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SPORT TOURISM: A BUSINESS INHERENCY OR AN INNATE COMPULSION?

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ABSTRACT

Human interactions are usually reconcilable by certain mutually acceptable actions--that is by interpretation and balance between stimulus and response. As such, specific or symbolic behaviours give meaning to Sport Tourism. Conditions springing from actions take into account opportunities, means, demands, discomforts, impositions and the like. Decisions are based on the assessment of these factors--be it by the individual, by the collectivity or societal quest. Furthermore, decisional behaviours are defined or structured in terms of business procedures, holistic conditions or mediated interpretations--in essence, an interactionist approach to Sport Tourism.

SPORTS TOURISM INHERENCIES

The popularity of sport, today, is widespread. The most impressive evidence of this general interest is chiefly the allocation "of a large amount of time, energy and money to participation or sponsorship or both". (33, p. 4) Furthermore, the array of

publications devoted to sports, athletes and playing environments substantiates its relevance to livelihood. (33, p. 6) Above all, judging by the emotional displays of both the active and passive participants, the pretence that sport is unimportant or non-affective is simply not true. (17, p. 1) Thus, sport, as a major impetus on societal institutions had and still has significant consequences on any society.

RELATIONSHIPS

The sport tourism relationship can be studied through the application of four distinctive concepts:

Firstly, organizational structures, teams and athletes exist mainly to be rival--playing to win. Even in recreational sport pursuits, the combative spirit, in varying degrees, entices people--participants to value the rivalry aspect.

Secondly, individual sport activities, having self-development as its primary objective, inherently create a self-challenge, be

it physical, intellectual, social and/or environmental.

Thirdly, for the sports spectator, symbolically or other, sports competitions provide opportunities for expression of sentiment, appreciation, individual and/or collective identification.

Fourthly, the heritage dimension alluring sports enthusiasts to nostalgic memorabilia, historical markers, and renowned facilities verify cultural linkages.

A good example of healthy rivalry could be easily identified with the 1998 Soccer World Cup where both the active participants and spectators demonstrated their country affinities while appreciating each others skill capabilities. (35) The self development concept can be exemplified by a mountain climber overcoming natural terrain difficulties in striving for the zenith. (28) Spectators, in identifying themselves with athletes, share intensely the emotions of winning and/or losing. (38) The most recently constructed Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland, in attracting visitors, well fulfils the heritage dimension regarding sports tourism relationships. (39)

INTRA POSITIONS

Emotions, sentiments and expressions can be harnessed. (5) So much so, that organizational structures and mechanisms assist in building cultural or sub-cultural identities and in reinforcing sports relationships of athletic teams, heritage and self. The degree of sport interactions invariably correlate to the sentiment values experienced. Thus, participatory outlets (active and passive) by major "professional" status environments often overcome, overwhelm and

overpower the potential achievements of "minor" level rivalries. (9)

Subsequently, sport, as a social force, has the ability to divide, unify or integrate peoples, be it on the local, national or international strata. (32, p. 13) The Korean Olympic Games seemingly exemplified the potential for peace amongst Asian countries. (1) Unifying forces on the community level appear to have existed in the "breaking" of the Home Run Baseball Record--an American Pastime Sport. (29) Also evidenced was the integration aspect in the winning of the World Cup Soccer Championship (35) and the highest Medal Count Standings of the Commonwealth Games. (4, 13) Emotional and affinity divisions can occur in times of negative drug testing results of stalwarts or geo-political polarization. (7)

FANDOM

In sports crowd situations, spectators, suspend their personal identities, feelings and moods. The capriciousness and fancifulness of the crowd takes over. The group cohesiveness "blocks out" one's individuality. (12, p. 5-6) In essence, the greater the crowd, the more festive the atmosphere--the same may be said for active participants, at least while "victory" is plausible and possible. (26) Moreover, the site and density of certain populations can contribute to the momentum aspects of participatory sport. Furthermore, electronic advances have helped in the development of universal communities--uniting audiences and extending common expectations, the Virtual Tourists.

As example, the 1998 Stanley Cup Finals demonstrated the ice hockey crowd culture overtaking individual personalities and

ultimately becoming “cheering units” in accordance to their group affinities and affiliations. (3, 16)

RELATED THEORIES

Cognitive theories, particularly related to social psychology, emphasize mental ideas, images, and photographic representations of the actual world. (26, p. 11-13) In other words, whatever an individual knows and understands has been highly self-selective. Other theories refer to symbolic interactions whereby objects or situations have value validity. (26, p. 16-17) Still, other beliefs prefer attributive theories designating perceptions and evaluatory judgements. (10, p. 63) (31, p. 9) Nonetheless, in any reality construction, people do make decisions and do take action. (19) Thus, in reference to sport, people (participants and spectators) take appropriate reality decisions whether to travel or not to travel for sports purposes.

MOTIVATION

The variety of motives, exterior as well as interior, that influence human behaviour are quite numerous. Amongst the more important internally are:

- anxiety
- drives
- incentive
- arousal
- aspirations
- drives
- incentive
- motivations
- self-actualization. (6)

Exterior motives are chiefly based on experiential evidences:

- assumptions
- perceptual aspects
- informational data
- environmental energy input. (6)

Entrepreneurs, operators and managers of the sports tourism industry, without question, appreciate knowing what motivates and satisfies their consumers. Unfortunately, many consumers are not fully aware of their true travel motives. Oftentimes, the subconscious mind “obliterates” or “submerges” one’s particular desires, urges, feelings, and emotions. As such, true motives and desires may be difficult to identify, to define and to express.

Motivation is a force within an individual which causes him or her to do something to fulfil a biological need or psychological desire. (6) These drives cause and regulate behaviours directly towards achieving goals and could operate independently or interdependently. Yet on occasion, both could be simultaneously or concurrently satisfied--as in the sport situation where a ski resort combines skiing with socialization. (12)

TOURISM

In an earlier study by the United States Travel Service, findings showed that different stages of life have an effect (both positive and negative) on a person’s desire and intention to travel. Consciously or unconsciously, certain elements affect the participation and/or spectatorship--in enticing people to travel to specific sports destinations or environments. The following are sequential phases usually associated with travel decision experiences:

- incentive phase [the push]
- decision phase [the action]
- preparatory phase [the planning]

- travel phase [the displacement]
- return phase [the home base]
- evaluation phase [the assessment] (37)

The above first three phases have a direct relationship between innate compulsion and “entrepreneurial” business inherence. To reiterate previous statements, motivation is a force within an individual causing him/her to do something to fulfill a biological need, psychological desire or social objective. These needs could function dependently, independently or interdependently. (6) They could “mushroom” simultaneously or concurrently affecting the travel consequences.

Business inherency through strategic marketing “bombardment” on a person’s needs resultingly could reinforce individual motivation to predisposed experiences and develop into a “readiness” travel status. (8) Directly or indirectly, this attitudinal predisposition, depending on degree of impact, could lead a person to specific sports travel goals. (19)

Sports tourism entrepreneurs primarily attempt through distinctive and segmented marketing strategies, to capitalize on individual needs by creating a “magic environment” defined and delineated by programs, services, and mythical expectations. (2, 14, 15, 18, 20, 24, 34) In essence, this enhanced concept is termed exterior business inherency. (25, p. 1)

When this “magical ambiance” correlates positively with one’s innate desires, the individual suppresses his/her particular identity--thereby, blending his/her innate compulsions with the business impaction. Consequently, the individuality aspect translates into the business projected image becoming the required “lever” push to travel action.

In essence, the two realities (sport and tourism) become integrated as one within the consumer mind. The result is interactionist; the decision behaviour, coupling sport and travel, is delimited, plotted and structured in accordance to predetermined business designs, holistic conditions and mediated interpretations. Thus a set pattern with some flexibility becomes the norm to the sports traveller.

There are several factors that have an effect on the maturation of sports tourism inherencies. Figure 1 illustrates the complexity through five different stages of process development. An individual requires a slight personal inclusion towards the sport tourism activity to become ingrained in the process. A “virtual taste” relating to an environment for sport involvement, is provided within the local community or through an outside destination. The choice result could be affected by innate, predisposed inherencies of the individual. Hence, the decision to travel, to be involved with sport or both is finalized. For instance, the distance runner who has had the propensity since childhood to run may, because of age, now settle for spectatorship. Or, the uncoordinated person who has no particular sports ability may be inclined to appreciate sport skills, values and rivalries. (26)

If further interest is to be stimulated, the virtual images provided by marketing strategies will reinforce, over time, the desire to travel for sports sake. Such image impacts may be symbolic of high profile, luxury amenities and/or natural scenic portrayals--that have business inherency foundations providing “magical moments” and a “virtual taste” of sensory satisfactions. (11)

ROTE IMPACT

Positive sport and tourism experiences increase as these images become repetitive. The individual then determines whether further or deeper needs could be satisfied by seeking out more positive sports involvements at a preferred locale or sophisticated destination. (26, p. 14) When the individual's internal inherencies "outweigh" and "overpower" the external business image--the person in question resigns from travelling to the sports tourism environment. (19, p. 325)

The "Trigger Point" for travel displacement is a combination of personal internal and business external inherencies--fused into one primary motivational thrust. Evidently marketing strategies attempt to target the various degrees and dimensions of individual and group compulsions. (22) Marketing strategies build up potential satisfaction levels to ignite and match an individual's or groups' predispositions, desires and inclinations. Yet, without question, the persons concerned must have some basic affinity to a sport, the sport spirit, the sport ambiance or a combination thereof.

MARKETING

The Disney "World of Sports" Complex, through its publicity efforts and image presentations, have created a desired "thirst" amongst certain sports enthusiasts to participate actively in a specific sport offerings. This innovative Disney Theme Park has such an allurement quality that a sports person not being able to travel to said destination may feel somewhat left out of the mainstream. On the other hand, China has initiated the channelling and funnelling of tourism through sports envi-

ronments thus creating an attractive image to "vehicle" tourists to the country. (21) In both cases, the external inherency illustrates the creation of conditions and expectations in order to influence the individual internal inherencies.

Plog also found distinctive travel personality traits with two extremes, namely the Allocentric and Psychocentric. (23) The former was seen as the trend setter, the challenger, the courageous person who willfully desired to be the first traveller to a new destination, setting or environment. In effect, this tourist could be referred to as a "travel-leader". An example of this Allocentric sports tourist would be the individual to be the first to experience paragliding or paddling down an historic river.

The Psychocentric, on the other hand, is a follower who prefers to travel to familiar and safe sports tourism areas--after some family member or acquaintances usually have had the sought after experiences. As an example, the individual who paraglides long after the introduction of the sport in a set environment.

Individuals who have a predisposition for travel (innate influences), and who may or may not have a high level of sport interest or preference, could become sport tourists depending upon the degree of impact by the external business inherencies. Figure 2 demonstrates such possibilities with individuals possessing an Allocentric predisposition--individuals seeking their sports interests through travel to either specific sports or multiple sports venues.

Individuals with a low degree of sports disposition, while travelling may attend or participate in on-going sports activities, are also be categorized as Allocentric by definition. As shown in Figure 2, all Allo-

centric situations depict sports tourists with higher degrees of innate inherencies for travel but with varying degrees of innate inherency for sport. It is understood that business inherencies directly affect final travel action or inaction.

Bipolar personality traits (Allocentric and Psychocentric) are illustrated in Figure 3. However, most sports travellers find themselves, in varying degrees, along the horizontal line of the trait scale. Certain societal conditions thrust the sports tourist to swing, at least temporarily, from one extreme to another. (22, p. 40)

The hang glider, because of family obligations, may abort travelling to specific destinations but may still participate actively at a lower key in his/her home environment. Thus, the shift from Allocentric to Psychocentric.

The "pendulum" affectation may be reversed in accordance to exterior motivational factors within particular sport situations. An example may well be the psychocentric traveller who gains more confidence in travelling--may in due time, be "compelled" or attracted to "taste the magic" of an exotic, faraway destination for sports purposes.

CONSUMER TYPES

Another typology (27, p. 59) which identifies three distinct interpersonal styles of human behaviour, that may be applied to the sports tourism environment, consists of:

a) The Compliant Consumer-Traveller allured by the general sports crowd buying and purchasing tendencies.

b) The Aggressive Consumer-Traveller who purposefully does not conform to general crowd buying and purchasing sport loyalties.

c) The Detached Consumer-Traveller whose purchasing and buying criteria are self-governed, emanating from within oneself.

An example of the "compliant" consumer would be the true loyal fan travelling to away games or competitions because of the sport sense of belonging and affiliation--the chief motive being group value and group acceptance. Another example would be a sports participant entering different international tournaments wholeheartedly accepting respective social norms, traditions and regulatory conventions.

The "aggressive" sports tourist consumer is, in effect, the opposite to the "compliant" traveller. Here, the person, although having an affinity to a sport and willing to travel to high profile activities demonstrates non-conformist or non-conventional behaviour. For instance, the use of abusive language by a highly skilled athlete towards officials or crowd reactions ordinarily is not acceptable. Or, a sport tourist spectator acting or reacting in an unsportsmanlike manner during a critical golf putt. Nevertheless, in both examples, the affinity and love of sport was still the prime motive for travel.

The "detached" consumer, although appreciating sports and willing to travel, has little concern for conventional values, rules, safety and security. In effect, this sports traveller may cause vandalism, injury to others or disruption of regulation play. This independent attitude could be classified as more or less anti-social. (17) The

sports tourist spectator who interferes by catching a rule “fly-ball” (baseball) thereby affecting play, is an example of the “detached” consumer. Or, the mountain climber who secretly attempts to achieve his or her climbing objective usurping proper procedures, policies and practices.

ADDITIONAL TYPOLOGIES

Along similar lines, typologies have also been based on travel motivations—interactional and cognitive-normative. The “interactional” category emphasises visitor-destination relationships. In sports tourism, the serious tennis player may search a resort with international level facilities and professional ambiance. While the cognitive-normative traveller, on the other hand, desires to meet people, socialize and enjoy the culture within the destination community. The Dragon Boat Races in Hong Kong are a prime example of such a destination for a cognitive-normative sports traveller. (30)

NEGATIVE IMPETUS

The one important question relating to sports travel is: “Does the need to travel destroy the sport inherency to participate actively or passively?”

For instance, to what extent can the highly skilled mountaineer be discouraged to travel to a country with high level mountains, where lack of safety and security is manifested or where “terrorism” is immi-

nent. What about circumstances where adequate hospitality amenities are not available? Or, where religious beliefs and practices may be valid obstacles for travel? Travel Advisories regularly evoke negative reasons (murder, crime rate ratios, hospitalization, safety and security) for travel to specific destinations. (36) Evidently, these conditions diminish the inherencies (internal and external) to travel to a specific destination where sport involvement do show positive experiential images.

Considering images “provoked” by external business inherencies, the degree and type of impetus are factors in affecting the individual’s sport and travel expectations. The realities within sports environments will enhance the travel determination in terms of an individual or group aspirations. The success of the business inherencies may also depend upon the person’s feasibility to travel e.g. finances, time constraints, family complications and values.

POSITIVE IMPETUS

External images may not necessarily incited a person’s need to travel. Nonetheless, the predisposed individual will continue to pursue his/her active or passive sports needs, desires and interest on selected levels. Resultingly, sports involvement, per se, is not diminished but the travel inherencies may be overlooked, delayed or obliterated. Thus the need to travel does not necessarily destroy the sport inherencies found within individuals and groups.

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FIGURE 1
FACTORS IN THE PROCESS DEVELOPMENT OF
SPORTS TOURISM INHERENCY

| STAGE OF INHERENCY | VIRTUAL TASTE | DEGREE OF INHERENCY | SPORTS TOURISM ACTION |
|--------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| INITIAL IMPETUS | Location Where Sport can be Played/Observed | Play/Spectate | + or - to Pursue |
| | | Travel Vacation | + or - to Pursue |
| REINFORCE | More Local Sports | Play at locale | Consider Sport |
| | More Sport Destinations | Travel to Sports for Play/Observe | Consider Sport Tourism |
| REPETITIVE | Travel Concerns Home Values | Sport/Play/Spectator | Play Sports See Sports |
| | Value of Travel Holiday | Travel Vacation to Destinations | Tourism in Varying Sports Environments |
| INHERENCY | Sports Tourism | Implosion | Needs Not Satisfied |
| | Sports Tourism | Explosion | Needs Satisfied |
| FINAL DECISION | Seek out Local Sports in Positive Environment. | Complete | No Travel |
| | Seek out Positive Environment for Sports Tourism Destination | Complete | Travel |

FIGURE 2

SPORTS TOURISM PREDISPOSITION DRIVES

| ALLOCENTRIC PREDISPOSITION | PRE-TRAVEL MOTIVATION | EXTERNAL INHERENCY | DRIVE AFFECT |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| For Sport (General) | Seek Sporting Activities | eg. Commonwealth Games | Sport Tourist Views Commonwealth Games in Malaysia and visits country. |
| For Sport (Specific) | Seek Specific Sport Activities | eg. Skiing | Sport Tourist Skiis in Switzerland and Visits country. |
| For Travel (General) | Seek Interesting Destination | eg. Malaysia | Sport Tourist Visits Malaysia and views the Commonwealth Games |
| For Travel (Specific) | Seek Specific Destination | eg. Switzerland | Sport Tourist Visits Switzerland and skiis. |

FIGURE 3

ALLOCENTRIC AND PSYCHOCENTRIC TRAVELLER DIFFERENTIALS

| ALLOCENTRIC | PSYCHOCENTRIC |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Most frequent travel | Less Travel |
| Venturesome | Less Venturesome |
| Self Confident | Less Self-Confident |
| Less Inhibited | More Inhibited |
| Less Anxious | More Anxious in Daily Life |
| Travel by Various Means | More Likely to Travel by Car |
| Select More Exotic Destination | Select Familiar, Safe Destination |
| Spend More Money on Destinations | Spend Less Money on Travel While on Vacation |

FIGURE 4

SPORT TOURISM BEHAVIORAL PERSONALITY CHART

| TYPE OF CONSUMER TRAVELLER | BUYER/PURCHASING TENDENCY | BEHAVIORAL FOCUS |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Compliant | Follower | Social "Groupie" |
| Aggressive | Non-Conformist | Non-Social |
| Detached | Self-Governing | Personalized |
