

Does It Really Matter Whether It Evolved From Sports or Tourism: Let's enjoy the Perfect Embryo "Sport Tourism"

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Abstract

This study aims to explore new ways of looking into the Sports Tourism as new academic field and market segment. A brief review of the related literature which is still dominated by the debates over whether sports or tourism oriented approaches should be applied indicates that sports tourism deserves attention as a new realm with its own dynamics.

Key Words: Sport Tourism, Sport Tourist

Sport and Tourism

Sport and tourism have strong linkage both as an industry and a discipline. It could be safe to point out that sport and tourism are the most common entertaining activities among like ones. As an industry sport and tourism are attracted and followed by millions that spent billions of dollars annually. From the consumer's perspective, they are not just consumable tangible products they create intangible nostalgic memories that last forever.

People do talk about sport and talk about their sport or recreation or vacation memories extensively. Cherishing their memories and nostalgia associated with sport festivities or competitions, everyone likes to share experiences with detail; their trips to football, soccer or baseball etc. People spent very limited amount of time regarding their daily errand, how long or how often can you talk about your fridge or vacuum cleaner? It is quite possible that a 30-minute sport talk show program generates more conversation and covers more human emotions than most people talk about their social problems daily. People from every aspect of life have strong bounds not just with their teams but other fans and even with their rivals or anti-fans, too. Sport and tourism provide opportunities to people to discover their common

likes or dislikes, lifestyles, cultures, and origins etc. Does it really get any better and more entertaining than this?

It seems that when it comes to sport and tourism the *experience* extends to its peak level. Impossible is nothing in this department. “Extraordinary,” “peak,” or “flow” is the other literary words that can decorate the Sport and Tourism experiences (Celsi et al., 1993; Arnold and Price, 1993). Morgan (2007) proposes a holistic approach on the sport tourist experience in which customer experience is defined as the interaction between external elements that controlled by organizational management and the internal elements perceived by the customer.

The Trends in Sport and Tourism

Tourism is recognized to be the world’s largest economy. In 2011 about 980 million people have traveled internationally with a 4.4% growth from the previous year. International tourism receipts have reached US \$919 billion in 2010 with a 5% increase from the previous year (WTO, 2012). These figures do not include the financial statistics of the domestic tourism figures.

The growing trend concerning public health, fitness (Gibson, 1998) and anti-aging, more tourists prefer and add daily physical exercises or maybe even a more intense sports program such as pace walking, spinning, cycling, distance swimming etc. to their vacation regimens. To assert the significance of sport in our societal wellbeing the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that in 2010, 65% of the Americans participated in one or more forms of sport and entertainment activities (CDC, 2010). Trends in adult sport participation show that fitness-oriented activities are now more popular than competition activities (Woods, 2007). Sport and tourism contribute to grounds in terms of value based experience (De Knop, 1990). Weed and Bull (2004) taking this argument one step further and indicated that sport tourism is more than just sport and just tourism coming together; referring the sport tourism products and experience. Seems like what we have is more than one plus one equal to two.

DISCUSSION

Being a part of an entertaining sport event such as Olympics, World Cup, Formula One or Super Bowl is a once in life time *experience* or a part of a must-do list before reaching to a certain age. Attending and being inside the stadium during a two-week sporting festivity such as Olympic Games or World Cup finals is truly a dream come true *experience* for a lot of people. How often or where else can somebody gain and live such experience? Apart from watching the competitions, the opening and closing ceremonies of ‘mega events’ such as Olympic Games or World Cup Finals etc. are considered to be “the entertainment of the year” or “entertainment of the city or country” for the decades to come. According to Kurtzman and Zauher, “the popularity of the international and national sporting events has been on demand and rising steadily.” Collins and Jackson (1996) point out that due to enormity of global media coverage, the local or national governments, do not hesitate to spend millions if not billions of dollar to stage mega events. Authorities in the field are convinced that hosting and organizing mega events would rejuvenate host city, and nation’s cultural pride, creativity, ability to organize people and innovate and use state of art technology.

When Anthony (1966) first mentioned the role of *sporting activities on societal unification during* holidays, he entitled the opportunity as “Sport and Tourism”. Good news is along the way, however that the “*and*” between Sport and Tourism for the moment has been disappeared but there is still an ongoing debate over whether the field should be called ‘Sport tourism’ (Hall, 1992; Gibson, 1998; Gabin and Robinson, 1997), ‘Sport Tourism’ (Weed and Bull, 2004), or ‘Sport Holiday’ (De Knop, 1990). The latter seems to drop out by De Knop himself and replaced with “Sport Tourism”. Sounds like, “you say tomato and I say tomato, you say potato and I say potato. *As long as nobody calls tomato as potato or vice versa, let’s call the whole thing off.*”

To build a conceptual framework with two distinctive terminologies; “Sport Tourism” and “Tourism Sport” besides their soft and hard definitions, Gammon and Robinson (1997) made a distinction based on primary and secondary motivations of the participants. Even though it is just expectable to look into this relatively emerging area of research from the sports perspective with a sports background and from the tourism perspective with a tourism background, the tribal settlement might be a hidden trap for new foci of interest.

Regardless there is still a continuing debate over the definition of ‘tourist and tourism’ and ‘sports’ in their individual jurisdiction. (Gibson, 1998) makes it even more challenging by calling it ‘*sport tourism.*’ To delimitate the subject from others, *subject area* experts in the field seems to reserve big portion of their published work to the effort of defining “*sport tourism.*” Experts do this mostly following the same path and make a distinction of ‘*sport tourist*’ among other kinds of tourists by elaborating upon the involvement as active or passive and as spectator or participant.

In a vague definition, Weed and Bull (2004) point out that sport tourism is a social, cultural, and an economic phenomenon involving people, activity, and place. It appears to be that this definition matches both tourism and sport separately and even most of social science concepts such as art, education and etc.

In his early works, De Knop (1990) defined sport tourist as someone who attends some sort of a sport activity during his/her holiday. He sub-headed and classified the sport tourism concept and the dimensions of experience under the three groups such as;

- The pure sport holiday
- The sporadic acceptance of organized sport by taking advantage of sport facilities
- The private sporting activity on holiday.

Unfortunately while he makes an effort to define sport tourist in reality he categorizes and classifies status of holidays. Contrary to De Knop, Gibson (1998) focuses on the differences and the desires of the different sport tourists. Yet, according to Gibson there are three different sport tourists with three different sport tourism interests such as:

- actively participating or “Active Sport Tourism”
- spectating “Event Tourism”
- visiting and paying homage “Nostalgia Sport Tourism.”

Adapting from Glyptis (1982) ‘demand categories,’ Weed and Bull (2009) came up with five different types “sport tourism product life” and they are:

- supplementary sports tourism
- sports participation tourism
- sports training tourism
- event sports tourism
- luxury sports tourism.

There is a wide range of combination of sport and tourism as one product and one is very individualistic. Trying to define sport tourism based on these combinations might be a limited endeavor. Since every person has a unique way of integrating sporting activities in his/her life. For instance, during a short business trip paying a visit to the hotel's small fitness center might not be counted as sport tourism by the definitions made so far, and yet presence of that small fitness center creates a competitive advantage over the others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the territorial debates from both sites as tourism and sport, literature and business aspect of sport tourism is attracting a growing attention. Inherited the challenges regarding definitions of the core concepts from both fields, sport tourism is still far from to create unobscure boundaries. The future endeavor is expected to focus on elaborating the definitions, classifications and motivations of the "sport tourist".

Since the question "Who is the sport tourist?" remains to be unfolded for further debate, it appears that current attempts are geared towards conceptualizing and defining sport tourism within which sport tourist assumed to be identical and indistinguishable individual. Through examining different class of sport tourists and their motivations, more effective models for managerial and marketing implications might be developed.

Majority of the current efforts in terms of defining sports tourism are based on the involvement and motivation of the individuals taking part in sporting activities, and segmentations from the demand side. Evolving promisingly as an industry Sport Tourism

comprises not only consumers but suppliers, policy makers, local administrations, governments, destinations, media, related national and international sports, and tourism organizations. It appears to be that sport tourism as an evolving terrain from sports and tourism has its own dynamics. If the sport dimensions have been as intense as it is claimed by some authors, why not then staying home and watching your team on your couch? Then again, if the travel dimension were as powerful as it is suggested, why not enjoy the other more traditional tourist attractions such as perhaps sun bathing or paying a visit to the local museum? Understandably so there is a growing trend towards desiring to be more active during vacations. As sport tourists fans are more likely to engage in traditional tourist behaviors while attending away activities.

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