

2007 Cricket World Cup Sport Tourists: The Caribbean Experience

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Abstract

Introduction

The West Indies was awarded the right to host the International Cricket Council (ICC) 2007 Cricket World Cup (CWC), marking its first attempt at hosting an international sport championship.

The CWC is one of the world's most viewed sporting events. As indicators of its global reach, 2007 CWC matches were televised in 200 countries to over 2.2 billion television viewers. Televised rights for the 2011 and 2015 CWC were recently sold for over \$US 1.1 billion, and sponsorship rights were sold for a further US\$500 million (cricinfo.com, 2007).

A total of 51 one day matches were hosted by eight territories (Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia and Trinidad & Tobago) over the period 13 March to 28 April 2007. Super Eight matches, essentially eight-team round robin competition, were held between 27 March and 21 April in Antigua, Bridgetown in Barbados, Providence in Guyana, and Grenada. Attendance for the entire 2007 CWC averaged 11,176 per match (www.icc-cricket.com).

Aims

While several studies have profiled sport tourists at international events, relatively few have involved events in developing countries, particularly in the Caribbean. The purpose of this study is to examine the consumer behaviors of tourists to the 2007 Cricket World Cup and to compare them to previous CWC visitors.

Research Design

To facilitate the purpose of the study, visitors were interviewed at the Guyana National Stadium at Providence during selected days on which matches were played and in the Departure Lounge of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport. Key findings are presented in the following section.

Results

A total of 394 spectators were interviewed for the study. Visitors from the U.S. accounted for 50% of the total, while those from the Caribbean formed 25%, followed by Canada (13%) and the UK (8%). Nearly 80 percent (79.4%) were visiting Guyana to attend the CWC. Other reasons for visiting Guyana reported included vacation (9.3%), visiting friends and relatives (5.9%), and business (4.4%).

CWC visitors in Guyana averaged three persons in group size and stayed 7.65 nights. By comparison, vacationers were in two person groups and stayed 9.73 nights, visitors for other reasons including visiting friends and relatives were 2.20 persons in size and stayed 10.86 nights, and business travelers in groups of 2.62 persons stayed 7.59 nights in Guyana. Visitors (and their immediate travel groups) who came to Guyana primarily to witness the 2007 CWC spent on average \$US 1 902 for lodging and \$934 for food and beverage in Guyana.

Additional spending included retail shopping (\$439), stadium purchases (\$248), local transportation (\$379) and other purchases (\$475).

Most spectators (85.9%) had not attended a CWC prior to 2007. For the majority of spectators (61.0%), attending the CWC was their first live expose to an international sport championship.

Discussion

Present findings were compared to those from the 2003 Cricket World Cup. The 2003 CWC took place in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya during February and March 2003. A total of 54 matches were played at locations around these countries. The 2003 CWC matches were attended by 626,845 people, while the 2007 CWC sold more than 672,000 tickets (IndiaNews.com, 2007). The average length of stay of a foreign visitor for the CWC 2003 was 16 days, slightly longer than for the average non-CWC foreign visitor (12 days). Visitors that came specifically for the CWC 2003 stayed the shortest, while those that had timed their holiday to coincide with the event ended up staying over 22 days – this trend was also evident in the Guyana segment of CWC 2007. Crime reported during the event was at insignificant levels. Three percent of visitors to CWC 2003 experienced an incident of crime while in the South Africa. Ninety-nine percent of visitors said they would return again and 99 percent said they would recommend a South Africa visit to others. Likewise, visitors to CWC 2007 expressed satisfaction with the event and noted low levels of crime. An overwhelming majority (76.9%) would visit Guyana again and 87.8% would recommend to their friends or relatives that they visit Guyana. Fifty-eight percent of the net benefits to South Africa arose from spending by CWC visitors who spent an average of R1 400 per day over an average of 16 days. Per day visitor spending figures for 2003 and 2007 CWC are nearly identical (2003-\$190 and \$191 in 2007).

Research implications to event and destination marketers are discussed, and questions posed for sport tourism event researchers interested in further investigations of sport events in developing nations.