

INVESTIGATION OF THE PROFILE, NEEDS, MOTIVES AND BEHAVIOR OF SPORT TOURISTS THAT PARTICIPATED AT THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL MARATHON IN LIMASSOL

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Abstract

The geographic position of Cyprus, with its high temperatures and extensive coastlines, contributes to the growth of sporting activities, which facilitate to the development of sport tourism in the country. In general, tourism is an important source of income, and enterprises follow several strategies for the development of this particular sector (Cyprus Tourism Organization, 2004). The predominantly long term good weather conditions in Cyprus compel the responsible agencies to develop sport tourism as a good source of income. This is evident from the fact that the British Olympic Commission chose Cyprus for the preparation of its athletes for the Athens Olympic Games (Kartakoullis and Karlis, 2002).

Cohen (1972), describes four categories of Tourists Typology: (a) the individual mass, (b) the organized mass, (c) the drifter, (d) the explorer. (Cohen, 1972). Later Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) expanded these categories and resulted in 15 tourist's roles: 1) Sun Lover, 2) Action Seeker, 3) Anthropologist 4) Archaeologist, 5) Organized Mass Tourist, 6) Thrill Seeker, 7) Explorer, 8) Jetsetter, 9) Seeker, 10) Independent Mass Tourist I & II, 11) High Class Tourist, 12) Drifter, 13) Escapist I & II 14) Active Sport Tourist 15) Educational Tourist (Gibson, Yiannakis, 2002). Also Maslow (1970) analyzed the major human needs and concluded in five categories. (a) Need for self esteem and recognition from others (b) Physiological Needs (c) Need for love (Social need) (d) Need for self- fulfillment, self-motivation and self-development (e) Security needs (Maslow, 1970).

The aim of this study was to investigate the profile of Sport Tourists that participated at the 3rd international Marathon that took place in Limassol in 2010, as well as their motives, needs and their behavior. It is assumed that the

responders of the survey traveled to Cyprus with the main purpose to participate in the marathon. There were 530 participants in the marathon and the survey sample consisted of 106 responses, who were all experienced marathoners. It is not known if the responders visited Cyprus before or participated previously in the same marathon. For the completion of the study, the equivalent questionnaire by Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) was used, which has been proven to be valid and reliable according to the literature. The questionnaire was in English and was translated in Greek by Yfantidou, Costa and Michalopoulou (2007). It consisted of 11 demographic questions, 26 questions on sports activities, 34 questions concerning activities responders liked to participate in during their holidays, and 21 questions concerning their basic human needs. A 5 tiered Likert scale was implemented.

Descriptive statistics, frequency analysis and reliability tests were used for the analysis of the results, which showed a high percentage or reliability in the needs of the tourists ($\alpha = 0.922$) as well as their behavior / motives. ($\alpha = 0.852$).

The descriptive statistics showed that the greatest percentage of the tourists were men (69.9%), graduates of higher institutions, (35.9%), with full time employment (89.2%). Their age was between 17-39 years, with an annual income between € 20.000 - 60.000. Their country of origin was primarily England and Greece. After the completion of the frequency analysis it was discovered that: a) sports tourists often relax and sunbathe, b) mingle with the locals to try the food and to familiarize themselves with the language and c) remain physically active and practice their favorite sports (marathon running and hiking). Their more important needs were their need for health and wellness, their need to feel good about themselves, as well as their need for love and affection.

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