



Research Article

An Assessment of Sport Event Tourists' Motivation with a Framework: A Case Study at a Southeast Conference Football Game

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Abstract

The decision to travel and attend sport events is usually an important process for the travelers that involves many key factors such as motivation, time allowance, interests, destination image, past experience, personal factors, and economic condition. While a significant number of studies have been conducted on sport event attendees' and tourists' behavior, especially their motivation, there is little research to date that examines and understands why tourists attend college football events in a structured framework. The objective of this study is to find these reasons and construct an instrument for measuring sport tourists' motivation that can be useful in organizing sport events and developing marketing plans. Three important factors were found: *Economical Sport Event Tourism*, *Football Game Itself*, and *Being a Good Resident*. The results of this study will be very useful for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and college sport event organizers to understand sport event tourists.

Keywords

Sport event tourism (SET); Motivation; Football; Southeast conference (SEC)

Introduction

Background of this study

With growing interests in sport events and festivals, more attention has been paid to Sport Event Tourism (SET): e.g., framework, economic impact, and sport tourist's behavior. Similar to Special Interest Tourism (SIT) which is one of the expanded forms in segmented tourism [1], SET became a significant tourism field by grouping many activities, perspectives, and components to maximize tourist's interest. Weed [2] briefly described SET as a scope where all three domains (i.e., tourism, event, and sport) play together. Accordingly, a significant number of behavioral studies have been explored in SET: self-esteem [3], motivation [4,5], sports fans' typology [6], as well as economic impact and benefits [7-12].

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Received: December 11, 2012 Accepted: January 28, 2013 Published: February 04, 2013

Many mega sport events in the United States, such as the Bowl, college football and bowl games, especially in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I-A, National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR), playoffs and finals for National Basketball Association (NBA) and Major League Baseball (MLB), and major championships for golf (e.g., Masters in Augusta, Georgia) and tennis (e.g., Wimbledon, UK) are more than events themselves. Sport event tourists plan and attend events, often check scores and rankings, are involved in many related activities, and are usually loyal fans that often look forward to the next game and/or season. Key factors in the decision making process, such as motivation, time allowance, interests, destination image, past experience, personal factors, and economic condition, play an important role in travelling and attending sport events. Among those key factors, motivation has been studied primarily in understanding tourist's behavior [13-19].

Gleitman [20] argued that most human behavior can be predicted by their inner motives such as desire, which directs people to reach their goal. Thus, increased interests and studies in what motivate sport event attendees to attend sport games have grown dramatically because of its growing demand [21]. Crompton and McKay [22] highlighted the importance of motivation in event research and showed three interrelated reasons: 1) it is a primary concept to construct better products and services, 2) it is strongly related to consumer's satisfaction, and 3) it is a fundamental step in understanding the visitors' decision-making process. Thus, many motivation studies on sport fans and spectators have been conducted [5,23-33]. Although a significant number of studies have been conducted on sport event attendees' and tourists' behavior, especially their motivation, there is little research to date that examines and understands why tourists attend college football events (e.g., southeast conference) in a structured framework.

From tourism spending (sightseeing, lodging, food, etc.) to raising college spirits, sport event tourists' economic and social impacts on a destination are significant to many college communities. To answer the question of why tourists attend college sport events, this study is conducted in two phases: 1) building a framework to understand tourist's motivation at a college sport event and apply the results and 2) understanding sport event tourist's motivation. With two phases, this study attempts to achieve the following three objectives: 1) to provide a framework to understand tourist's motivation and its application, 2) to develop a measuring instrument to explain sport event tourist's motivation, 3) to provide managerial implication to destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and sport event marketers.

The following section provides a framework to understand tourist's motivation at college sport events based on conceptual research review. Next section presents the literature review: sport event tourism, importance of college sports events and its impact and motivation in sport event, followed by research methodology: instrument development, data collection and analysis, and findings of results. Then, contribution of this study is discussed with the limitations and future directions in the final section. The following two primary research questions were addressed to achieve the objectives of this study:

- Research Questions 1: Is there a proposed framework to understand tourist's motivation and its application?
- Research Questions 2: What motivates sport event tourists to attend sport events?

Literature Review

Sport Event Tourism (SET)

With increasing interests in tourism and sport games (e.g., Olympic Games, FIFA World cup, and World Baseball Classics) SET has become more popular in the last decades. Many types of SET (i.e., traveling to attend sports events) have begun to emerge with SET's significant economic impact on the community. Findings from the SET studies [34,35] showed that positive impacts are perceived by communities, such as urban regeneration, increased sense of security, positive fan behavior, and the general atmosphere surrounding the event. According to Gibson [36], sport tourism can be defined as a "leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to participate and/or watch physical activities or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities (p. 49)." As one of the popular trends in tourism, "being involved in the process and experiencing," the definition of sport tourism explains why sport tourism has always been loved and is becoming more popular. However, it still does not include the concept of "event." Although a few definitions of sport tourism were developed and suggested [37-39], they have not clearly addressed "event" for SET. Perhaps, SET has been more often mentioned and rooted in event tourism than sport tourism. Getz [40] emphasized an event in event tourism perspective saying, "Events are a major component of sport tourism, and perhaps the most significant in terms of tourist numbers and economic impact. Sport event tourism is internationally recognized as a substantial and highly desirable niche market".

Event has become one of the most popular areas in tourism because of its potential market and growth. Thus, the term, "event tourism" has begun to be used. However, SET was not even clearly defined. Kurtzman and Zauhar [41] categorized sport tourism as sport tourism attractions, resorts, cruises, tours, and events but those categories are only typology in sport tourism. Getz [40] said:

"From the destination's perspective, sport event tourism is the development and marketing of sport events to obtain economic and community benefits. To the consumer, it is travel for the purpose of participating in, or viewing, a sport event. From the event organizer's perspective, tourists might be one of several target markets to attract, and to event sponsors (companies and organizations who pay to

participate in events for their own marketing purposes), the tourism market is only one of several within which relationships are forged."

Getz [40] briefly defined SET in both destination and consumer perspectives but those are still limited to the explanation of both perspectives, and each segment (i.e., sport, event, and tourism) was not explained equally. The definitions of SET have been limited and not clearly explained because of its different but unique approach to understand SET from three different perspectives: sport, event, and tourism. In this study, a sport event tourist has been defined as one who traveled for watching the sport game and attending related events over fifty miles away from their residency to the destination or stayed for more than one night regardless of distance traveled. Thus, by collecting all information sport event tourism can be defined as a visitation to the destination for watching the sport game and attending related events over fifty miles away from their residency to the destination or stayed for more than one night regardless of distance traveled. Based on the definition of SET and previous studies, the following Figure 1 is provided.

Motivation in SET

A number of tourism studies have covered such topics as theory application [42,43], travel motivation events [22,44,45], the purpose of traveling [46,47], and motivation by cultural background [48]. It is clearly stated that there are three interrelated reasons why motivation is important in event research [22]: 1) it is a primary concept to construct better products and services, 2) it is strongly related to consumer's satisfaction, and 3) it is a fundamental step in understanding the visitors' decision-making process. Nicholson and Pearce [49] indicated that there were two types of reasons for tourists to attend event, namely common and personal reasons. According to Kim et al. [13], there are three different motivation factors for each push and pull at a food festival. Wigley et al. [33] even emphasized that college baseball fans have different motivation in different seat sections.

If there are some reasons to attend events, what motivation factors would particularly influence sport tourists? Zhang [50] and his team found psychological factors of spectators' decision making to attend sports events: game attributes, game convenience, home team, economic weighting, and visitor team. Hunt et al. [51] explained sports fans motivations by the level of involvement: situational and enduring. In a similar way, the eight most important motives: escape, economic (i.e., gambling), eustress (i.e., positive arousal), self-esteem, group affiliation, entertainment, family, and aesthetics to attend sport events were identified using the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS)

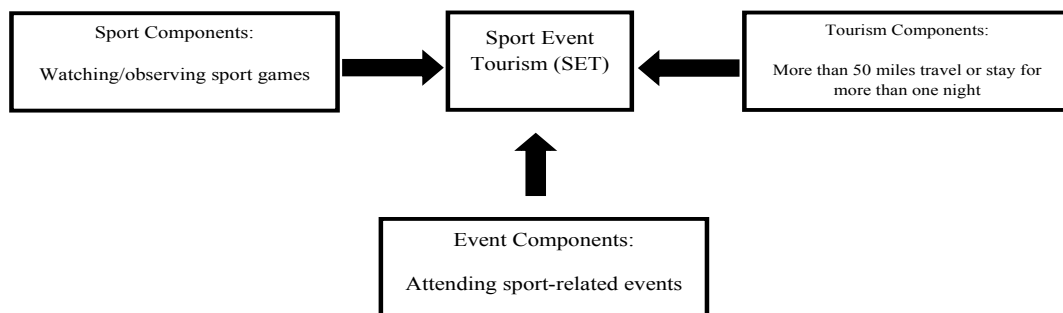


Figure 1: Understanding of Sport Event Tourism (SET).

[52]. Later, Wann et al. [21] examined sport type differences in eight motives. Correia and Esteves [53] suggested that there are five specific reasons to attend: material reasons, team affiliation, extra and facilities, star players, and form of entertainment. Interestingly, it was also simply concluded that sport fans' main motivation was to see the game [54]. Trail et al. [55] asserted that both personal motivation and attributes of events are very important emphasizing both internal and external motives.

A framework: to understand sport event tourist's motivation

With much existing literature on motivation in sport, event, and tourism or combined research areas [5,13-19,23-29,30-33], the term, 'motivation' has played a significant role in the field of sport tourism. Of course, many studies pointed out that destination image [56-58], personal factors [59-61], and past experiences [62,63] may influence the tourists' decision-making process, especially in the potential for return visits. However, Crompton [64] argued that motivation is the most significant variable that may contribute to an explanation of why tourists travel and their behavior: it is a very complex procedure to measure why people travel and what they want to enjoy because a paradigm of tourism is always related to human beings' decision and natural environment factors.

Figure 2 shows the process of how research on motivation can help in DMO's decision making purposes that can eventually be applied to a marketing plan. Through extensive research on motivation factors the analyzed data will provide a guide for a decision making. Finally, this can be applied in marketing plans and the results will be

controlled and measured to provide feedback and evaluation for the next cycle.

SET in college sport events and its impact

Because of college sport event's economic and social impact on its destination, a number of studies have been conducted on college sport event and tourism [9,54,65,66]. According to USA Today [67], most schools in major NCAA football conferences (e.g., ACC, Big 12, Big East, Big Ten, PAC-12, and SEC) generated more than 50 million dollars from 2006 to 2011, including ticket sales, student fees, school funds, contributions, rights/licensing, and other source. University of Texas at Austin was top ranked with more than 150 million dollars in revenue. College sport events in the U.S., especially football games are not only for attending 'sport games' but also, they are for socialization such as party, meeting, picnic, festival, fun, and more for both host community and sport event tourists as well. According to Walo et al. [66], the sport event provided an 'economic boost' to the community with fans spending on food and drink. Garnham [9] suggested that restaurants and pubs experienced positive economic benefits. He said, "People were not in a shopping mode but in a partying mode" (1996, p. 148).

The impact of sport events and their market is big enough to create concern in both financial and social aspects on the community. The primary question, "what factors motivate tourists to behave the way they do?" should be answered rather than describing what degree of motivation affects their behavior. However, there was little research done in measuring motivation factors for sport event attendees with a

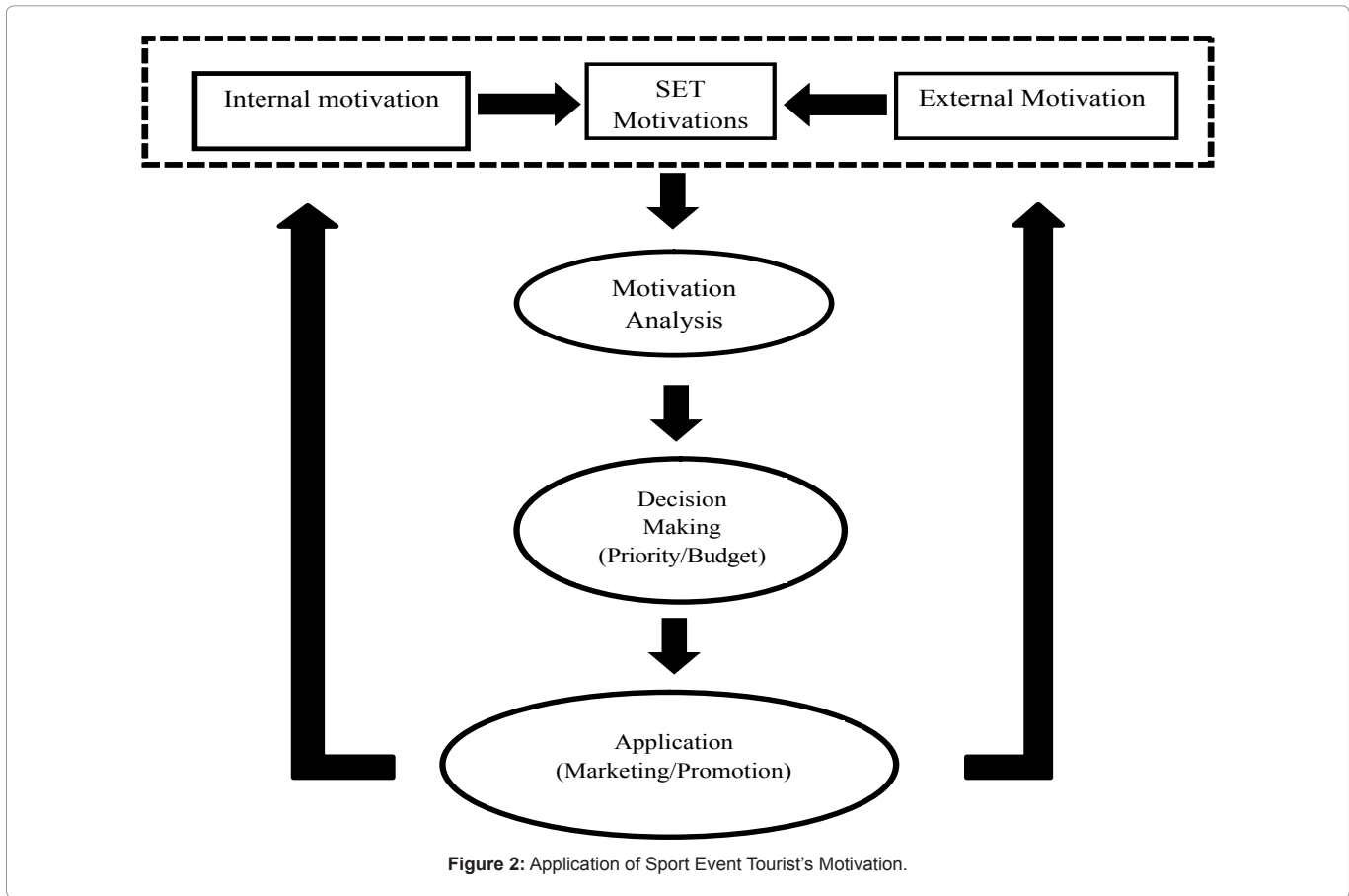


Figure 2: Application of Sport Event Tourist's Motivation.

systematic approach within sport tourism. The objective of this study is to find these reasons and construct an instrument for measuring sport tourists' motivation that can be useful in organizing sport events and constructing marketing plan.

Methodology

Instrument development

The questionnaires were developed to examine sport tourists' demographic characteristics and their behavior including motivations. Motivation variables were developed on the basis of a review of related literature and they were modified to apply to the research and target population. Based on the literature review, 21 items were constructed with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Least Important (1)" to "Most Important (7)." Once the first draft was constructed, a panel of experts was invited to review the instrument. The experts are composed of academic scholars with doctorate degrees in sport, event, and tourism management and practitioners with more than 15 years' experience in the sport, event, and tourism industry. The 21 items were reduced to 13 items. After refining the instrument, a pilot test was conducted. All scales obtained above 0.78 of Cronbach alpha value. The final instrument was again reviewed by three experts in sport, event, and tourism. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied to develop the instrument. The current research paper consists of four steps for instrument development:

- Step 1: Identify the motivation factors,
- Step 2: Construct and refine the first draft through literature review, expert review, and other survey instrument,
- Step 3: Conduct pretest,
- Step 4: Conduct a pilot test and refine instrument

Data collection and analysis

The data collection was conducted at one of the 2010-2011 Southeast Conference (SEC) College Football games in the U.S. The sample for this study consisted of sport tourists at sport events. Data were collected over two days. The questionnaires were distributed by individuals who were certified by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program. Willing participants were asked if they were tourists, and the questionnaire was given to those tourists. To ensure only tourists being surveyed, the question, "what is the zip code of your residence" was asked. A systematic sampling method was applied. The tests were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 19.0 for Windows).

Results

The sample was drawn from sport event tourists who were 21 years old and older. Based on the definition of SET, only sport event tourists were selected for further analysis. A total of 175 surveys were completed. The percentages of female (51%) and male (49%) were about the same. Over half of the total attendees (62%) said that their primary reason was for attending football games and tailgating. Twenty-three percent of respondents came only for the football game itself. About half of the attendees (50%) used their own car to attend this sport event. Thirty-five percent of respondents stayed in a friend's or relative's house while 19% stayed at a hotel or motel. Seventy-seven percent of respondents were college graduates including 30% post-graduates. Forty was the median value of participant's age. About one third of participants (33%) were ranged from 21 to 31 years old. About

53% of the people came with their friends and 24% are with their family members. Almost half participants (43%) have been to more than 3 home games this year. Respondents were also characterized by a high annual income with 77% having an annual household income of more than \$50,000.

To compare and rank the items, descriptive statistics were used to evaluate participants' motivation towards football event. "Socialization" (M=6.25, SD=1.1) was the highest motivation item for sport event tourists, followed by "Love Football Games" (M=5.84, SD=1.5) and "Area, Weather, and Good Residents" (M=5.71, SD=1.6) respectively. On the other hand, "Promotions and Giveaways" (M=3.38, SD=2.1) was ranked the lowest motivation factor, followed by "In-Game Entertainment" (M=3.99, SD=2.0) (Table 1).

Table 2 shows the results of factor analysis. The question was asked, "How important was each factor in your decision to visit today? Please circle one that best describes on each question." After Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of 13 items, 12th and 13th items were eliminated because the response rate (less than 5%) of 13th item (named, "others") and the communalities of 12th item (family togetherness) were too low for further analysis. Although the Cronbach's standardized alpha of factor 3 was slightly lower than desired ($\alpha=0.56$), it was acceptable as this was an exploratory study [68].

Factor 1 included six attributes and had a reliability of 0.861. The six attributes accounted for 31.41% of the total variance. Factor 1 was labeled *Economical Sport Event Tourism*. Factor 2 was named *Football Game Itself*. This factor has a reliability of 0.71. Three attributes include *Rivalries*, *Quality and Result of Play*, and *Love Football Games*. It explained 19.38% of the total variance. Factor 3 contained two attributes and has a reliability of 0.56. Factor 3 was labeled *Being a Good Resident*. Two attributes explained 15.59% of the total variance.

Conclusions and Discussions

The most significant contribution of this study can be explained in both conceptual and practical perspectives. In conceptual perspective, this study proposed a framework that shows the steps to find motivation factors of SET and apply the findings from the results. Most importantly, this study provided a definition of sport event tourist and tourism. Although SET was described in Getz's study, it only generally explained what factors need to be studied and addressed in two different perspectives, whereas, the findings from this study provided several implications in practical perspective.

Table 1: Sport Event Motivation Items.

Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Rivalries	4.83	1.9
Quality and Result of Play	5.01	1.6
Viewing Outstanding Player	4.36	1.9
Ticket Price	4.02	1.8
Overall Cost	4.10	1.9
Love Football Games	5.84	1.5
Socialization	6.25**	1.1
Area, Weather, and Good Residents	5.71	1.6
Promotions and Giveaways	3.38*	2.1
In-Game Entertainment	3.99	2.0
Relaxation	5.20	1.9
Family Togetherness	5.45	1.9

*Lowest and **Highest Score

Table 2: Factor Analysis Results.

Factors	Attributes	Factor loadings	Communality	Eigen-value	Variance (%)	Reliability coefficient
Factor 1: Economical Sport Event Tourism	Overall Cost	.841	.740	3.455	31.412	.861
	Promotions & Giveaways	.836	.706			
	Ticket Price	.815	.730			
	In-Game Entertainment	.738	.613			
	Viewing Outstanding Player	.586	.669			
	Relaxation	.539	.503			
Factor 2: Football Game Itself	Rivalries	.831	.706	2.132	19.377	.710
	Quality & Result of Play	.719	.703			
	Love Football Games	.664	.644			
Factor 3: Being a Good Resident	Socialization	.800	.671	1.714	15.581	.564
	Area, Weather, & Good Residents	.761	.616			

In marketing perspective, factor 1, “economical sport tourism” explains that sport event tourists travel and attend sports events because they want to enjoy sport events with low cost. They like to attend the event to relax and get away from their daily routine. However, their expenditure is one of the most critical concerns. It indicates that marketing departments at colleges need to focus on special promotions (e.g., discount coupons or special package) for SET. Based on weekly information of the sport season, revenue management may be applied for ticket prices. In addition, any related local events can be combined as a package. For example, the homecoming game can be scheduled with the opponent who had the lowest number of attendees from previous years, thus providing yet another reason (other than sport) to attend the event. On the other hand, the results implied that sport event tourists do not attend sport only for watching but also committing their citizenship. It also emphasized that pre-, on, and post-game events, such as tailgating, need to be promoted. The result of factor 2 also clearly point out that the game itself is important. The results are consistent with those factors in other studies [13,19,49]. Many strategies can be applied to improve the quality of game, such as training of student athletes and selecting good coaching staff. Finally, factor 3 suggests that social engagement, “being a good resident” is one of the main reasons to attend college sport event. It indicates that marketing departments at colleges need to focus on special promotions for internal market, such as student, faculty, and staff. In addition, public relations (PR) should be applied as one of marketing tools which directly increase the reputation of the college and sport spirit. As a result, it will create and maintain the strong relationship between residents and tourists.

Although all processes were developed through the validated instrument and method, it is believed that the scale or items may be further refined or improved. Some group difference analysis methods (e.g., t-test and ANOVA test) can be also applied to see differences. The results can provide more detailed information (e.g., target market in different segmented group). On the other hand, limitations may be associated with framework. Although a framework provided a clear guidance of how to apply the findings from the results conceptually, more detailed information (e.g., destination image, personal factors, and past experiences) can be provided or empirically examined. Finally, the results of the study may be specific to the tourists of the specific college football event, to the region, or even to the state. Thus, the event location limits the generalization of the findings. The findings and conclusions of the current study may have been different had the data been collected from other regions. Nevertheless, it is believed that the results of the current study represent the first

approach in finding motivation factors of SET at the college football game by providing an efficient and effective framework for DMOs to apply into decision-making process. In addition, this practical approach can be useful in strategic planning for the future SET and college sport game settings.

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