

INFORMATION SEARCH AND EXPENDITURE OF SPORT EVENT PARTICIPANTS- COMPARING LOCAL PARTICIPANTS AND SPORT TOURISTS

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Abstract keywords

Information Search, Sport Tourist, Sport Event Management

Aim of abstract/paper - research question

Since Tokyo Marathon was first held in 2007, participating sport events have become popular among the Japanese society. Nowadays, there are numerous sport events such as running and cycling that gather thousands of participants throughout the country. Rising number of participating sport events in Japan indicate the elevating expectations of municipalities toward sport events as an effective means for activating cities. However, although the number of sport events is increasing, the majority of them concentrate on the operation of the event itself, and lack in capturing the various characteristics of the attendants from a sport-tourism-perspective (Kudo, 1998). When an event gathers participants from various areas, it is important to understand the different consumer behavior of a local participant and a sport tourist. The purpose of this study is to analyze the type of information consumed by different groups of sport participants, and to examine the consumer behavior of such groups through the average expenditure per person at the destination.

Theoretical background or literature review*

Generally, sport consumers go through a certain process when watching a game or participating in a sport event; need recognition, information search, comparing choices, consuming product or service, and evaluation (Matsuoka, 2008). The second step's information plays an important role as an antecedent of evaluation and behavior intentions (Echtner et al., 1993; Bigne et al., 2001). To acquire information, consumers conduct an internal search, which seeks information from one's own experience, and an external search, which information is gathered from external sources that supplement the internal search (Matsuoka, 2008). Sport event participants who come from distant places and are not familiar with the hosting destination become more dependent on the information acquired beforehand. However, many of the sport events in Japan lack in providing a variety of information in co-operation with the destination (Ninomiya, 2009). The main purpose for the sport event participant is to consume the sport event experience, yet participants are understood to consume not only the sport activity, but also shopping, dining, and other elements that is part of the experiential journey of the event (Funk, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the difference in consumer behavior between the local participants and sport tourists in order to provide the appropriate information necessary for each group. However, research in this area comparing the local participants and sport tourists is scarce.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

Questionnaires were distributed to participants of a half-marathon event on May 13, 2012 in Sendai, Miyagi-Japan and December 2, 2012 in Ise, Mie-Japan, which both had about 10,000 participants. To distinguish sport tourists from local participants, a question asking whether the participant stayed overnight to attend the event was included along with the place of residency. 532 surveys and 589 surveys were collected from each event, and they were processed to analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics 19.

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions**

From the results, there were significant differences between the information used between sport tourists and local participants. Sport tourists tended to search for more information related to the destination such as accommodation (64.4%, $p < .001$), cuisine (17.1%, $p < .001$), shopping (16.1%, $p < .01$), public transportation (37.5%, $p < .05$), and sightseeing (16.8%, $p < .001$). Furthermore, first comers to the destination showed a higher percentage to search for the 5 type of information mentioned above compared to repeat and local participants. On the other hand, local participants searched for information related to the marathon event such as the marathon course (62.8%, $p < .001$), the event schedule (56.1%, $p < .05$), and marathon-related events (21.9%, $p < .01$).

As to expenditure, it was significantly clear that sport tourists spend more on transportation, cuisine, shopping, and touristic activities. It also became apparent that the expenditure differed according to who the participant came with to the event. Single participants showed the lowest price average compared to participants who came with family members or friends. The highest group was those who came to the destination with family members.

The results acquired from this research indicate that when a sport event managers and hosting cities expect participants not only from the local area but from distant areas, it is necessary to deliver a variety type of information and to understand the different consuming behavior of the participants. Such operation will lead to a better link between the event and the destination.

References

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