

# **(SP) THE SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN SPORTING EVENTS AND SPORT TOURISM: THE CASE OF THE 2005 PAN-AMERICAN JUNIOR ATHLETIC CHAMPIONSHIPS**

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## **Introduction**

Sport events have become a significant component of the tourism marketing mix (Gibson, 2003). The effect on tourism is pretty obvious for mega sport events, such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup of Soccer. They receive a high level of (worldwide) media attention, which increases the awareness and affects the image of the hosting city (e.g., Chalip & Costa, 2005). Consequently, this media attention may affect both current and future tourism. Less is known, however, about the potential tourism impact of 'medium sized' international spectator/competitor sporting event, such as the Pan-American Junior Athletic Championships. One can wonder if these types of events stimulate tourism all? They may have an impact on current tourism, in the way that non local spectators, participating athletes, coaches, officials, and media people extend their stay and combine it with a vacation. Their effect on possible future tourism is, however, unknown. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent a 'medium sized' international sporting event generates current and future tourism behaviour and impact.

The Pan-American Junior Athletic Championships provided a sound opportunity to analyze tourism behaviour and impact of a medium sized sporting event. In 2005, the event was hosted in Windsor (Ontario, Canada) from July 28-31. 443 Athletes ( $\leq 20$  years of age) and 144 team officials from 35 countries participated in the event. Approximately 4000 spectators attended the opening ceremony. The average attendance for the three-day competition was 3,969 per day.

## **Methods**

For the purpose of this study only information of *non-local* spectators and participants (i.e., athletes, coaches, officials, and media people) was taken into account. The non-local spectators (n=217), whose primary purpose was to be in Windsor because of the Pan American Junior Athletic Championships, made up 19% of the total spectator response group. Of the 256 participants who returned the questionnaire 241 (or 94%) were non-locals. The overall response rate was 55%. A written questionnaire (based on Woodside et al., 2002) was used to collect data on *current tourism behaviour* such as information search, time spent, and tourism activities undertaken while attending the event. Furthermore, the respondents were asked whether they planned to combine their visit with a vacation in Windsor/Essex County, Ontario, and/or Canada. With regard to potential *future tourism impact*, one set of questions asked how likely the respondents would return to Windsor/Essex County, Ontario, and/or Canada, while another set of questions asked to rate how likely they would recommend Windsor/Essex County, Ontario, and/or Canada as destinations to friends and/or family. In a first step, descriptive statistics are used to analyze the data. Next, the data for time spent with each information source are subjected to smallest space analysis to determine which types of information source utilization can be aggregated. The amount of time spent on all information sources that fall into the same

smallest space cluster are calculated to obtain an index of time spent on each cluster of information sources. The data on activities are similarly analyzed in two steps. First, the activities are analyzed using smallest space analysis to determine which activities tend to cluster together. Then the time spent on each activity in which the respondent engaged within each cluster is summed to obtain an index of the amount of activity of each cluster type.

## Results

In the spectator group 68% had previously visited Windsor/Essex County (WEC), 83% Ontario (ON), and 92% Canada (CA). These percentages were much lower among the participants, being 25% (WEC), 36% (ON) and 59% (CAN) respectively. The internet is the most used source to collect information about the destination, i.e. Windsor/Essex County (approximately 61%), followed by 'friends and family' (41%). Most of the non-local visitors, both spectators and participants, spent about up to one hour searching the internet. Shopping was the most popular tourism activity among the participants (70%), followed by dining out (67%). This ranking was reversed for the spectators, where dining out was the most frequent tourism activity (90%), followed by shopping (56%). Nightlife was ranked number three among the participants (45%), while visiting parks and gardens were ranked the number three activity for the spectators (40%). Attending performing arts was least popular in both groups (participants: 6%, and spectators: 3%). Eighteen percent of the spectators indicated that they would be extending their stay for a vacation in Windsor/Essex County, compared to only 6% of the participants; these percentages shifted to 9.5% for a vacation in Ontario for the spectator group, compared to only 4% of the participant group, and to respectively 9% and 6% for a vacation in Canada. Overall, spectators had significantly higher means than participants when asked on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = not at all likely to 6 = definitely) whether they would return to Windsor/Essex County, Ontario and/or Canada in the future, and similarly when asked if they would recommend Windsor/Essex County, Ontario and/or Canada as a tourism destination to friends and family.

## Discussion

The findings of this study highlight to what extent a medium sized international youth sporting event contributes to current and future tourism behaviour and impacts. At first sight, non-local spectators seem to have a stronger tourism impact than the participants. This can partly be explained by the specific characteristics of this type of sporting event. Smallest space analysis will provide deeper insights in the results. The findings contribute to the body of knowledge of tourism marketing. The practical implications for event marketing and event leverage to promote and/or bundle tourism activities for event attendees will be discussed. This may also enhance the economic impact of events, as suggested by leveraging theory (Chalip & Leyns, 2002).

## References

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