

Comparing Two Types of Nature Sport (Event) Tourists in Germany Based on Travel Motivation and Behaviour– the Case of Ski Tourers vs. Trail Runners

Hodeck, Alexander²; Kuehnast, Jens¹ and Wohlfart, Olivia¹

1: Leipzig University, Germany; 2: EBC University of Applied Sciences Hamburg, Germany
hodeck.alexander@ebc-hochschule.de

Introduction

Nature sport (events) and the tourism around these, if applied correctly, can contribute to the strategies of a sustainable local development of mountain destinations (Stroebel, Moesch & Buser, 2018). While the behaviour of sport tourists has been investigated in various studies, little is known about their motivation to participate in specific sport activities on a trip. To better understand decision making processes of tourists in general and sport tourists specifically, understanding the motivation of the tourists is one important step. Only if the decision making process of the tourists is understood, can sport tourism contribute to a local development strategy (Weed 2014). Trail running as a growing trend sport (event) and ski touring as a traditional winter sport can both be considered niches to the nature sport tourism market with a need for further research. The authors acknowledge both types of sports as fast growing areas of nature sports with a high potential for developing active sport tourism in destinations. Therefore, learning more about these to date scarcely investigated active sport tourists is essential when dealing with destination management through sport tourism. This study aims to analyse the motivation of participation and travel behaviour of these two unique groups of sport tourists. A comparison of these two groups is adequate, since both are nature sports in mountain regions, but the activities are practiced in different seasons. This makes it possible to further improve the understanding of sports tourists. Trail runners participating in the SachsenTrail 2017 will be compared to ski tourers questioned in the winter season 2017/2018. Based on the data, it will be investigated and discussed whether and how these nature sports can contribute to the development of tourism destinations.

Method

Using a questionnaire based on the German Travel Analysis FUR (2013) and Hodeck and Hovemann (2016), participants of the SachsenTrail 2017 as well as active ski tourists in Germany from the winter season 2017/2018 were asked about their social-economic data, their motivation and their travel behaviour. As the questionnaire was used already in previous studies (ibid) there was no pre-test. Data from the trail runners (n=101) was collected by sport management graduates by paper and pencil method with the area sampling method (Berekoven, Eckert & Ellenrieder, 2001) on-site during the time of the event itself. Data from ski tourers (n=125) was collected with an online questionnaire using the platform SoSciSurvey over the time period 18.12.2017-17.03.2018. The online questionnaire for ski tourists was distributed using the snowball-method (ibid.) and focused on active ski tourers as members of alpine and winter sport associations.

Results and Discussion

In terms of age, the two groups examined hardly differ: at 37.6 years, ski tourers are about a year older than trail runners. Significant differences exist with regard to gender. While ski tourers are male to 67% percent, the investigated trail runners are almost equally distributed male and female. In terms of motivation and travel behavior, many similarities can be found, although, due to the different destinations and the nature of the stays, differences in length of

arrival and length of stay are identifiable. Based on already existing sport tourism studies we expect the motivational factors of the groups to be similar, identifying both groups as individual nature tourists for whom the competitive factor is less important than practicing the activity. The results of this study confirm previous studies. We do, however, expect differences in travel behaviour: In previous studies dealing with active sport tourists, winter sport tourists travelled longer distances and spent more time and money than active sport tourists travelling in the summer season (Hodeck & Hovemann 2016). Both groups studied are relatively young compared to other active tourists. Due to the fact that both sports are physically exhausting and therefore, in contrast to classic hiking and Nordic skiing probably interesting for younger target groups. These target groups accept comparatively long travel distances and are prepared to invest a relatively large amount of money in their activities. Against this background they represent an extremely interesting target groups for tourism destinations that can widen the classic customer portfolio. The study provides further important insight to the motivational factors of sport (event) tourists which needs to be further investigated with other sample groups and destinations. Though limited in its impact through a small sample size, the investigation adds to the knowledge about why people choose to do sport while on holiday and with that helps close the knowledge gap within the interesting field of destination development through active sport tourism.

References

- Berekoven, L., Eckert, W. & Ellenrieder, P. (2001). *Marktforschung. Methodische Grundlagen und praktische Anwendungen* (9.) [Market research. Basic methods and practical use]. Wiesbaden: Gabler.
- Forschungsgemeinschaft Urlaub und Reisen e.V. (FUR) (2013). *ReiseAnalyse. Hauptsache schönes Wetter* [Reiseanalyse. Only nice weather counts]. Kiel.
- Hodeck, A. & Hovemann, G. (2016). Motivation of active sport tourists in a German highland destination – a cross-seasonal comparison. *Journal of Sport & Tourism* 20 (3,4), p. 335 – 348.
- Stroebel, T., Moesch, C. & Buser, S. (2018). Inszenierung von Erlebnissen im touristischen Wettbewerb–Eine Fallstudie am Beispiel des Eiger Ultra Trails [Staging experiences in tourist events - a case study using the example of the Eiger Ultra Trail]. In G. Nowak (Ed.), *(Regional-)Entwicklung des Sports* (193-206) [(Regional) Development of Sport]. Schorndorf: Hofmann.
- Weed, M. (2014). After 20 years, what are the big questions for sports tourism research? *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 19 (1), p. 1-4.