

WHAT MOTIVATES SPORTS EVENT TOURISTS? A SYNTHESIS OF THREE DISCIPLINES.

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Abstract

Sport event tourism is a significant and growing global industry with important economic implications for the specific sport the/or event and the flow on impact of travel and tourism related benefits for host destinations. Research within the tourism and event marketing fields reveal an abundance of studies on motivation and satisfaction (Crompton 1979; Dann 1977; Uysal & Jurwoski 1994; Gnoth 1997; Wann & Branscombe (1995). However there is a lack of research into what motivates consumers to become sport event tourists and whether these motivations differ from those posited in the traditional sport consumption, tourism or event marketing literature. This working paper synthesises the consumer motivation literature from three fields; tourism, events and sports spectating. It further outlines a proposal for future research which advocates the testing of a new set of motivational variables with the intent eventual identification of a sport event tourist typology.

Keywords: motivation, destinations, tourism, sports, events, motivation.

INTRODUCTION

The last decade has seen an increase in the number of sporting events held worldwide (Getz, 1998). These sporting events may appeal to various interest groups at the local level (Chinchilla Watermelon Festival – watermelon throwing contest) right through to a global audience (Olympic Games). However, for any sporting event to be successful it not only needs sports participants, it also needs spectators or attendees (Gibson, 1998). Marketers need to be aware of and to appreciate the driving forces which influence these spectators to take the time, effort and expense to engage as spectators, either locally or internationally. Spectators will often plan their yearly holiday to coincide with a sporting event and as such there will often be many influencing factors i.e. time of year, destination and cost that impact upon the prospective event attendee. This working paper examines therefore what motivates sport event tourists to engage in the events they do.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON MOTIVATIONS

To be motivated means *to be moved* to do something (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus a person who has no stimulus to act is often considered to be unmotivated. On the other hand, a person who is moved to act is considered motivated. Importantly, motivation can vary with respect to the levels of motivation (how much motivation) as well as the orientation of the motivation (what type of motivation).

Underlying all behaviour are needs and motivations, grounded in the basic physiological and socio-psychological needs and wants of all humans. Some theories of motivation applied to understanding sport, leisure and tourism behaviour are Murray's (1938) needs theory of personality, Maslows' (1943) hierarchical theory of needs and Berlyne's (1960) concept of optimal level of stimulation.

Murray (1938 p. 123) explained that "A need is a stimulus – a force pushing an individual in a certain direction or to behave in a certain way". He identified 12 physiological needs which are viewed as primary needs, and include air, water, food and security. He also identified 28 psychological needs which he argued were secondary needs and were connected to an individual's level of mental or emotional satisfaction.

Previous research underpinned by Murray's or Maslow's theories into sport, tourism and leisure have found that the relationship between needs and activity choice is quite complex (Driver & Knopf, 1977; Tinsley et al., 1977; Allen, 1982; Iso-Ahola & Allen, 1982; Pearce, 1982; Beard & Bagheb, 1983; Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Mills, 1985). Significantly, research undertaken by both Murray and Maslow has led to the belief that behaviour is multidimensional and that the same activity may be motivated by a variety of needs at different times for the one individual or that one activity may have different meanings to another person at the same time (Crandell, 1987). That is to say that no matter how complex the relationships may be the motivation theory still gives an insight into why people choose to take part in certain activities for example, being a sports event tourist.

Other research has noted that motivation can be referred to as a biological/psychological need and want, including forces that arouse, direct and integrate a person's behaviour and activity (Dann, 1981; Pearce, 1982; Uysal & Jurowski, 1993; Mannell & Jkeuber 1997). Various disciplines have been used to explain the phenomena and characteristics related to motivation. However, the characteristics are very complex as they relate to human beings and human nature which in itself is complex (Chon, 1989). Whilst in the disciplines of sociology and psychology, motivation is often directed towards cognitive and emotional motives (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) or internal and external motives (Gnoth, 1997). Internal motives are associated with feelings, instincts and drives whereas external motives involve mental representations such as beliefs or knowledge. MacCannell (1977) noted that from an anthropological viewpoint, tourists are motivated to escape the routine of daily life and seek authentic experiences. Whereas, from a socio-psychological point of view, motivation is classified as seeking and avoidance (Iso-Ahola, 1982). It therefore appears that motivations can be linked to various disciplines and can be represented in various ways depending on the view taken with respect to the sport event tourist.

Motivation of sport attendees

Sports spectators are estimated to be worth millions of dollars to the global economy (Getz 1998) which would suggest that they are a very valuable 'niche' market segment which should be studied and understood. There appears to be little agreement in the literature however as to which factors (or combinations) explain or predict the motives of sport spectators. Theories have been put forward by various researchers (Duncan, 1983; Thomas, 1986; Smith, 1988; Sloan, 1985; Wann, 1995; Trail, Anderson & Fink, 2000), however there has been little empirical testing of any of the theories.

The increase in sport tourism in recent years has been aided by advances in information technology (IT), transportation and in the promotion of good health. Spectators have the ability to get onto the WorldWide Web (WWW) and view first hand the conditions for a snowboard competition and seek out competitive airfares to the destination. With improved transportation and more reliable services the spectators are today able to travel far more easily and more affordably than yesteryear. However, there remains the need to find out what

motivates people to become spectators and what motivates them to travel to attend specific types of events.

Whilst there are theoretical formulations regarding independent motivational factors for sport consumption, the research is fragmented and in some cases inconclusive. Hence there is really little consensus on the boundaries of such theories. Sloan's (1985) review of sport motivation literature suggests motivational factors which are traditionally used to explain sport participation could be applied to sport spectatorship.

Motivations to attend events

There are many types of events. For example, special events, mega events, hallmark events and major events. McDonnell, Allen & O'Toole (1999) considered a special event to usually be one-off or infrequent by nature. The special event could then be considered as a mega or hall mark event. Getz (1997 p. 6) defines a mega event as:

Their volume should exceed 1 million visits, their capital costs should be at least \$500 million, and their reputation should be of a 'must see' event. Mega events, by way of their size or significance, are those that yield extraordinarily high levels of tourism, media coverage, prestige or economic impact for the host community or destination.

The definitions of various types of events all have one thing in common and that is, that they are a reason to celebrate, to bring various groups or individuals together to experience what the event has to offer, whether it be for leisure or a business event. The event may last over several weeks or just a day. It may be a one time or recurring event and it may be a public or private sector event. Whichever type of event it is, there is the need to motivate people to take action to attend. Getz (1997) took the general approach that people attend events to satisfy various personal needs.

Several definitions have been expressed in relation to events and now it is time to review some of the motivations which draw people to these events. There are several groups of motives proposed by McDonnell et al. (1999). The four main groups proposed by McDonnell et al. (1999) are social motives, organisational motives, physiological motives and personal motives.

It should be noted that attending an event may be the result of many motives, not just one motive from one group but several from various groups. These are issues which sport event marketers or promoters should be very aware of.

Motivations of a tourist

A review of the literature on motivation suggests that most people travel because they are 'pushed' into making a travel decision by internal, psychological forces, or 'pulled' by the external forces of the destination attributes (Crompton, 1979; Dann 1977; Uysal & Jurowski, 1993). Tourists have their own individual internal and external reasons for travelling (McGee, Loker-Murphy & Uysal, 1996). However, these reasons could have positive or negative impacts on their perceived level of travel satisfaction. Travel satisfaction has been used as a tool to assess the outcome of the travel experience (Bramwell, 1998; Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991).

In tourism this concept of motivation can be divided into two groups which indicate that people travel because they are either pushed or pulled to do so by forces or factors (Dann,

1977; Dann, 1981). These factors show how tourists are pushed by motivation variables into making travel decisions and then how they are pulled or attracted by a destination attributes (Uysal & Jurowski, 1993). So the push motivations are related to the tourists' desire, while the pull factors or motivations are aliened with the attributes of the destination choice (Cha, McCleary & Uysal, 1995; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Oh, Uysal & Weaver, 1995). Put simply, the push motivations are related to internal or emotional factors whilst pull motivations are connected to the external, cognitive or situational factors. Crompton (1979) found that push motivations could be grouped into the following areas; to escape, rest and relaxation, prestige, health and fitness, adventure and social interaction, family togetherness and excitement. Tourists may travel to escape the dreariness of their every day lives and to find authentic experiences. The pull motivations are attributed to the destinations overall attractiveness. For example, beaches, cultural attractions, natural scenery shopping and so forth. However these push and pull factors may work together and the destination attributes may stimulate and reinforce inherent push factors (McGee et al., 1996). Several research studies have been undertaken using these perspectives (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Pyo, Mihalik & Uysal, 1989; Yuan & McDonald; 1990) and found that in some instances the push and pull factors work in combination to attract the tourist.

It can therefore be seen that there are some similarities in motivational theory from various disciplines which will impact on the sport event tourist.

Conclusion

The value of considering what motivates sports events tourists is twofold. Firstly, it will allow the marketers of sport events to enhance their marketing to this particular group by understanding what motivates them as attendees. Secondly, it will enable the tourism industry to better meet the needs of the sport event tourist by way of specific tourism products which relate to sport events. Hence, this paper has presented an overview on motivational theory together with motivation factors associated with sport attendees, event attendees and tourists and has found that whilst there are many theories for each independent group they have not specifically been linked to sports event tourists as a total consumer group. The next step in this research is to undertake motivational research on this specific consumer group and to build a typology which will provide marketers with up-to-date consumer information on this ever increasing market sector.

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