

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

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Abstract

Sport event tourism is a huge and growing global industry with important economic implications for both the sport, the event and the impact of travel and tourism related benefits on 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 1992; Wann & Branscombe. However there is a lack of research into what motivates consumers to become sport event tourists and whether these motivations differ from the traditional sport consumption, tourism or event marketing literature. This paper synthesises the consumer motivation literature from three fields; tourism, events and sports spectating. It further provides a proposal for future research which advocates the testing of a new set of motivational variables and 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 a local market (Chinchilla Watermelon Festival – watermelon throwing contest) or a global level (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 be a spectators either locally or internationally. Spectators will often combine their yearly holiday to coincide with a sporting event and so there will be many influencing factors i.e. time of year, destination and cost to name a few. This paper examines what motivates sport event tourists.

Literature review on motivations

To be motivated means *to be moved* to do something (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A person who has no stimulus to act is thought to be unmotivated. On the other hand a person who is moved to act is considered motivated. Motivation can vary from the levels of motivation (how much motivation) and also 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 (1913 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 are considered secondary needs and are connected to mental or emotional satisfaction.

The hierarchical theory of needs by Maslow (1943) is a well known theory on motivation and like Murray (1913) suggested that peoples behaviour is driven by both physiological and socio-psychological needs. However, Maslow had a more structured hierarchical order to the needs of activation and satisfaction. He believed that the lower-order needs (psychological needs followed by safety needs) had to be satisfied before an individual could work on the higher-order needs of love, belongingness and self-esteem. At the top of the hierarchy of needs is self-actualisation which is an opportunity for individuals to 'become everything that one is capable of becoming' (Maslow, 1943 p. 382).

Research using Murray's or Maslow's theories into sport, tourism and leisure have found that the relationship between needs and activity choice is quite complex (e.g. Driver & Knopf, 1977; Tinsley et al., 1977; Allen, 1982; Iso-Ahola & Allen, 1982; Pearce, 1982; Beard & Bagheb, 1983; Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Mills, 1985). Research undertaken by both Murray and Maslow has lead 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, 1980). 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 i.e. being a sports event tourist.

On the other hand Berlyne (1960) postulated that there are those individuals who prefer a very stimulating situation/s and who seek out those activities that match their threshold for stimulation. This could be reflected in the need to attend a high octane car race as a spectator. There are also others who avoid situations which they feel are above their optimal level of arousal. Iso-Ahola (1982) suggests that the optimal level of stimulation is a balance between the need for stability and the need for variety. He notes that sport and tourism behaviour are motivated by two forces; seeking and escaping. The escape motive would be predominant in tourism behaviour because of travel away from the everyday environment. Because the consumer chooses to take part in tourism and sport, they can select activities that match their optimal levels of stimulation need i.e. being a sport event tourist.

Further research notes that motivation can be referred to as biological/psychological needs and wants, including forces that arouse, direct and integrate a person's behaviour and activity (Dann, 1981; Pearce, 1982; Uysal & Jurowski, 1993). 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) notes 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 sport event tourist.

A different theory for motivation proposed by Deci & Ryan (1985) is The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which differentiates between the various types of motivation which are based on different reasons or goals that are followed by an action. Much research (Deci & Flaste, 1996; Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000; Iwasaki & Mannell, 1999; Hennessy, 2003) has also been undertaken on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is naturally interesting or enjoyable, while extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to an independent outcome. The sport event tourist may fall into either of these groups depending on their goals and motivation.

Motivation has often been considered the primary cause of people's thoughts, feelings and actions and refers to an activated state within a person which consists of drive urges, wishes and desires which lead to goal-orientated behaviour (Mowen & Minor, 1998). Motivating factors in tourism can be divided into two groups. Firstly, those which motivate a person to take a holiday and secondly those which motivate a person to take a particular holiday to a specific destination at a particular time (Swarbrooke & Honer, 1999). Sports tourist would pertain to the second group of tourists as they are travelling to a particular destination to watch a particular sporting event at a certain time.

Beard and Ragheb (1983) developed a model called the Leisure Motivation Scale (LMS) which tried to divide the motivators into four types based on the work of Maslow (1943). The scale is divided into four sections. The first being the intellectual component which examines the extent to which individuals are motivated to participate in leisure activities which involve mental activities i.e. learning, exploring, discovery, thought or imagery. The second component is the social component and it explores the extent to which individuals engage in leisure pursuits for social reasons. This includes the two basic needs of friendship and interpersonal activities. The third component is the competence-mastery section which examines the extent to which individuals participate in leisure activities in order to master, challenge or compete. The final component is the stimulus avoidance area which assess the desire to escape and get away from life's over stimulating situations. They seek solitude and calm conditions to rest and unwind.

Whilst areas of the Leisure Motivation Scale are applicable to the tourism sector it should be noted that every tourist is different and so are the factors which they are motivated by. Swarbrooke & Horner (1999) suggest that there are six main motivating factors which influence the potential traveller. They are; personality, lifestyle, past experience, past life, perceptions and image. It is not likely that a potential traveller will be motivated by just one factor rather they are more likely to be influenced by a number of factors at any one time.

While there are theoretical frameworks 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.

As social creatures, people have the desire to be with others and this is known as the affiliation motivation. Affiliation refers to developing and maintaining relations with others (Handy 1993). Often spectators' association with sport is motivated by a desire to confirm their sense of identity. Donnelly and Young (1988) through their analysis of mountain climbers and rugby players, detail a complicated process of identifying construction and subculture affiliations. Researchers have noted that spectators can bring together people who otherwise would have little in common (Kutcher, 1983; Melnick, 1983) and it can also instil a feeling of national pride of a sense of community (Klein, 1984; Klein, 1991). Being with

others who enjoy the same activities is defined as social facilitation (McDonald, Milne, Hong, 2002). Spectators and participants alike are motivated by the opportunity of spending time with family and friends. Studies by Jamber (1999) and Weiss and Duncan (1992) show that peer and family relations in a sport situation could motivate participant performance.

Motivation of sport attendees

Sports spectators are estimated to be worth millions of dollars to the global economy 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 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 is little empirical evidence available on any of the theories proposed by the above researchers.

This 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 Web and view first hand the conditions for a snowboard competition and also to obtain competitive airfares to the destination. With improved transportation and reliable services the spectators are able to travel easily and very affordably. However, there is the need to find out what motivates people to become spectators and what motivates them to travel to attend these events.

Motivational theories have also been developed by Sloan (1985) and they are categorized as follows: salubrious effects theories, stress and stimulation seeking theories, catharsis and aggression theories, entertainment theories, and achievement-seeking theories. Sloan (1985) found that the *salubrious effects* theory suggests that involvement in sport is motivated by pleasure and increased physical and mental well-being whereas *stress and stimulation seeking theories* propose that when risk levels, stress and arousal fall below desired levels, organisms will seek opportunities to increase arousal intensity. Sloan (1985) further suggests that the *catharsis and aggression* theories indicate that participation in, or being a spectator or, acts of aggression will either result in a reduction of aggression levels, or alternatively, increase the aggression levels. The entertainment theories are linked to the attraction to sport based on the aesthetic and moral representations derived from the meaning of the sports event. Finally, achievement-seeking theories suggest that individuals fulfil their need for achievement through athletic competition.

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 et al.(1999) considers 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. 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) takes the general approach that people attend events to satisfy various personal needs.

Now that the definitions have been explained 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.

Social motives may include the opportunity to experience social interaction with others or of being part of the community spirit which takes place during an event. The event attendee may feel so moved by their social motives that they want to partake of good deeds and may become a volunteer at the event.

The second groups of motives are organisational motives. These generally include the need for status or recognition that they have been part of the event. For example, there is status and/or prestige connected with attending an event such as the Olympic Games. Organisational motives also include sponsorship or community support. Organisations want to appear to be supporting the community through their commitment to the event.

Physiological motives are the third group. These include the need for relaxation and or exercise depending on the type of event. The attendee of the event expects to eat, drink and to be entertained as part of the event process.

The final group is the personal motives. These motives can be different for each attendee. Some of the personal motives could include the need to seek new experiences from the everyday. It could be to fulfil an ambition to achieve something which the attendee has always wanted to do i.e. attend the Passion Play in Oberammergau, Germany.

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 shows that people travel because they are 'pushed' into making a travel decision by internal, psychological forces, and 'pulled' by the external forces of the destination attributes (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Uysal & Jurowski, 1993). Tourists obviously have their own internal and external reasons for travelling (McGee, Loker-Murphy & Uysal, 1996). However, these reasons could have positive or negative impacts on 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 alienated 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).

Further research by Iso-Ahola (1982) suggested that one perceived a leisure activity as having the potential to produce satisfaction for two reasons. The first reason being that the leisure activity may provide intrinsic rewards (such as mastery and competence) and secondly to escape from routine life. In 1987 Kippendorf conducted similar research and found that tourists are motivated by 'going away from rather than going toward something' and that tourist motivation is generally self-oriented.

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

This paper has discussed an overview on motivational theory and related it to 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 specific motivational research on this specific consumer group and build a typology which will provide marketers with up-to-date consumer information on this ever increasing market sector.

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