A Wave in Time – The Sports Tourism Phenomena

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“The spirit of travel has lived on down the ages.” (Bhatiz, 1991) Throughout “man has travelled in search of new places, new lands, new cultures and experiences.” (Laverty, 1989) As such, there is little doubt that travel “has, and continues to be, a focus for development.” (Kinnaird and Hill, 1984) “Successive changes in transportation, technology, including the steamboat, railway, automobile and airplane, coupled with a myriad of socioeconomic transformations, have enabled growing numbers of people to travel.” (Heath & Wall, 1992)

Human behaviour can be understood by determining the motives, drives, or concerns which are being satisfied. A “motive” can be explained as a person’s basic disposition to reach for or strive towards a particular goal or combination of goals. A “drive” can be conceived as an inner factor predisposing one to react either positively or negatively towards some particular object or act. A “concern”, on the other hand, deals with a person’s commanding role to become involved. (Bhitz, 1991)

“Throughout history, man has been impelled to travel because of sport – the motive, the drive, or the concern. In effect, in the last decade or so, “there has been an increasing participation in a wide variety of sporting activities.” (Baker, 1988) Visitors, be they participants or onlookers, travel to places primarily to indulge and satiate in a sporting environment.

Sport

“Sport derives its root meaning from ‘disport’ meaning to divert oneself. It carried the original implication of people diverting their attention from the rigours and pressures of everyday life”. (Edwards, 1973) Today, however, sport is often anything but diversion to its active and passive participants.

Sport can be defined in many ways and from different viewpoints or distinctive perspectives. As definitions are mere tools, serving or assisting to specify some level of precision and characteristics, the following have been selected to demonstrate sports activity as a part of our social world:

“Sport is viewed as a game occurrence.” (Hart & Birell, 1981)

Sport is a diversion, amusement or recreation; a pleasant pastime which can be pursued in the open air as hunting, fishing, skiing, or trekking. (Zeigler, 1984)

“Informal sport is free in that participation is totally voluntary. (Chu, 1982)
[Competitive] “sport is an institutionalized competitive activity that involves vigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by individuals where participation is motivated by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.” (Coakley, 1982)

[Competitive sport consist of] “physical activities which involves the coordination of large muscle groups which have a set of universally recognized rules and which produce a winner and a loser.” (Coakley, 1982)

[Recreational sport is characterized by] “playfulness involved and enjoyment of play that serves the primary reason for participation.” (Chu, 1982)

An imperative feature of competitive sport is that activities, classified as such, are formally structured to a degree and organized within a context of formal and explicit rules of behaviour and procedures. Salient features include some level of competition and physical exertion. In addition, competitive sport, being the formal, rational, goal directed endeavour, provide or allow little opportunity for fantasy or make believe – either to or for the participant or spectator. (Edwards, 1973)

An imperative feature of recreational sport is that activities are informally structured with limited organization in a physically-oriented setting and voluntary participation context. In addition, recreation sport is self-directed activity which can be challenging to the individual participant and not necessarily competitive in nature with few, if any, spectators in attendance.

**Purpose of Sport**

Sport represents an universal need. To truly understand the purpose of sporting activity, a description of such activity undertaking is of importance:

“A sport contest is a voluntary, agreed upon, human event in which one or more human participants oppose at least one other human to seek the mutual appraisal of the relative abilities of all participants to move mass in space and time by utilizing bodily moves which exhibit developed motor skills, physiological and psychological endurance and socially approved tactics and strategy.” (Fraleigh, 1984)

For the athlete-participant, the mastery of the body in particular skill development is implicitly essential. To the spectator, the degree of skill perfection and discipline demonstrated by the athlete becomes a symbol of perfection, admiration and success. Evidently, these universal needs will be felt differently and in various measures due to a variety of reasons – be they intellectual, emotional, psychological, social or other. (Schwartz, 1973)

Sports purpose has been interpreted in terms of deep satisfaction it provides humans in their realization of the desire to be self complete through testing and extensions of the body. Recreational sport has many unique opportunities for individual/group participation which may include such factors as stimulation, challenge, self-fulfilment and diversion.

Competitive sports also have special allurement for spectators – for these people share a common identity with the participants. In effect, “spectators are most important to sport today than they have ever been in the past.” (Vinoker, 1988)

The revolution in communications makes greater numbers aware of sport competitions, sports activities and recreational sports opportunities. Governments use sporting events to political advantage as sport can strengthen identification to the nation – with positive consequences. (Vinoker, 1988)
In the past decade or so, sport has become a social phenomenon of great importance and magnitude and, perhaps complexity.

“Sport permeates any number of levels of contemporary society, and it touches upon and deeply influences such disparate elements as status, race relations, business life, automotive design, clothing styles, the concept of hero, languages and ethical values” (McPherson and Curtis, 1989)

Stevens and Nixon in “Sportwissenschaft”, through analysis of literature and conceptive perspective, isolated five basic functions of sport, namely:

A. The socio-emotional function, which operates at the level of the individual and is concerned with the socio-psychological stability of the individual.
B. The socialization, which also operates at the level of the individual, and is concerned with the inculcation of cultural mores and beliefs, and with the development of personality characteristics.
C. The integrative function, which operates at the level of collectivity, and is concerned with the harmonious integration of disparate individuals into, and their identification with, the collectivity.
D. The political function, which is predominately operative at the level of the Nation State, is concerned with the function of sport as a political instrument.
E. The social mobility function, which has concerns at the level of the individual, the collectivity, and the Nation State, deals specifically with the movement of individuals between socially defined categories. (Stevenson and Nixon, 1972)

Henry Edwards, in examining the functions of sport, suggested “that the seriousness with which so many people treat the subject indicates that something more than ‘entertainment’ is at stake.” (Edwards, 1973)

Sports build character, teach values, encourage healthy competition, provide outlets for aggression and promote international friendship and understanding. The Modern Olympics, re-established by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, was founded in the belief that sport brought people together and in doing so contributed to a better understanding between peoples and nations. (Bannister, 1981) This was in evidence during the Seoul Games of 1988 which acted as a “catalyst” to accentuate progress towards positive country relationships. (Kurtzman, Zauhar, Ahn & Choi, 1993)

Generally speaking, the contribution of sports, to the active and passive participant is widely recognized and accepted. The nature and content of sports does vary. (Butler, 1950) These fluctuations are dependent upon location, interests, facilities, traditions, climate, type of organization or entrepreneurial enthusiasm and the like. And, there are the different possible codifications of sport ranging from individual activities to dual experiences and team enticements. (Anderson, Brown, Pooley, Rhodes, Robertson & Schrodt, 1989) (Research Unit, 1994) Other differentiations are contingent on the quality levels of sport experiences – informal, formal, recreational or competitive.

Another approach to the question of sport deals strictly with culture and culture affectations. As such, bull or cock fighting could be considered as definable and acceptable to certain cultures of the world, yet, non-appropriate and not inclusive in other parts of the globe. The same may be said for ice fishing, dog racing, horseshoes, dance, etc. Oftentimes, the types of sport enjoyed and appreciated resides in religious cults, traditions, mores and inborn impulse and basic needs. (Olivova, 1984)
Tourism

“People’s desire for travel is related to their immediate socio-physical environments and the appeal of the beyond.” (Witt & Moutinho, 1984) And this travel drive is an economic, environmental and sociological force of global proportions. However, there is “considerable debate surrounding the meaning of travel in terms of tourism. Much of this debate is concerned with the desirability of employing definitions based upon the activities that are engaged in or on the experience that are derived from participation.” (Stevenson & Nixon, 1972)

“Tourism usually denotes form of activity that take place beyond a specific distance from the home or in a geographic administrative jurisdiction different from one’s place of permanent residence.” (Heath & Wall, 1992) It involves the motivations, experiences and expectations of people travelling – the tourists. It enwraps the expectations, adjustments and tolerances of the residents or hosts. And, it engages numerous organizations, agencies and institutions in catering to guest needs, wants and desires. (Heath & Wall, 1992) Etymologically, “the word ‘tour’ is derived from the Latin ‘tonare’ and the Greek ‘tornos’ meaning the movement around a central point. Hence, when the word ‘tour’ and the suffixes ‘ist’ and ‘ism’ are combined, they suggest the action of movement around a circle.” (Weiler & Hall, 1992)

In effect, the first definition appeared in the Dictionnaire Universel du XIX siecle in 1876 – defining a tourist as a person who travels out of curiosity and idleness. In addition, tourism has been “variously defined or refined by governments and academics to related fields such as economics, sociology, cultural anthropology and geography.” (Laverty, 1989)

The following are but some additional interpretations describing the scope and meaning of tourism:

[Tourism is] “the sum of the phenomena and the relationships arising from the interactions of tourists, business suppliers, host governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors.” (McIntosh, Goeldner & Ritchie, 1995)

[Tourism can be construed] “as the science, art and business of attracting and transporting visitors, accommodating them and graciously catering to their needs and wants.” (McIntosh, Goeldner & Ritchie, 1995)

[Tourism is] “a means by which [peoples] may know and understand one another; human understandings being so essential in the world at this time.” (Mill & Morrison, 1985)

As an exponent of leisure and mobility ... tourists variously seeking culture and pleasure according to the delights of their time. (Feifer, 1985)

It also has been suggested that tourism is a study of people away from their usual habitat, of an industry which responds to their needs and of the impacts that both (the people and the industry) have on the hosts socio-cultural, economic and physical environments. (Theobold, 1984)

Statisticians and market analysts have sought better descriptors for more accurate accounting of tourism visitations. (Travel and Tourism Data, 1989) The World Tourism Organization has developed a definition that states:

(a) Domestic tourists are visitors from within the country who stay a minimum of 24 hours and not more than one year for pleasure, recreation, sport, business, visiting friends and relatives, mission, conference, health, studies, and religion.
International tourists are residents of one country visiting another for many or all of the same purposes as domestic tourists.

The Governments of Canada and the United States have an agreement to include resident travellers, non-resident travellers and other travellers in their tourism statistics – incorporating both the business and pleasure visitors. As such, all travellers are statistically defined as tourists. The European Economic Union has also looked into the matter of uniformity in their tourism data gathering processes. (Gunn, 1988)

Other levels of government, community and regional agencies have utilized different approaches for calculating visitor statistics. The use of a well defined geographical boundaries in a tourist definition is critical (Metro Region, as example) when identifying the starting point for visitor measurement. A time dimension may also be considered (day-trippers, over-nighters) in determining visitor status.

**Purpose of Tourism**

The generally perceived importance of tourism for economic development reasons cannot be disputed. Statistical evidence depicts a remarkable increase in the number of international travellers from 25 million in 1950 to 425 million in 1990 (World Tourism Organization, 1993) – and over and above this figure in 1997. As such, tourism is a significant strategy for capital accumulations. Furthermore, developments in international tourism markets – as well as domestic and national tourism – is increasing in many countries. (Kinnaird & Hill, 1984)

The reason for travel may be different from the purpose. For instance, “one may need a rest” or “the advertising was pervasive” or simply “to accompany a friend”. Mere explanations do not necessarily explain the intention or resolve for travel.

The following “Purpose of Travel Classifications” are based on current practices and recommendations from the World Tourism Organization and from United Nations documentation:

**LEISURE**

(a) Seaside or Lake
(b) Countryside, mountains
(c) Culture (festival, theatre, opera as a spectator)
(d) Carnival (as a spectator)
(e) Sports events (as a spectator)
(f) Spa holiday
(g) Convalescing
(h) Rest and recuperation
(i) Honeymoon, romance
(j) Gambling
(k) Shopping

**Touring, Sightseeing**

(a) Based on one center destination
(b) One country – based on more than one center
(c) Several countries
Sports (Active)
(a) Winter sports
(b) Boating (yacht, barge, etc)
(c) Diving (scuba, etc.)
(d) Events (Olympics, World Cup)
(e) Hunting, riflery, fishing
(f) Safari
(g) Golf
(h) Other

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)
(a) Visits to immediate family, (dependents) of nationals resident abroad
(b) Other home leave of nationals resident abroad
(c) Other VFR holiday to “ethnic homeland”
(d) Holidays primarily to visit friends or relatives in other countries

Special Interest Holidays
(a) Pilgrimage, religion
(b) Adventure (eg. mountaineering, desert trek)
(c) Hobby (eg. bird watching, history, music)
(d) Summer camp (Gunn, 1988)

Cruises
(a) Multiple destinations
(b) Single destinations
(c) Casino cruises
(d) Sports cruises
(e) Ocean voyages
(f) River Trips
(g) Other

An important part of tourism psychology is the fact that people usually travel for more than one reason. In effect, one motivator may be reinforced by another. Such motivators can be divided into four categories:

(a) Physical motivators related to physical rest, sport participation, health, etc.
(b) Cultural motivators associated with music, art, heritage, etc.
(c) Interpersonal motivators directed to making new friends, visiting relatives and the like.
(d) Status and prestige motivators concerning ego needs and personal development. (McIntosh, Goeldner & Ritchie, 1995)

The key to understanding tourist motivation is to see vacation travel as a satisfier of needs and wants. Motivators occur when an individual wants to satisfy a need. A study of travel literature indicates that travel motivations fit well into the Maslow “Hierarchy of Needs” model.
And if inclinations are sufficiently strong to imply action or movement, consequent decisions are made to satisfy personal needs to a certain degree and within specific parameters.

Sports Tourism – A Partnership

Today, sport is regarded as the world’s largest social phenomenon. And, tourism is predicted to become the world’s biggest industry early in the next century. As such, the points of contact between sport and tourism have increased dramatically – the mutual benefits for both are quite perceptible and their relationships very compatible. (Olivova, 1984) In fact the term “sports tourism” has been coined to better understand the use of sport as a touristic endeavour. Moreover, in the last decade or so, there have been philosophical and entrepreneurial developments that attribute to such a “marriage” actuality.

(a) The “Sports Tourism” phenomenon has been exhibited, manifested and marketed through and by world-wide sporting events such as the Olympic Games, Super Championships, and the like. (Info Sport International, 1989)

(b) The potential significance of the massive nature of “sports tourism” produces an upsurge in “spectatoritis” and prevalency in “hero worshipping” and stalwarts. (Schwartz, 1973)

(c) In North America and other developed countries, the concept of health through physical activities at all ages sparked renewed interest in a variety of sporting activity participation. (Bhatiz, 1991)

(d) There exist important affiliations between sport and tourism in promoting domestic, national and international friendship and understanding amongst individuals, groups and communities. (Kurtzman, Zauhar, Ahn & Choi, 1993)

(e) Future projections, with respect to tourism trends, indicate a tendency pattern of breaking free time into a series of blocks, thereby permitting a variety of experiential stays within a single year. (Zauhar, 1994)

Different forms of tourism can be defined in terms of the kind of leisure mobility undertaken by the tourist and may be identified as types:

(adventure tourism (reality experiences)
(incentive tourism (productive motivational technique)
(cultural tourism (vestige of life-styles)
(heritage tourism (glories of the past)
(marine tourism (water oriented activities)
(festival tourism (celebrations of diverse festivities)
(leisure tourism (away from work time)
(ecotourism (experiences of alien sceneries)
(educational tourism (site visitation leaning)
(wilderness tourism (relative to nature)
(sports tourism (centered physical activity)

Oftentimes, sports tourism is categorized directly or indirectly through a value system related to economic impact. The primary qualifier for the determination of sports tourism activities is destination focus directed to its sporting activities, through marketing strategies and provision of a sports programming milieu. On the other hand, tourism destinations whose sports activities are “peripheral” to their focus and...
marketing efforts are considered to offer sports programs and activities solely for a “supportive” role acting as a “retention” factor for the respective destination. As such, it is also imperative to provide a foundation for defining “sports tourism” through the nomenclature of actual sporting activities, rather than by philosophical definitions. Thus sport and tourism are distinct in that there are several differences in the types of activities, modes of transportation, location of experiences, and “polarization” appeal and allurement to and for the tourist. On the other hand, these approaches do have a degree of similarity in the fact that each category is sports related with an enthusiastic touristic followership, be it participative or non-participative. These relationships have to existing sporting tourism activities can be categorized into five unique areas viz. resorts, cruises, attractions, tours and events. (Research Unit, 1995)

**Sports Tourism Categories Identified**

**Sports Tourism Attractions:**

This category refers to those attractions providing “energizing power” with sports related physical activities as their principle focus. Such attractions are usually on-location in places within regions, country sides or urban settings providing the tourist things to see and do where personal and social expectations are realized to varying degrees. (Gunn, 1988). Attractions could be natural (parks, mountains, wildlife), or man made (museums, buildings). (Coltman, 1989)

General characteristics represented in this core area of sports tourism product include visitations to:

A. State-of-the-art sport facilities and/or unique sports facilities which generally house sports happenings such as stadiums, arenas, bowls, domes, etc.
B. Museums dedicated to sport heritage such as those at Ancient Olympia in Greece.
C. Sport heritage sites dedicated to founders, developers, special events such as the Birthplace of the Inventor of Basketball.
D. Halls Walls of Fame dedicated to and honouring particular sport heros, leaders and organizers.
E. Colossal and unique sport facilities such as water slides, summer ski jumps, bungee jumping stations.
F. Sport Theme Parks such as Disney World of Sports.
G. Sport Shows and Demonstrations such as Tall Ships visitations, aquatic performances.

In other situations, some of the visitor attractions lead to participation usage and interactive involvement. In addition, this attraction area offer multiple opportunities for photographic and artistic expression.

**Sports Tourism Resorts:**

This categorization represents well planned and integrated resort complexes or villas with sports as their primary focus and marketing strategy. In many situations, these vacation centers have high standard facilities and services available to the sport tourist. (Smith, 1989)
Generally speaking this resort category offers:

A. Teachers, trainers, coaches with a great deal of expertise and personal visibility.
B. High-tech instructional apparatus for practice and game play.
C. Opportunities to compete and practice fundamentals, fine tuning and comprehensive strategy.
D. Areas, sites and facilities for general sports activities

Some of these resort sites focus on specific, highly developed skills; some cater to recreational sporting activities. However, installations may vary from site to site extending from “high level” international standards to campground services.

**Sports Tourism Cruises:**

Although ship construction suffered the slowest evolution in technology, cruise ships are becoming more and more to resemble hotels and resorts. (Travel and Tourism Research Association, 1986) This cruise category designates boat trips that have sports or sporting activities as their principal market strategy. Some ships may have unique sports installations as well as sports celebrities on board. The use of watercraft for sporting activities (as example, yachting, sailing, barging and the like) is also an important dimension to this category.

General characteristics enhanced by this cruise area are as follows:

A. Special transportation for tourists from one land location to another providing opportunities for golf, tennis, snorkelling, etc. in unique and varied water environments.
B. High profile sports personalities on board sharing antidotes, discussions, and coaching opportunities for tourists.
C. Provision of on-board facilities for physical activities, sports competitions, and/or modified games.
D. Hosting of a Sports Conference with experts offering seminars and special sessions.

There also exists Cruise-and-Drive programs, whereby tourist private vehicles are boarded to facilitate transportation to desired sports destinations or centers. On the other hand, Fly-and-Cruise Programs provide both air and sea transportation to distinct sports environments.

Another sports cruise example consists of “classy and serene-oriented ambiance” of a cruise ship combined with the “intimacy and eliteness” of a private yacht. (Travel and Tourism Research Association, 1986)

**Sports Tourism Tours:**

“Every firm providing goods and services to tourists is constrained by the demand functions of its customers.” (McIntosh, Goeldner & Ritchie, 1995) Some of these companies cater to common interest groups, and arrange tours and touring venues with sporting activities as their prime focus. In effect, such groupings range from incentive travel with sports interest arrangements to sport team travel with chartered
travel and accommodations. Sports tourism tours may also be self-guided or organized depending upon access, location and nature of the activity.

In effect, sports tourism tours characteristically consist of:

A. Specific visitations to one or more sport attractions over a specified number of days (sport museums, halls of fame, stadia, theme parks, etc.).

B. Combined visits to sports attractions and major sports events (heritage sites, walls of fame, wave tech pools and sports event).

C. Attendance at a specific number of major sports events (professional hockey and basketball, in one or more locations).

D. Participation in conferences, workshops, clinics, forums, and attendance at major sports events (Scientific Congress prior to the Olympic Games).

E. Tours related to the natural characteristics of a region pursued by tourists for aesthical and/or physical reasons (trekking, cycling and canoeing).

In essence, this category may be indicative of “novelty seekers” and “explorers” in pursuit of authentic and quality sports tourism experiences.

Sports Tourism Events:

Sports tourism events refer to those sports activities that attract tourists of which a large percentage are spectators. Furthermore, these sports tourism events have the potential to attract non-resident media, technical personnel, athletes, coaches and other sports officials.

In some instances, sports tourism events may have a cultural association – as example the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival which transformed from a semi-religious ceremony into an international sports tourism event. (Sofield & Sivan, 1994).

Tourism Hallmark Events (Ritchie, 1984) and Mega Events (Getz, 1991) have also been associated with this category as well as the Olympic Games, World Cup and Major Regional, National and International Contests/Competitions.

Other distinctions that qualify a sport event to be touristic in nature are:

A. Tourists travelling distances to see present and past star athletes or winner teams.

B. Tourists attending or participating in sports activities, formally planned or informally organized.

In a good number of situations, sports tourism marketing is geared for the high level skill activities of a sports tourism event as well as for economic impacts derived by the host community and surrounding regions.

Impacts of Sports Tourism

Sport tourism activities have generated enormous economic impacts – not considering the social/cultural and intellectual benefits of tourism. A study of North American Convention Tourism Bureaus showed that sport accounted for 25% of the tourism receipts. (Research Unit, 1994) In a 1994 study, analysis of twenty-two “Tourism Event Schedules” from seven world geographic regions indicated that sports tourism activities represented 34% of the events.
This same study also showed that 42% of the scheduled days were sports tourism related. (Research Unit, 1994) Accordingly, the Sports Tourism Index (STIX) calculated that the direct contribution of sports tourism activities to overall tourism equated to 32%. And, based on growing domestic and international travel, forecasts for the year 2005 show that the gross output of tourism worldwide will reach 7.9 trillion dollars. (World Travel and Tourism Council, 1994)

**Sports Tourism Settings**

Sports tourism activities could take place in urban and non-urban settings, indoors or outdoors, in all types of climatic conditions and in all seasons. Furthermore, interest in sporting activities may encompass a multiplicity of motivators – for the participant, the spectator or both. (Weiler & Hall, 1992) And, touristic typology accounts for the explorer, the elite, the off-beat, the unusual, the mass and the charter. (Smith, 1989)

Statistical evidence depicts a remarkable and progressive increase in international travellers. This tendency indicates that the demand for international travel, linked to major indicators of lifestyle change and opportunities, will continue to expand. (Kinnaird & Hill, 1984) In this sense, the world has shrunk, not only in size but in accessibility – of time and distance and comfort, and lifestyles and culture.

Different settings within sports tourism can be classified according to the situational milieu of the experience and may be identified according to:

A. cultural setting  
B. natural setting  
C. man-made setting  
D. social setting  
E. economic setting

**A Wave in Time – The Sports Tourism Phenomena**

The following Model illustrates the philosophical and integral elements of sports tourism currently exploited in societal and global milieu:

(a) The Hub represents the main focus of sports tourism around which the respective physical activity be it recreational, competitive or both, evolve.

(b) The Spokes illustrate the five different sports tourism categories according to specific touristic endeavours.

(c) The Spoke Interspaces demonstrate five potential settings in which the sport tourism activity, for the participant or spectator or both, could take place.

(d) The Outer Rim indicates different building blocks that potentially could and do contribute to the overall development of sports tourism.

(e) The Roadway suggests motivation elements which impel tourists, be they participant, spectator or both, in varying degrees and different directions to be involved in specific sports offerings and opportunities.

The Model depicts movement on a Wavy Roadway over time; whereby, each sports tourist can adapt and adjust according to his/her needs, interests and desires.
Figure 1 A Wave in Time – The Sports Tourism Phenomena Model.

References


Fox, Richard M. 1982. The So-called Unreality of Sport. Quest 34(1);1–11.


