

Passive Sport Tourism: Building an Autonomous Profile

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Abstract

There have been a significant number of attempts to define sport tourism as well as to categorize its different expressions produced since the two massive leisure phenomena have collided in the early '80s. 'Passive' sport tourism has early been identified as one of the main pylons of the phenomenon examining travelling produced due to events' attending but literature has failed to produce concrete assumption on its size, nature and operation. Further confusion is produced when linking events organization with sport tourism, generating thus, the need to produce clear guiding theoretical guidance to facilitate organizers and policy makers to design effective developmental plans. The paper focuses on passive sport tourism revisiting the initial conceptual paths and building on the specific features that separate this specific tourism form. Concluding suggestions aim to produce distinct types of sport tourism operation, tourist behavior and map the dimensions for developing effective passive sport tourism developments.

Keywords: Sport Tourism, Passive Sport Tourism, Events Tourism, Events Organization

JEL Classification: Z320 Tourism and Development

1. Introduction

Since Glyptis' (1982) first attempt to examine any possible common grounds between sport and tourism till Weed and Bull's (2009) comprehensive analysis on the dimensions of the sport participation during the tourism experience, literature has produced enormous development to effectively cover all aspects identified. Hall (1992), for example, has early defined sport tourism as "travel for non-commercial reasons, to participate or observe sporting activities away from the home range". A significant volume of literature has grown around the attractive proposal of sports tourism appreciating its appeal, multidimensional character and potential still growing three decades later (Vrontou, 1999).

The two major pylons of the sport tourism expression, 'energetic' sport involvement during holidays and 'passive' participation through sport events' spectating have conquered literature for years building around them a variety of typologies to comprehend their nature (Stadeven & De Knop, 1990). The volume of literature produced over the last decades becomes the most important evidence of a solid tourism expression with certain characteristics, passionate behavior and dynamic nature (Gibson, 2006). However, efforts on defining 'passive sport tourism' since its theoretical identification seem unable to tackle effectively a synthetic leisure expression during holidays.

The 'energetic' form has been the protagonist due its appealing profile, its easiness to experience, the different tourist profiles it can accommodate and its smooth inclusion to the existing tourism industry mechanisms. Similarly, the other element of travelling associated with sport spectating has also been early recorded. Ancient Greeks expressed their desire to travel for numerous purposes such as religious or even sport participation (Miii, 1990). Romans also, have presented organized travelling to attend gladiator

competitions in a planned manner. Throughout centuries people have travelled to observe and participate in sport competitions and were largely recorded since the re-organization of the modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896 with European visitors attending Kallimarmaron Stadium to celebrate the 'Rebirth' of the Games (Kurtzman, 2005; Standeven, 1992). Proof of organized or sporadic sport spectating related travelling has been recorded unsystematically but vividly enough to elevate academic interest especially the last thirty years.

Passive consumption is the main characteristic of the second expression of sports tourism as presented in the relevant traditional parts of the literature (Weed & Bull, 2004). Spectating events, as well as participating has been largely recognized as being part of the sports tourism phenomenon (Hallmann, Kaplanidou & Breuer, 2010). Sports events' spectating suggests a specific tourism form where events become the main purpose for travelling. Within this expression, sporting events due to the significant economic returns and attractive image have been multi-dimensionally examined by authors. In addition, significant growth of sports museums has been recorded whether this suggests a random or spontaneous activity in the context of travelling or as the main purpose of visiting the area, often termed 'nostalgia' sport tourism. In addition, whether these sport history related attractions create a concrete expressed tourism demand or supplements an existing tourism offer; still it could generate tourism flow to a place wishing to create a certain image.

Furthermore, Weed (2008) analyzes this sport tourism type further studying "tourism behavior motivated or generated by Olympic-related activities" defined as "Olympic tourism", covering all activities planned to promote the Olympic host and city. His work in attempting to define the Olympic tourist lies in the assumption that these tourists are travelling to watch Olympic Games, as well as following athletes' Olympic preparation, or wishing to experience an event in a historic or new venue. However, the case of passive tourism lacks of in-depth underpinned analysis. Its nature, the uncertain segment borders and the difficulty of measuring relevant tourist behaviors have failed to produce solid features that policy planners could base a new tourism development.

2. Theoretical Considerations

Events as a developmental vehicle

Sports events, generally due to their economic magnitude tend to attract a significant number of research as well as the debate around the nature, size and capability to meet the organizers needs. Despite the present inadequate economic tools that would verify events undisputed role in economic development academic as well as cities' interest continue to grow (Getz, 2004). The greatest attention has been given in the need for estimating revenues directly linked with the staging of the events but most frequently the enormous costs associated with their long-term preparation.

Despite the fact that cost and benefits associated with large events have been examined by the academic community as well as the corporate sector, little confidence has been built over their long run economic effects as well as other societal developments and specific production enhancement. Roche (1994) stretched the need for highlighting the isolated "production, and the conditions of the production" surrounding events, and exploring "understanding of causation/production". Due to the liquid international environment, the global sharing of resources and the recent economic market uncertainty, the quantification of the impacts deriving from large events remains a difficult task (Sparrow, 1989). Multi – disciplinary research is needed to map Hall's (1989a) concerns on events' literature for neglecting "the philosophical, societal implications...and political nature of the events at both the macro and micro level for individual and institutional actors in the policy-making process".

Despite the difficulty in calculating positive events' impacts, literature increased dramatically on the attractiveness of mainly 'mega-events', due to their "size in terms of attendance, target market, level of public financial involvement, political effects, extent of television coverage, construction of facilities and impact on the economic and social fabric of the host community" (Getz, 1991). Ritchie (in Hall, 1992), remains a characteristic research piece where focus is given on the short-term impacts suggesting that "until a systematic analysis of the long-run impacts of such events is reported, all investments in hallmark events must be conservatively treated as short-term expenses". Research on the impacts of the 1988 Calgary Olympic Games, revealed that 'the recognition for Calgary' received 50% of for local people as one of the positive impacts for the city (Ritchie & Lyons, 1990 in Getz, 1991). Hall's (1989b;c) work on locating the reasons behind the decision to organize a significant event by an increased number of local actors has led to

categorization of three event types of motives. First comes the 'civic pride' for local people by promoting their cultural identity while "putting themselves on the tourist map through positive imaging". Secondly, creating the 'appropriate image', events become a positive long term social and cultural investment such as the production of increased tourism flows. The "changing nature of leisure activity" emphasizes the benefits communities gain by successful events' staging when their area is translated to an equally successful host destination. In addition, the psychological impacts, (Ritchie, 1984), are termed by Burns & Mules (1986) as the 'psychic income' for the host community as a "the general excitement created by the event, good self-opinions, the opportunity to have guests, home hosting, and the pleasure of experiencing the event".

Getz & Ritchie (1984 in Hall, 1989) attempt a guiding map of both positive and negative impacts deriving from events' staging, as the possible scenario for designing developmental strategies structured in six major areas, directly quoted here from their 'analysis of the possible impacts of Hallmark Events on host communities' as:

Economic: Positive - Increased expenditures, creation of employment, increase in labor supply, increase in standard of living. Negative - Price increases during event, real estate speculation, failure to attract tourists, investment, inadequate capital, and inadequate estimation of costs of event.

Physical/Environmental: Positive - Construction of new facilities, improvement of local infrastructure, preservation of heritage. Negative - Environmental damage, changes in natural processes, architectural pollution, destruction of heritage, overcrowding.

Social: Positive - Increase in permanent level of local interest and participation in types of activities associated with event, strengthening of regional values and traditions. Negative - Commercialization of activities which may be of a personal or private nature, modification of nature of event or activity to accommodate tourism, potential increase in crime, changes in community structure, social dislocation.

Psychological: Positive - Increase local pride and community spirit; increased awareness of non-local perceptions. Negative - Tendency toward defensive attitudes concerning host regions; cultural shock; high possibility of misunderstanding leading to varying degrees of host/visitor hostility.

Political: Positive - Enhanced international recognition of region and values, development of skills among planners. Negative - Economic exploitation of local population to satisfy ambitions of political elite, distortion of true nature of event to reflect values of political system of the day, failure to cope, inability to achieve aims; increase in administrative costs; use of event to legitimate unpopular decisions, legitimation of ideology and sociocultural reality.

Tourism: Positive - Increased awareness of the region as a travel / tourism destination, increased knowledge concerning the potential for investment and commercial activity in the region, creation of new accommodation and tourist attractions, increase in accessibility. Negative - Acquisition of a poor reputation as a result of inadequate facilities, improper practices or inflated prices, negative reactions from existing enterprises due to the possibility of new competition for local manpower and government assistance".

Events as passive sport tourism generator

Literature on events usually follows authors' scientific background and theoretical stance. A definition often met in theoretical work that of 'hallmark events' includes "major one time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short and/or long term. Such events rely for their success on uniqueness, status or timely significance to create interest and attract attention" (Ritchie in Hall, 1992). Getz (1991) also has previously suggested that "events have the potential to foster tourism, conservation, heritage, leisure, community development and ... can be catalysts for economic, and infrastructure development, and they can support urban renewal efforts". As expected for the present study this viewpoint seems to be approaching the scope of developing sport tourism and thus, sport events tourism. Despite the difficulty researchers face in estimating with accuracy the economic benefits of staging an event, overall the local image lift, national pride and build of a positive picture for a localities has not been doubted. Burns & Mules (1986), argument that the primary function of 'hallmark events' is "to provide the host community with an opportunity to secure a position of prominence in the tourism market for a short, well defined period of time", has been dominating the theoretical work for the last few decades but has not been underpinned by equivalent volume of numerical proof. To fairly assess theoretical work, relevant studies have to be revised leading to secure credible assumptions such as Pyo, Cook & Howell (1991) attempt to analyse the economic activity of the Summer Olympic tourist market as well Kang & Perdue's (1994) & Heinemann (1993) work on the long-term impact of special events. The

appreciation of the positive relation between events and development has grown despite the fact that “these high profile events face great difficulty in calculating the benefits derived from their organisation, due to uncertainties over the real long term economic effects, the true costs of staging events, and the full scope of financial activity during these events” (Vrondou, 1999).

‘Event tourism’ is the term often met in the literature to describe tourism developed around events, promoting “the role events can play in destination development” while focusing on “the maximisation of an event’s attractiveness to tourists” (Getz, 1991). Events’ spectating on one hand and sport participation during holidays on the other has admittedly been broadly defined as the sports tourism phenomenon (De Knop, 1990). Weed’s overall work the last twenty years has discriminated the sport tourism behavior further proposing that “it refers to tourism where the prime purpose of the trip is to take part in sports events, either as a participant or a spectator” (Weed, 2008). Since then, a great number of authors have built on the notion that events can be catalytically significant in attracting mass spectators and participants. This consideration has lifted questions regarding the size, nature and type of events that would be applicable for host areas to select in order to maximize positive impacts. “Events periodically organised at different places over regular and irregular time intervals (mega-events)” to “events periodically organised in certain places over regular intervals”, to ‘events organised periodically in a place at a regular time’ (Rooney, 1988) is one possible categorization that would guide the event selection, lacking however persuadable explanation. Supporting hosts’ decision on selecting the right event, Sparrow (1989) suggests two different types of events emphasizing the role local authorities can play in reaching positive impacts. ‘Indigenous’ events selected directly by local actors and ‘adventitious’ events opposed to localities by foreign decision-making centers leaving little room for local say. Murphy (1985) agrees to the above directly linking local decisions to analogous tourism development. “Events tourism with its emphasis on communities, provides a ready-made basis for the development of a sustainable approach towards tourism” (Hall, 1992).

Relevant work is “worthy of recognition by national, regional and city level governments concerned, whether for city reimagining, economic impetus or tourism development, with assessing the benefits of event-staging and particularly sports event strategies” (Vrondou, 1999). Getz’s (1991; 1994; 2008) has offered valuable guidance through his conceptual work producing a framework for considering tourism through major and minor special events suggesting that ‘events tourism’ is linked with “an integral and major part of tourism development and marketing strategies”. He often highlights the importance of smaller scale events, where visitors’ needs for cultural experience can also be satisfied, notion that can be crucial on choosing the applicable sport event size in a specific area. On contrary, mega-events can offer international significance, when they are effectively handled to spread and expand tourism operation, through a positive image creation.

Getz (1991) records the crucial dimensions in selecting significant scale events, in the process of considering events as a catalytic strategy for local economic and tourism development and thus, in our case passive sports tourism. Three areas of consideration become his main proposal, namely, “the organizers’ perspective” as produced by “internal management process”, and secondly, “the organization and its environment” where organizers should calculate benefits based on their local physical and cultural resources in order to produce a specific tourism offer. Thirdly, “the community development perspective” where Getz places significant attention in the role of the community over the administration of the events in order to achieve a series of positive outcomes such as “community control of the event”, “satisfying community needs”, “fostered leadership and inter organisational networks”, and “potential for social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts”.

Developing our understanding further the present analysis employs Weed & Bull’s (2012) ‘Sports Participation Model’ that aims to group motivation and behaviors of sport tourists in total and guide a relevant tourism offer by the relevant producers. This synthesis of theoretical paradigms and Weed & Bull’s model-based analysis becomes the main focus of the study aiming to guide the mapping of ‘passive sport tourists’ or ; ‘sport spectating events tourists’ hopefully consulting the appropriate decisions over events selection and hosting. Revisiting Jackson & Reeves’ (1996) initial ‘Sport Tourism Demand Continuum’ and identifying weaknesses in recognizing the importance of sports tourism placed on people, even when levels of participation are low, Weed and Bull defend their model on re-estimating the importance given on a sports tourism proposal by people travelling. Actually, they evidently accept the fact that despite the obvious elite – driven end of their triangle significant sports-related tourism activity can be generated at lower levels of tourist interest.

3. Methodology

The study reviews 'passive sport tourism' as one of the two theoretical components of the sport tourism phenomenon. The origins and development of sport tourism and specifically, passive sport tourism are identified through both literature reviews and typological analysis. A conceptual analysis of the specific sport tourism type and crucial points in tourism studies are utilized as a vehicle for stimulating academic interest, while supporting tourism policy implementation. The main purpose of the study is based on an identified need in sport tourism research that the theoretical continuation of the phenomenon demands clarified conceptual assumptions. These assumptions are here derived from a plethora of theoretical perspectives that have evolved through time in need for clarifying the subject further.

The main focus is placed on the conduct of a theory analysis of the available definitions and paradigms in order to examine the extent to which these concepts can be instrumentally useful for the clarification of the passive sport tourism field. More specifically, the study bases the analysis on Weed & Bull's (2004) largely appreciate "sports participation model" regarding sports tourism to identify the position, nature and adaptation of passive sport tourism in relation to the dimensions as suggested in the model. A review of available definitions and theories lead to re-examination of theory and formulation of restructured body of knowledge regarding passive sport tourism. The analysis offered in the present study is intended to facilitate clarification of puzzled passive sport tourism, but also to support the development of comprehensive mega-matrix of sport tourism overall as an autonomous tourism expression.

4. Passive Sport Tourism Theoretical Extension

Visiting a place, in order to watch sporting events and positioning sports competition as the primary purpose for travelling, remains our main definitional base. The question however remains regarding the morphology, extent and operation of events tourism that goes beyond recorded visitors' numbers and reaches long run effects on local tourism and image boosting overall. In an effort to examine the autonomous character of passive sport tourism the study engages Weed & Bull's (2004) comprehensive 'Sport Tourism Participation Model' as having the capacity to base an analysis on the spectrum and behavioral nature of sport related tourism activity. Levels of 'participation' in a sport tourism related activity increase along the horizontal axis while the vertical axis describes the second determining dimension, as the 'importance' placed on a sport tourism activity. The model demonstrates the level of importance placed on a sport tourism activity from high to negative, where at the 'driven' end of the scale both participation and significance are high. The model's theoretical 'triangle' of participation proposes the "size which corresponds to the number of sports tourists at each particular level" (Weed, 2008).

In relation to the passive sport tourists, namely those tourists attracted by the spectating side of the sport activity the study suggests that can be found at all range of the model from lower levels of 'incidental' participation with little importance to highest levels of 'driven' where importance and participation motives to travel are high such as visiting the Olympics. The latter, is obviously a distinct travelling mode where travel motive is directly linked with the sports function, in our case of passive tourism, watching an important event where area appeal and culture becomes secondary.

At the lower end of the horizontal axis, theoretically, interest for participation is limited leading to sporadic sport tourism expression, thus traveling to visit an event or a stadium spontaneously. However, this segment remains crucial for the case of events spectating presenting high visiting numbers in comparison to other sport tourism expression i.e. energetic sport tourism. The volume of participants may considered to be low at the 'occasional' profile at an active holiday product consumption but when considering it in the sphere of events' attendance that could be calculated to significant numbers for the host community.

Examining the base of these two axes, incidental visits to a sports event present a significantly larger pool due to the numbers most likely to participate to an affordable and approachable local event if met during holidays. This capability reveals a critical element for our research area of passive tourism, the fact that "there are a much greater number of 'incidental' sports tourists than there are 'driven' sports tourists" (ibid). Adding to these assumptions the appeal of the local image could determinately affect the nature of the event organizers could select, contributing to an enhanced and attractive tourism offer and experience. This fact becomes a huge driving force for host communities to re-plan and redirect the total of local resources in order to build on an event that combines the dynamic of sport competition along with the local idiosyncrasy. "With the exception of the elite athlete, high levels of sports ability and performance are not a pre-requisite for even the most committed of sports tourists" (Weed, 2008). This suggests that despite the fact that organizers have

to implement event requirements based on sport rather than tourism planning decisions are now faced with the challenge to reconsider any event level from small to medium size not only as an obligatory process but also as a local tourism development scenario. Developing this logic further, one could suggest that this enhancement of local sport events could lead to the lift along the participation as well as the importance triangle. Enriched sports events where besides sport concern a visitor can experience a multi-interest tourism experience is directly associated with increased interest towards visiting an area. Isolating the group of spectators at the 'driven' level that travel to a significant event it is difficult to meet large numbers. Could be driven by the importance of their sport interest and present limited local attachment therefore present a smaller and uncertain group despite the fact that the event each self can be of great international importance such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup. Pyo, Cook & Howell (1991) attempt to measure economic activity of the 'Summer Olympic tourist market' have reached the assumption that mega events have been proved "unable to attract the expected number of tourists".

Still, localities seem to be more attracted to the mega event prestige than events with more dedicated audiences. Mega events have enjoyed great positive attention by literature leaving little room for doubt even between the skeptics. Image boosting with lasting impact seems the undisputed result that puts more cities in bidding phase. But what is the size of the segment of tourists following mega events? What is the level of loyalty they present since there is at least a four year period between similar events? How does the cost to attend a mega event affect the creation of a larger audience? There are very basic questions to be answered in future studies to enhance knowledge in the largely complex passive sport tourism decision and behavior field.

Local planners doubting the importance of small scale events often miss the opportunity to attract the 'occasional' sport tourists despite the fact that research has revealed that if offered the opportunity they would attend a sporting event in the context of enriching their leisure time during holidays. Katsoni & Vrondou (2016) revealed a significant 25.5% of the total of tourists visiting a peripheral region of Greece who "find interest in watching sporting events during their vacation". Obviously, more studies are required to verify size, nature and characteristics of this expression but it suggests proof of what Weed & Bull (2004) term 'occasional' participation at least in the passive sport tourism side of spectating events. The same study comes to verify Weed & Bull's (2004) suggestion that large numbers of attendance are most likely to be found at the lower side of the participation model that at the prestigious higher end.

5. Concluding Remarks

Despite the growth of work in this area in recent years, there is a need for more substantial research examining the potential of this type of sports tourism to maximize the identified positive benefits and for its adoption within long-term cultural and economic regeneration planning. The diversification of segments met in this passive sport tourism form has led to a broad theoretical output suggesting a fruitful future research area. The present study aims to set the basis of clarification within the different passive sport tourism aspects that hopefully guide future developments.

Uncertainty still lays into whether large scale events attract equivalent visitors' flows or if low or medium size sporting events manage to become an important addition to the tourism experience as well as the level of loyalty presented by visitors. Future research should estimate the characteristics of passive sport tourists at all levels of participation from incidental to driven in terms of size, profile, spending behavior and 'intrinsic' motives leading to decisions.

Working in parallel, the local or national organizers' perspectives and motives have to be inserted in the equation in order to produce applicable developments. The local actors' goals towards creating a new attractive local image lies heavily on the appropriate sporting event selection in terms of competition size and level, international or local appeal and possible economic and positive benefits. However, this decision has to be enriched by knowledge on the tourism idiosyncratic behavior met amongst visitors moving along the crucial axes of significance placed and the intention for participation in this experience in order to effectively produce solid passive sport tourism offers.

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