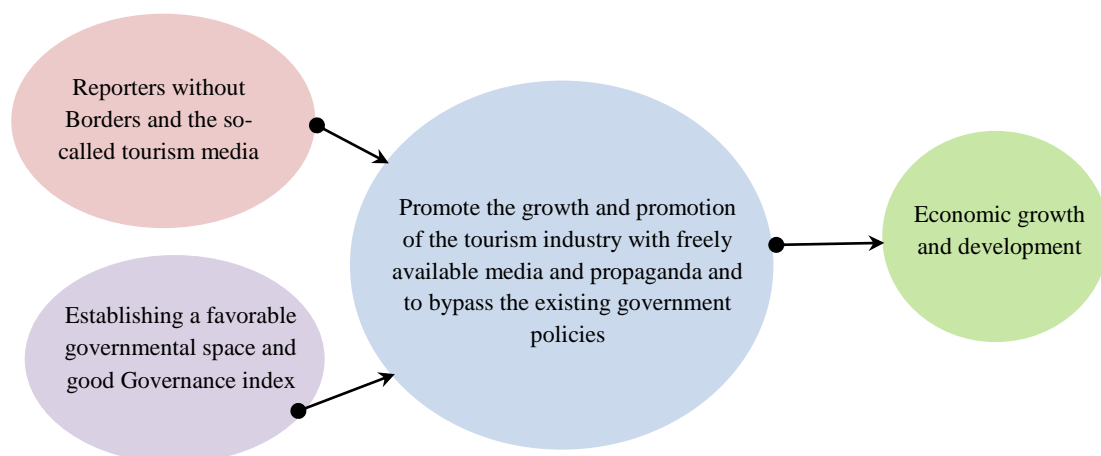


Figure 2. The conceptual model of the current research

According to (Figure 2), as a final remark in this section, it can help promote an infrastructure for other media freedom. Also, according to theoretical and empirical foundations, establishing a high-governmental atmosphere and improving governance in most studied countries can enrich the tourism industry. Thus, it is causing high and enormous revenues, followed by optimal and steady economic development.

A review of previous studies shows that Reporters Without Borders and good governance have been investigated separately in the tourism sector and show that the improvement of both these indicators can help the development of tourism, but none of the studies show the effect of both. They have not investigated this variable on tourism income. Therefore, considering the current gap in tourism literature, this research examines whether free media environments affect tourism development differently. It also examines two hypotheses: the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) index and the Governance Index Good (GGI) have a positive and significant effect on the income of the tourism industry. This study is innovative regarding the impact of RSF on tourism revenues, as research has yet to examine this issue. The structure of this research is as follows. The next section presents our materials and methods. After that, the third part shows the result and discussion, and the conclusion will be discussed in the fourth part.

## Methodology

### *Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) approach*

Most economic relationships involve dynamic adjustment processes. Dynamic models are very popular in panel data frameworks in labor, development, and general macroeconomics (Panchanan Das, 2019).

Dynamic panel models are regression models that include both cross-sectional effects and a lagged dependent variable. They are a powerful tool to deal with eliminated factors whose effects persist over time (Gotti-Rose and Rashid al-Khattabi, 2017). In the model with dynamic panel data, the lags of the dependent variable are used as explanatory variables. This means dynamic panel data models are useful when the dependent variable is related to past facts. However, the coefficients of lagged dependent variables may be far from our interest.

Including dependent variable lags provides a suitable description of many economic dynamic adjustment processes. However, in the analysis of panel data with short time intervals, there often seem to be inference problems, including small sample bias in coefficient estimation and hypothesis testing (Morris & Sarafidis, 2015). However, including lagged dependent variables introduces a correlation between the regressions and the residual error, and the endogeneity problem appears. This endogeneity issue suggests that least-squares-based estimators may be inconsistent. Using instrumental variable (IV) or generalized method of moments (GMM) methods produces consistent parameter estimates for data with limited periods and large cross-sections. Among them, the GMM system estimator has become increasingly popular. This is because it provides efficient asymptotic inference using minimal statistical assumptions (Panchanan Das, 2019).



Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) estimation is one of two econometric developments in the 1980s that revolutionized empirical work in macroeconomics. Among the pioneering articles in this method were the articles of Hansen (1982) and Hansen and Singleton (1982) (Sorensen, 2022). Based on dynamic panel models, the generalized moment estimator (GMM) is used in the equations in which there are unobservable effects specific to each country and the lag of the dependent variable. The generalized method of moments (GMM) is a method for constructing estimators similar to maximum likelihood (ML). GMM uses assumptions about specific moments of random variables instead of the entire distribution, making GMM more robust and efficient than ML (Drucker, 2015).

The consistency of the GMM estimator depends on the validity of the assumption of non-autocorrelation of the error statements and instruments, which can be tested by two tests specified by Arellano and Bond and Arellano and Burrow. First, the Sargan test checks the validity of instruments with predetermined limits. It determines any correlation between instruments and errors and has a chi-square distribution. The second test is the chain correlation test, which tests the existence of second-order chain correlation in disturbance components using M2. In this method, endogenous variables can be used; one of the ways to control the endogeneity of variables is to use an instrumental variable.

One of the advantages of GMM is that it allows us to use the intercept of these variables as suitable tools to control endogeneity. The GMM method can include the dynamics in the investigated variable in the model and can be used in all-time series, cross-sectional, and panel data. Using the dependent dependent dependent variable can also cause the loss of collinearity in the model. However, the main advantage of this method is that all the regression variables that are not correlated with the disturbance components (including the dependent and explanatory variables) can potentially be instrumental.

This study examines the impact of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on the income generated in the tourism sector using a dynamic panel data approach and the generalized system of moments (SGMM) method for 14 Southwest Asian countries from 2012 to 2018. As an explanatory variable, the dependent variable describes econometric patterns with dynamic links (fit model parameters). The method of moment generalization was first described by Hansen (1982). This provides an easy measure to find the efficiency of the estimates. This strategy considers the dynamic effect of the dependent variable. This technique will show at least standard and inconsistent results despite the correlation of explanatory factors.

However, in a dynamic panel data model, the lag between the dependent variable and the lags of the other variables (in a regression framework) is used as an instrument for the second lag of the dependent variable and the lags of the other variables as instruments. They are determining the dependent variable based on the generalized method of moments. The generalized method of moments (GMM) proposed by Arellano and Bond (1991) is an alternative to the present model to remove the effects attached to segments (individuals) and all fixed variables from the subject. The extended two-step technique is used to reduce the correlation between the gap and the false term and intercept variables as a tool for female estimation. If there is an inconsistent change in the error component, estimating a two-step method becomes more efficient and effective. Conditional mode is

used between errors and alternating values of the dependent variable in torque positions. It is expected that the disturbance components in this process do not have serial correlations. Arellano and Band's approach and test are used to test for serial correlation in disturbances. Sargan's test is used in this model to check the instrumental variables' validity by testing the over-identification limits (Baltaggi, 2013).

### *Case Study and Data Used*

In economic studies, assumptions are examined in a specific geographic area. Therefore, with its innovative idea, the current research examines the hypotheses raised in the previous section in the form of selected countries in Southwest Asia. The motivation for choosing this category of countries is the importance and innovation of using indicators of media freedom and good governance, as well as the importance of having income from the tourism industry to avoid a single-product economy. Therefore, the current study selected countries from among 22 emerging countries in Southwest Asia. Information was unavailable for some of these countries, so they were excluded from further analysis. Finally, data from 14 countries were used and analyzed (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The map of selected Studied emerging Southwest Asian countries (Color Figurers is only available in the online mode)

Source: Google My Maps<sup>2</sup> and Research Compilation

### *Research model and used variables*

In this research, tourism income is the dependent variable. Since tourism revenue affects the variables of the previous and subsequent year (for example, 1000 travelers visited a tourist attraction), part of the money collected from these visitors is spent on renovations and advertising. This will lead to developing and expanding building facilities and attracting more tourists in the coming years. As a result, it attracts visitors and increases the income of tourists. The World Bank website, the World Development

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.google.com/maps/about/mymaps/>



Indicators (WDI) database, and the World Governance Index (WGI) database were used to collect data for this study.

The study of the impact of Reporters Without Borders on the income of the tourism industry in selected countries of Southwest Asia is inspired by the theoretical foundations and empirical studies of Boga and Arkisi (2019), Litao (2015), Daryai et al. (2013), Memipour and Nazari (2014), and Bouhalis and Demizi (2013), as well as the panel data model introduced and used by Baltagi (2015). The equation for investigating the impact of Reporters Without Borders on tourism industry revenues in selected countries in Southwest Asia is as follows:

$$\text{Ln (TR)}_{it} = \beta_0 i + \text{Ln } \gamma(\text{TR})_{i(t-1)} + \beta_1 \text{Ln (RSF)}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Ln (GGI)}_{it} + \beta_3 \text{Ln (OER)}_{i(t-1)} + \beta_4 \text{Ln (GDPP)}_{it} + \beta_5 \text{Ln (TO)}_{it} + \text{Uit} \quad (1)$$

In Eq.1,  $\text{Uit} = \mu_i + \lambda_i + \text{vit}$ , in which  $\mu_i$  represents the specific effects of the country and  $\lambda_i$  represents the effect of the following year, and we will describe in more detail each of these cases.

Table 1 discusses the definitions of the used variables and the source of each one.

Table 1. Introduction of variables

Variables	Definition	Variable type	Source
Ln (TR)	The revenue of the tourism industry (in billion US dollars)	The dependent variable	World Bank <sup>3</sup>
RSF	Reporters Without Borders (Reporters et al.) <sup>4</sup>	independent variable	International Organization for Reporters Without Borders Global <sup>5</sup>
GGI	Good Governance Index <sup>6</sup>	independent variable	World Governance Index <sup>7</sup>
OER	Official exchange rate (in US dollars)	Control variable	World Bank
Ln (GDPP)	Real GDP per capita based on purchasing power	Control variable	World Bank

\*Ln: Logarithmic Format

According to Table 1, the description of the used variables is as follows:

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Press freedom index is published by Reporters Without Borders, as an annual score representing the countries' ranking concerning the freedom of the press in the country. According to the press release, each country grants some 0 (free) to 100 (minimum freedom).

<sup>5</sup> <https://rsf.org/en>

<sup>6</sup> The combination of six leading indices of governance introduced by the World Bank has been achieved by SPSS software analysis with Principal Factors Analysis technique. The results of this approach show in the Appendix.

<sup>7</sup> <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/worldwide-governance-indicators>.

### *Explanatory Variables Used in the Model (Empirical Model)*

The first and perhaps the most important point to note is that tourism revenue (TR) is the dependent variable (in US dollars), according to research conducted by Boga and Erkisi (2019), Panik (2014), and Cho (2010).

*Reporters Without Borders (RSF)*: This index is an annual score for countries evaluated by Reporters Without Borders. This index represents journalists, information technology agencies, citizens' freedom, and governments' efforts to respect and guarantee this freedom.

*Good Governance Index (GGI)*: Described in various ways. Good governance is defined by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as working in different fields to achieve balance at different national and international levels. Lyon (2000), on the other hand, defines good governance as the effectiveness of the country's economic and social resources. How transparent, responsive, fair, and open is this system? Based on World Bank indicators, GGI includes six important and influential sub-indices: 1) Voice and responsiveness. 2) Political stability. 3) Government effectiveness. 4) supervisory quality. 5) rule of law; and 6) corruption control is evaluated. As Khan et al. (2021), Bhuiyan et al. (2023), and Shamaï and Yousefi (2018) argue, this variable is expected to have a very important and significant impact on tourism revenues.

The explanatory control variables included in the model are:

*Official exchange rate (OER)*: The official exchange rate is a critical and influential control variable on tourism revenues. If the exchange rate in the destination country is lower than the country of origin, this will be a good incentive for visitors or tourists to go to the destination country. Therefore, the exchange rate is one of the important and influential variables used in modeling this research. As a result, the exchange rate is the most relevant variable in the study process, which, in theory and most previous studies, such as Xue et al. (2022), is also evident.

*Gross domestic product per capita (GDPP)* is one of the most important factors affecting tourism in the destination country, the country's income. In other words, since travel is usually considered an economic good, thus, this variable is more sensitive to the income level. Therefore, it is considered one of the most important components of the tourism income equation. This research applies the real income variable based on purchasing power. However, a review of previous studies shows that in most studies, GDP per capita significantly affects tourism income. Also, Wijeskara et al. (2022) and Khanal et al. (2021) in their article show that tourism significantly contributes to economic growth and vice versa. Therefore, the higher their GDP is, the more they earn from tourism (Xue et al., 2022).

*Trade openness (TO)* is a critical factor in analyzing and quantifying a country's economic progress, calculated as the sum of all exports and imports to GDP. Therefore, the larger the government deficit, the more open a country's borders are to exporters and importers, which means that the country and its economy have a more open and accessible level of trade. Based on previous studies such as Boga and Erkisi (2019), alşkan et al.

(2019), Okafor et al. (2021), and Mester et al. (2023), this variable is one of the most important and influential factors affecting tourists' income.

Furthermore, natural disasters, conflicts, policy changes, preferences, propaganda, expectations, political instability, terrorism, and other special events affect tourism. Due to the lack of data for the mentioned factors, these factors are entered into the model as a disturbance or error term and tested.

### *RSF and Tourism Industry*

We begin by providing a descriptive analysis of the leading variables of our study. Any country with a lower ranking on the RSF index is better. In addition, variable annual RSF statistics are provided for approximately 179 countries. Therefore, to examine the relationship between the tourism industry and Reporters Without Borders, the six-year average (2012-2018) of the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) index is shown in (Figure 4). In the RSF variable, the closer the number of Reporters Without Borders is to zero, the better the media freedom in that country. Therefore, Iran has the worst among the studied countries, and Armenia has the best RSF rate. It can also be seen in (Figure 5) that Iran has the highest rank, and Armenia has the lowest rank among the studied countries.

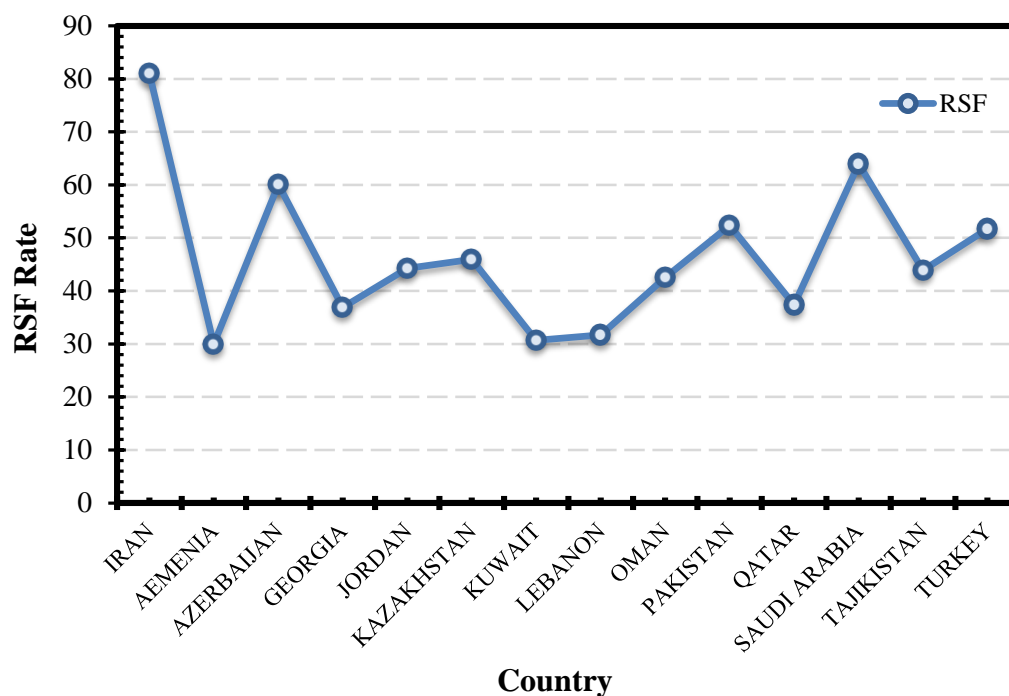


Figure 4. Average Rate of RSF in 2012-2018.  
 Source: rsf.org and researcher's calculation.

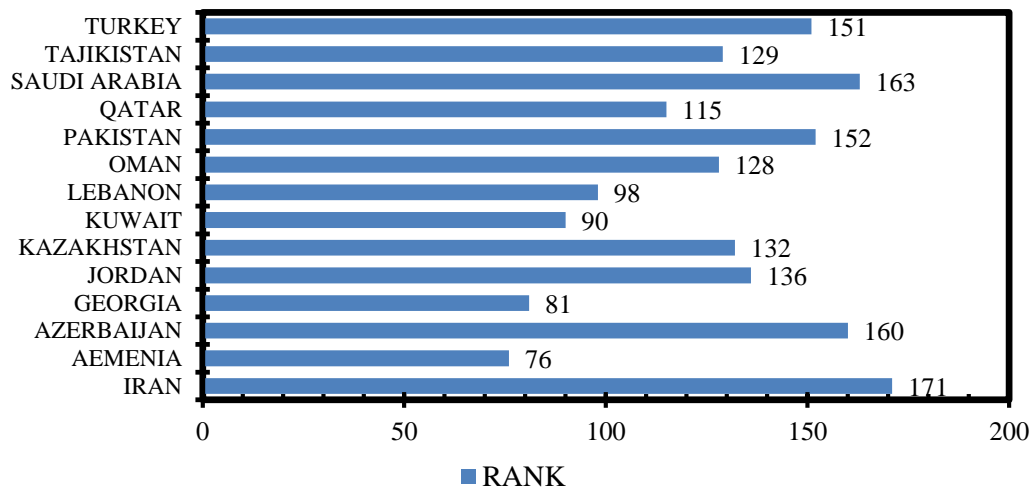


Figure 5. Average Rank of RSF in 2012-2018.  
 Source: rsf.org and researcher's calculation.

As shown in Figure 6, according to the latest statistics available in the press freedom index, Iran, with a value of 72.20, and Saudi Arabia, with a value of 62.73, were ranked 174 and 170, respectively. Therefore, they have the lowest value in the world press freedom index. On the other hand, Georgia, with a value of 28.64, and Armenia, with a value of 28.83, are ranked 60 and 63, respectively. Therefore, compared to the two. Countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia have a much better situation regarding the press freedom index in the world.

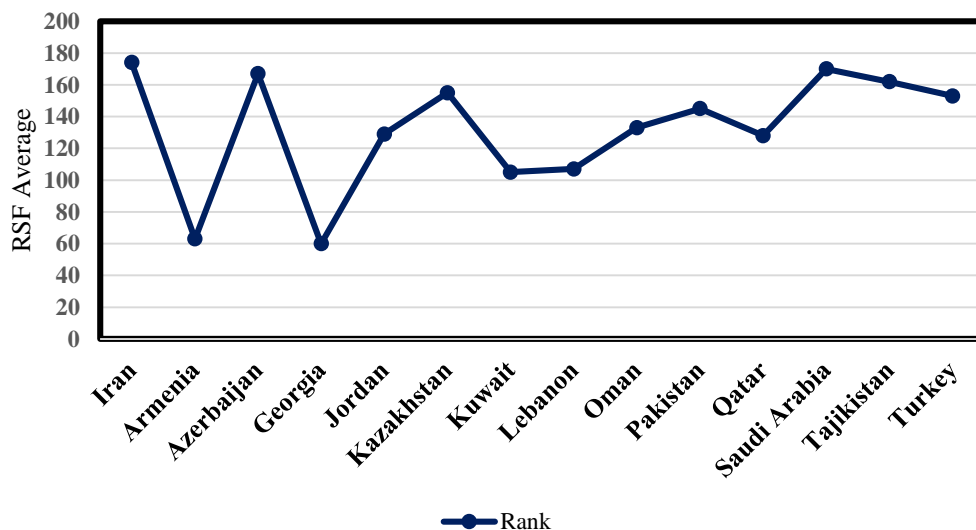


Figure 6. Selected Countries RSF, 2021 Rank.  
 Source: rsf.org and researcher's calculation.

According to Kamforo (2010), the press should serve the public interest and be trusted by citizens, not government officials. Experts and practitioners agree that the media is responsible for guiding and motivating officials to work only for the public good (Stiglitz, 2002). For example, Sen (1999) highlights the role of the free media in selecting factors

that reflect people's true preferences. On the other hand, an impartial press may also reduce religious prejudices (Nikitina, 2020; Adam, 2002) and minimize corruption (Egbunda, 1994; Jankoff et al., 2002; Reinikka & Svensson, 2005).

Stromberg (2004) also found that a free press fosters accountability and increases people's quality of life. One of the critical techniques to ensure press freedom is to minimize information asymmetry and create barriers between citizens and governments (Besley et al., 2002). This practice allows the government to have a say in its policies and shape them for the benefit of the people. The press release also invites people to participate in politics (Karppinen, 2007; Kuenzi & Lambright, 2007; Leeson, 2008).

Egorov et al. (2009) examine media freedom in non-democratic countries in their work. According to them, freedom of the media is very important to establish social order because it allows a fair and independent evaluation of the government's policies. As a result, the freedom of the press allows the people to evaluate the government's performance and decide on the country's future. However, since tourism is a multifaceted activity involving various economic, social, and other groups, it requires a strong governance framework to progress toward sustainable growth. As a result, governance in tourism development has become increasingly important in recent years, as it directly and indirectly affects tourism development (Karlikar & Becker, 2014; Cornelissen, 2005).

### *Good Governance Index (GGI) and Tourism Industry*

The governance indicators, i.e., government effectiveness, political stability, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and voice and accountability, also positively affect tourism development. Terrorism, environmental degradation, and corruption have shown adverse effects on tourism development as well as components of tourism development. Economic growth and trade openness have an encouraging effect on tourism development and its comments. It is concluded that through good governance, tourism may be developed, but terrorism and corruption need to be eliminated.

For the tourism sector to produce valid social and economic benefits, the principles of good governance should be considered. Tourism governance encompasses activities in the economic and political environment found locally, nationally, and globally (Bichler, 2021). According to Gretzel and Jamal (2020), transparency and effective government, for example, the capability to develop and execute effective policies, restructure institutions, organize resources available, facilitate economic and social well-being, enforce the rule of law, reduce corruption and involvement, are all examples of good governance. One of the most contentious issues in the literature is how governmental policies affect the tourism sector and how crucial political stability is to the long-term viability of the sector. Özgit (2022) stated that the optimal strategy for long-term sustainable tourism necessitates the creation of a system for efficient monitoring and regulations that are swiftly put into place thanks to sound governance.

In sustainable development, good governance is a collaborative endeavor that integrates environmental, social, and economic issues (Gretzel & Jamal, 2020; Siskawati et al., 2020). Although the concept of good governance is believed to be taken up by the public sector (government), it should be remembered that the community and private



sector can also uphold governance. Raszkowski and Bartniczak (2018) postulate that public managers influence good governance in the sense that they should demonstrate strong leadership, the ability to inspire people to achieve the set goals, and the ability to use both intellectual and organizational capacity. However, there are challenges in governance for tourism regarding the various roles of government and the private sector and the sector's social and environmental costs (Siakwah et al., 2020).

In this regard, the government institution, based on the views, has a decisive role in advancing the society towards progress. Based on theories about international tourism based on media embargoes in most countries, there is a gap in research that makes it very difficult for journalists and documentary makers to write stories and produce content about the potential of tourism in Asian countries. These countries have a long history and valuable resources, but most people only hear about it and invest little. Thus, it can be concluded that the only hypothesis of this research is that Reporters Without Borders has a positive and significant effect on tourism income.

## Results

To check for a non-false estimate between model variables, the variables in the regression should be evaluated for having a unit root. If the data used in the study have a unit root, the estimation findings will lead to spurious regression. However, given the years investigated (because of geographical and statistical limits), this research is six years for the panel data resilience test. Panel data from less than 15 years is optional for the concepts in the Baltic book (Baltagi, 2013).

However, in (Table 2), the findings of the estimation of the impact of the variables of borderless reporters as explanatory factors and other control factors on the level of tourism incomes (equation of equation 1) using dynamic panel data technique (SGMM technique). It has been reported Based on the findings of the model, all the coefficients are significant at the error level of less than 5%, and all these coefficients have a positive and significant effect on tourism income.

Table 2. Estimation Results of the Model by Two-Step GMM

Variables	Coefficients	Z statistic value	Probably value***
RSF	1.062	11.38	0.001
GGI	0.784	5.23	0.000
OER	0.005	12.35	0.002
Ln (GDPP)	2.134	14.11	0.000
Ln (TO)	0.628	3.25	0.000
Cons	-72.520	-14.65	0.000
Sargan	12.235* (0.752) **		
M1	0.778* (0.437)**		
M2	-0.892* (0.373)**		
Wald	33425* (0.000)**		

\* Indicates the statistics value \*\* Indicates the probability level \*\*\*  
Indicates significance at 5% level

According to the results of Table 2, the null hypothesis (which is based on Eq 1) will not be rejected. As a result, the variables used in estimating the model are of sufficient quality (there is no correlation between the disturbance components and the instrumental variables used). As a result, the variables used by the instrument in the model estimations are of sufficient quality (there is no correlation between the nuisance components and the instrument variables used). Consequently, using instrumental variables to manage the relationship between the explanatory factors and the equation is critical. Also, the findings of the autocorrelation of disturbance components (Table 2) do not show a significant relationship between the autocorrelation of 5% and the second rank. As a result, one of the important categories of this section is the interpretation and analysis of the model according to the above findings.

The following findings (a 95% confidence level) can be deduced from the results of (Table. 2):

The estimated coefficient of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), as one of the basic variables in this research, has a positive and significant effect on the amount of income from the tourism industry with this interpretation. In other words, an increase of 1 unit in the number of borderless reporters increased tourism income by 1.062 units. This meaningful conclusion is about the only hypothesis in this study, and it is consistent with studies such as Comeforo (2010).

The Good Governance Index (GGI) is one of the most important variables affecting the income of the tourism industry; in other words, with an increase of 1 unit in the rate of good governance, tourism income increases by 0.784 units. This result is consistent with the research findings of Joppe (2018), Khan et al. (2021), Bhuiyan et al. (2023), and Shamai and Yousefi (2018) argue that this variable is expected to have a very important and significant impact on tourism revenues.

Also, significant results have been obtained for the control variables of this research. The calculation coefficient of the official exchange rate (OER) showed a positive and significant effect on the income of the tourism industry. Therefore, a one percent increase in the official exchange rate increases tourism income by 0.005, per the findings of Xue et al. (2022). Also, GDP per capita coefficients positively and significantly affect tourism revenues. Tourism income has grown by 2.134% for every percentage increase in this variable. GDP per capita has a significant effect on tourism income. Also, Wijeskara et al. (2022) and Khanal et al. (2021) in their article show that tourism significantly contributes to economic growth and vice versa. Therefore, the higher their GDP is, the more they earn from tourism (Xue et al., 2022).

Therefore, improving the socio-economic status of a country is one of the elements that determine the amount of income generated by tourism, which is consistent with the findings of Litao (2015) and Sokhnor (2019). The calculated trade openness (TO) coefficient is also positive and significant. The amount of money received from the tourism business grows by 0.628% for every percentage increase in this variable, also, according to the findings of Boga and Erkisi (2019) and alşkan et al. (2019) and Okafor et al. (2021) and Mester et al. (2023).

Finally, we must mention whether or not the test statistic of the parameter estimated by the sample is equal to the desired parameter. Also, the T-test statistic with a value of 14163 and a probability level of zero percent of error has been obtained to estimate the value. A model where the null hypothesis is related to ineffective variables in regression

As the last point in this section, this research is unique regarding subject and methodology. This claim can be seen by examining various related research, such as Alam and Alisha (2013) and Tran et al. (2011). Thus, the role of press freedom in the Good Governance Index (GGI) and the relevance of a strong democratic system in the selected countries is examined in this study. In addition, dynamic panel econometric models and the System Generalized Method of Moments (SGMM) are used. The basic hypothesis and question of this study, based on the effect of the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) index on the income of tourists, showed that the RSF index has a positive and fundamental effect on the income of tourists in selected countries, including Iran.

## Discussion

Some of the comments are excerpted from the article, which can be seen below. The term economics refers to maximizing profit while working with limited resources. No matter what one seeks, one may find spiritual benefits in travel. The prevailing norm must be the same, whether the company provides products and services to visitors or the host state benefits economically from tourist spending. Economic brokers try to fulfill demand by supplying limited tourism resources (both physical and financial). Physical and practical requirements (typically restricted) are combined with intellectual needs to create demands (which are almost unreasonable). Similarly, those economies attempt to determine how to get the most out of scarce tourism resources. At the same time, they must deal with ever-changing expectations (whose physical needs and psychic desires are created).

The present study examines the impact of Reporters Without Borders on the profits of the tourism sector in selected countries in Southwest Asia from 2012 to 2018. This method uses the dynamic panel data and a two-stage generalized Moment system. Since good governance is one of the primary components of attracting foreign visitors, according to experts and researchers, the findings of this study have a beneficial effect on the quality of good governance for foreign visitors. In addition, the six governance sub-indices of the World Bank, created from the good governance index, have a positive and significant effect on the income from the tourism sector in selected countries in Southwest Asia. Therefore, the findings of this research confirm the two hypotheses of this research, namely that Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has a positive and significant effect on the number of tourism industry revenues and the positive effects of the good governance index on the amount of tourism industry revenues. The amount of income from the tourism industry.

According to the results obtained, it may be agreed that a free and fair press is in the interest of society. In addition, policymakers should understand that a free and independent press is good for the economy. Therefore, policies should be aligned to encourage a fairer and fairer press. As a result, public trust and vital freedom of the press will increase, and promotion and synergy in the tourism sector will be strengthened,

resulting in economic growth. However, since good governance is an essential component in attracting international tourists, the findings of this study have a significant beneficial effect on the quality of good governance for international visitors. Six World Bank governance sub-indices are combined to create a good governance index that positively and significantly impacts tourism sector income in selected countries in Southwest Asia.

As a result, boosting tourist industry income brings the following benefits: Press freedom can advance through media privatization, especially given the romantic mood and existing waiver in the researched nations, particularly Iran. Furthermore, in a country like Iran, the press promotes various viewpoints and information sources that are critical for tourism income. The private sector's support and promotion of content efficiency and their great investments have resulted in the media cycle and press movement being more remarkable than previously (as well as more prosperous countries like Turkey). Also, by stressing the six power components, emphasize building and strengthening the institutional ecology and governance (Control of Corruption, Government Effectiveness, political stability, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Voice and Accountability).

Moreover, among the other benefits introduced, consider trade liberalization and lessening the depth of geopolitics and security in Iran because entry and exit will occur if a nation's borders are more open. Furthermore, it impacts tourism profits since facilitating visitors' entrance as a luxury product within a country's borders increases the money generated by the tourism sector. The focus on developing GDP per capita growth may indicate that the country's income is focused on the tourist industry, with a single-product trade fleeing. On the other hand, any value in this is an investment field, future tourism income, and the growth of numerous economic sectors. Consequently, officials will be able to predict the expansion of output inside the country based on the findings of this fascinating study. Moreover, it has the potential to boost tourism earnings.

According to the results obtained from the present research, Improvements in the mentioned variables, including reporters without borders, governance, GDP, exchange rate, and trade openness, can improve tourism in 14 emerging countries of Southwest Asia. In this way, the need to pay attention to the variables mentioned in the countries under investigation becomes more apparent.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One of the important limitations of the present study is the relatively short period of available time series data, which is common in similar analyses. This research investigates the relationship between Reporters Without Borders, governance, and tourism revenues in 22 emerging countries of Southwest Asia. However, from 22 countries, information was unavailable on some of them, so they were excluded from the list. Analysis. Finally, data from 14 countries were used and analyzed. Therefore, the

current research is limited due to the lack of data to measure international tourism indicators in some emerging countries in Southwest Asia.

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## Appendix

To establish an overall indicator of good governance (based on World Bank measurements for this issue, they measure this using six essential indicators for each nation, defined by the Principal Factor Analyses (PFA) components of the variance data utilized). The total index is then calculated by combining these components. This procedure was carried out using SPSS software.



To see if this approach is adequate for merging the data utilized, the KMO<sup>8</sup> test and the Bartlett test are used. The results can be as follows.

- 1) The factor analysis is highly appropriate if the KMO is more significant than 0.9.
- 2) The factor analysis is correct if the KMO is more than 0.8 but less than 0.9.
- 3) Factor analysis is often suitable when the KMO is more than 0.7 but less than 0.8.
- 4) Factor analysis is typically unacceptable if the KMO is more than 0.6 but less than 0.7.
- 5) If KMO is less than 0.5, factor analysis is not recommended (Qi et al., 2013, p. 454).

The following are the results of this test (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of the KMO and Bartlett Index for the Selected Countries

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.915
	Approx. Chi-Square	1543.342
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df.	15
	Sig.	0.000

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<sup>8</sup> Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) of Sampling Adequacy.