

Differences Between First Time and Repeat Spectators of a Youth Soccer Event: Intentions and Image Approaches

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Abstract

Introduction

First time and repeat event sport tourists (i.e. spectators) can form two different market segments for sport and destination marketers. Extensive research exists in the tourism literature where the importance of encouraging repeat visitors to tourist destinations is stressed mainly because repeat visitors tend to have a more positive attitude toward the destination (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991, Gitelson & Crompton, 1984, Kozak, 2001). Haywood (1988) emphasized that repeat patronage is the backbone of all business, while Oppermann (2000) indicated that the establishment of a repeat market is seen as being inextricably bound up with success. Another component of the benefits of repeat patronage is that they are cost effective compared to generating first time visits (Spotts, Kim, Carr, & Holecek, 1998). In this framework, the research question that arises relates to imagery formed for first time and repeat visitors and whether these visitors differ in their intentions to travel to attend sport events. More research is needed in the sport tourism domain to understand the differences of overall event image perceptions of first time versus repeat spectators and intentions to re-attend an event. Overall event image is conceptualized based on the destination image formation literature as a global evaluation of the perceptions regarding the event (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Understanding the differences between these two groups will help both sport and destination marketers develop more effective marketing efforts that target each specific market's needs.

Method

Data were collected from spectators attending a youth soccer event (Gator Showcase for girls) that took place in February 2008 in the state of Florida, using an on-site self-administered survey. Five hundred and forty six spectators were intercepted and 476 respondents completed the questionnaire resulting in a response rate of 88%. Six questionnaires were incomplete and were not used in the analysis resulting in 470 questionnaires for a usable sample size for analysis. The questionnaire was three pages long and featured, demographics, attitudinal and behavioral questions.

Data analysis

The data were filtered to include only those respondents who were not residents of the county where the event took place and as a result they had to travel to attend the event (sport tourists). Further analysis compared the first time attendees with the repeat attendees on the following variables: overall image of the soccer event, overall image of the county where the event took place as a vacation destination, overall image of the county where the event took place as a sport event destination, intentions to attend events such as the soccer event in the next year, intentions to return to the destination for vacation in the next year. For the image items, the respondents had to indicate how negative or positive their image perceptions were on a seven point likert scale, where 1=extremely negative and 7=extremely positive. For the intentions statements the respondents had to provide their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point likert scale where 1=totally disagree and 7=totally agree. MANOVA was used to test the differences between first time and repeat spectator for the set of five dependent variables given the simultaneous collection of data from all variables (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998).

Results

Around two thirds of the spectators (66.7%) were female and one third (33.3%) were male. Most of the spectators were either parents of extended family of the athletes (95.9%). A small percentage said they were friends of the athletes (1.6%). Only 2.5% were not related to the athletes. The respondents' age ranged from 19 to 82 years old. The average age was around 45 years old (SD=6.89). The majority of spectators (72.7%) had more than \$80,000 total 2007 annual household income. The results from the MANOVA model did not support any differences in the mean scores between the two groups across the multivariate context. Upon examination of the univariate results, significant differences ($M_{\text{differ}}=.34$, $p<.01$) were found between the first time spectators ($M_{\text{first}}=5.96$) and the repeat spectators ($M_{\text{repeat}}=6.30$) for only one variable (intentions to attend similar events in the next year). Repeat spectators had higher means scores in their intentions to attend similar events in the next year but they did not seem to differ significantly in all other variables.

Discussion

The results provided in this study do not support the benefits from repeat patronage. Repeat visitors only differed in their intentions to attend similar events next year. Implications for theory and future research will be presented during the oral presentation.

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