

SPORTS TOURISM AND SYSTEM OF EXPERIENCES

*UDC 338.48:796](497.5)
Preliminary communication*

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Received 16 June 2010
Revised 27 August 2010
5 October 2010

Abstract

Tourists are increasingly more experienced and demanding and seek a wide range of experiences. They wish to broaden their horizon or feel enriched by engaging in new and specific sports activities. Therefore, sport in the modern tourism has not only a perceptual role, but it is also important contents of stay, and frequently the main motive for travelling to a certain tourist destination. In some cases the types of sports and sports services, and the unique experiences that are expected from sports activities directly affect the tourists when choosing a destination they will visit. The aim of this paper is to accentuate the connection between sport and tourism and to analyze the motives and profiles of participants in sports events. Based on years of experience working with top and amateur athletes as well as numerous interviews with the concerned, main sports tourism types will be mapped into the system of experiences schema, specific management tool that allows destination managers better management of experiences.

Keywords Sports tourism, Sports tourism types, System of experiences

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary tourists are more experienced and demanding, and are looking for a wide range of experiences. The main element of differentiation between the set of experiences and other methods of measuring destinations' performance is more focused on experiences than on accommodation and some other "classical" contents of supply. Therefore, it is widely accepted that tourist destinations using its specific system of experiences have to create a set of unique values and memorable experiences which tourists can "take home" and share with friends and families (THR and Horwath Consulting Zagreb 2003, 181).

Tourists wish to broaden their horizon or feel enriched by learning about something new or by engaging in specific activities. Active or passive participation in sports activities, in combination with unique sports resources, first of all places and facilities, could provide tourists with outstanding experiences.

Connection between tourism and sport is not new. Tourism and sport are two cognate and closely interrelated social phenomena. The interrelationship between tourism and sport was analysed by many authors (Hunziker and Krapf 1942; Anthony 1966; Glyptis 1982; Standeven and De Knop 1999; De Knop and Van Hoecke 2003; Bartoluci 2003), and as well as the similarity of their functions, it originates from the fact that the bearers of these two occurrences are as a rule the same subjects, i.e. tourists. Tourism,

as an experience-oriented activity, and sport, as a performance-oriented activity, are very much like Siamese twins (Keller 2002, 5).

Considering the mutual relationship, sport in the modern tourism has not only a perceptual role, but becomes ever more important contents of stay, with tourists who become active participants in various sports activities (Bartoluci 2003, 29). Furthermore, not only sport does become one of the contents of stay, but it is frequently the main motive for travelling to a certain tourist destination what makes a good foundation for development of selective form of tourism – sports tourism. Selective forms of tourism are recognized by motives why people travel at certain tourist destinations, and in this case, the main motives for travel are sport and sports facilities. Standeven and De Knop (1999) concluded that sport tourism, under a variety of forms, has become an integral part of tourism.

It means that when it comes to sports tourism, tourist choose destinations by the criterion of a sports activities, products and services it offers. Types of sports activities and the unique set of experience that is expected from these activities directly influence the choice of tourists.

Therefore, sports tourism sets new challenges for destination management, but also the tourists. Former are faced with the need for creation of new sports products, typical of their destination and turning it into a stimulating tourist experience. It is not only about involving tourists in sports, but it should be specific co production between destination managers and tourists.

1. SYSTEM OF EXPERIENCES

The new form of individualized approach to the tourist represents an advancement of tourism in the direction of the individual needs, expectations and forms of consumption, those facing the personal development. Travel demand is more targeted to the personal feelings and experiences that include senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch. Naturally, supply side has to find out the ways to satisfy such a demand.

It is crucial to truly understand the concept of experiences. Experiences are memorable events that seduce, inspire and influence the tourists. Experiences are categorized depending on whether the tourist is active or passive, and whether the tourist is mentally absorbed or physically engaged by the experience. The main element of differentiation is more focused on experiences than on accommodation.

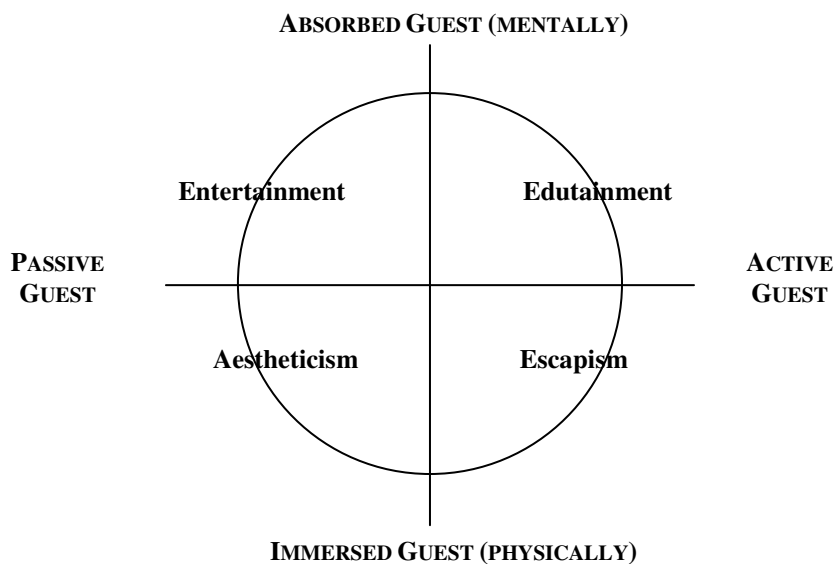
Regardless their predominant active- or passive-ness, tourists generally seek experiences relating to Entertainment, Edutainment, Aestheticism and Escapism (THR and Horwath Consulting Zagreb 2003, 181). Tourists' experiences integrate all aforementioned components but one aspect truly dominates over the others:

- Entertainment experiences – tourists are mainly passive; they intent to absorb presented experiences through their five senses – they want to see, hear, smell, taste and touch.

- Edutainment (education + entertainment) experiences – tourists seek to get actively involved in proposed experiences; they are eager to learn in an entertaining way.
- Aestheticism experiences – tourists are predominantly passive; they seek to immerse themselves into an environment and/or event.
- Escapism experiences – tourist search for hyper activity and involvement; they truly want to become part of it.

Considering the destinations system of experiences, components of tourism supply are usually displayed using images, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: System of experiences



Source: THR and Horwath Consulting Zagreb 2003, 181.

2. MOTIVES OF SPORTS TOURISTS AND PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Motives for participating in sport are many and varied. A significant amount of research on the motives behind sports participation involves the individual characteristics – interests, needs, goals and personality (Weinberg and Gould 2008) and is also linked to similar work on the social-psychology of leisure (Mannel and Kleiber 1997). On the other hand, there are clearly motives which are more specifically identified with sport (rather than tourism) such as competitiveness, a desire to win, the testing of one's abilities and the development of skills and competencies, especially among elite participants. Many other motives might also be claimed by tourism.

McIntosh and Goeldner (1986) classification system of the various travel motivators include physical, interpersonal, and status and prestige motivators that have relevance to sport. Complemented version of the most important motivators is shown below.

Physical motivators:

- refreshment of body and mind – relaxation and recuperation, escape from the pressures of everyday life, “recharging batteries” (Cohen 1988),
- health purposes – quest for health, fitness and general wellbeing (Astrand 1978; Long 1990), weight control, physical appearance (Reeves 2000),
- pleasure – pleasurable excitement.

Interpersonal motivators:

- desire to meet people – social integration, social interaction (Reeves 2000), sense of affiliation, need to belong to a team, group, club or society in general,
- visit friends and relatives – enjoying each other's company, emotional warmth (Elias and Dunning 1986),
- to seek new and different experiences – “quest for excitement” (Elias and Dunning 1986), to expect unexpected, to have fun,
- need to escape from routine experiences – break the routine within socially accepted boundaries, and “ritual inversion” (Graburn 1983).

Status and prestige motivators:

- personal development,
- goal achievement and winning (Reeves 2000),
- ego enhancement – an important component within a particular lifestyle, self-importance.

In each of these areas it is clear that the motives of the sports participants and the tourists can be remarkably similar. In order to understand more fully the motives of particular sports tourist types, a range of sports tourism participation profiles has to be examined. Profiles of a variety of sports tourists are structured under the three headings – primary sports tourists, associated sports tourists and tourists interested in sport (Weed and Bull 2004, 55-72).

Primary sports tourists are those sports tourists for whom sports tourism participation is the primary reason for travel. They are the most straightforward group to address (mainstream sports tourism market) but this group is not homogeneous and it would be very difficult to assign any common characteristics across these sports tourists, except that sport is the primary motivation for their trip. Elite athletes are a typical group of sports tourists – their travel is both domestic and international, and can be for either training or competition; sports participation is essentially their job; the place experience is often unimportant for them except in the sense that it provides quality facilities, expertise and adequate climate; the motivation for this group is advancement and achievement in elite sports but there may be exceptions to this. Other groups of primary sports tourists are outdoor, adventure and “alternative” sports tourists because the

nature of many of these sports (sailing, surfing, snowboarding etc.) is such that participant cannot take part in them at home, athletics spectators, committed football fans, golf and skiing tourists (experienced participants and those who are using the trip to learn to ski or to play golf) and mass-participation events.

Associated sports tourists are those sports tourists for whom sport is the primary reason for travel, but for whom factors other than the sport are the reason for their sports tourism participation. It is difficult category to delineate and some types of sports tourists may fall into this category if they primary motivation for participation relates to some aspects of the experience other than the activity itself (for instance meeting up with friends, post-activity experience etc.). Perhaps the best examples of “associated experience” sports tourists are horse-racing spectators and skiing and golf tourists for whom post-activity experiences could be more important than the skiing or the golf itself.

Tourists interested in sport are tourists for whom sport is not the primary trip purpose. They are incidental sports tourists but that is not to say that sport is always irrelevant in the holiday decision-making process. Sports opportunities could be one of the factors considered in choosing a holiday destination. The “tourists interested in sport” category is potentially huge and the best examples are holiday camp and traditional beach tourists.

3. MARKET FOR SPORTS TOURISM

Finally, there has to be considered the range of sports tourism provision. The supply side of the market for sports tourism has been modified from Glyptis's work (1982). The updated sports tourism types are (Weed and Bull 2004, 123-134):

- tourism with sports content – the broadest of the sports tourism types, including not only the widest range of activities, but also the widest range of providers. Tourism that involves sport as an incidental activity can often be sports tourism at its simplest and most unorganized. Sport and sports facilities or opportunities do not play any part in the choice of destination, and which would often take place spontaneously rather than being preplanned (a trip to the local swimming pool, a trip to watch an basketball match as an alternative evening activity).
- sports participation tourism – the most obvious category and it refers to multi-sport or single-sport sports participation tourism at the most basic level (excluding active participation at higher levels, instructions and trainings). Providers in this section tend to be drawn from the commercial sector.
- sports training – comprises sports tourism trips where the prime purpose is sports instruction and training ranging from beginners to elite athletes. Providers in this section can be drawn from both the commercial and public sector.
- sports events – refers to tourism where the prime purpose of the trip is to take part in sports event, either as a participant or a spectator. Providers can be drawn from the commercial or public sector, or by a partnership of the two.

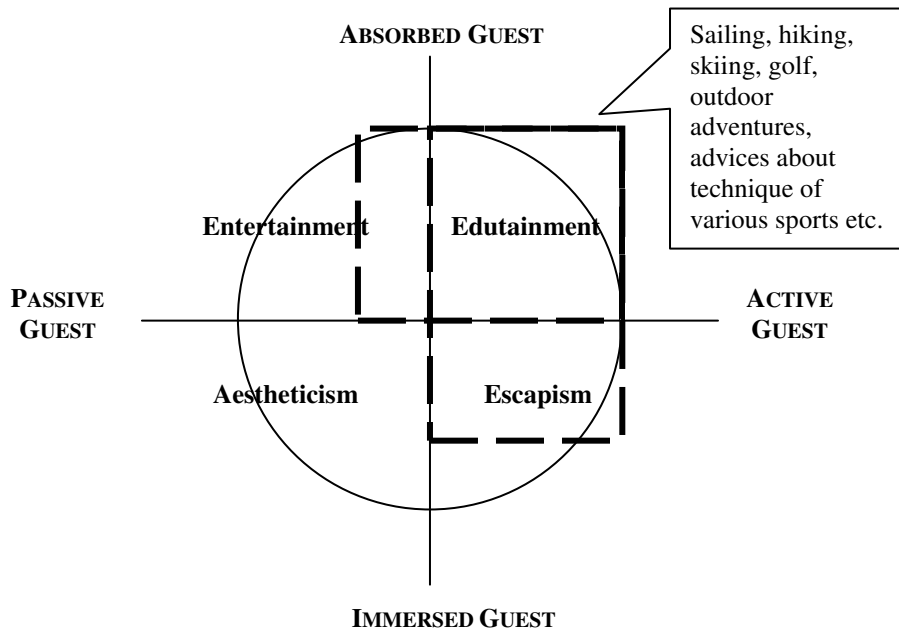
- luxury sports tourism – it is not defined by reference to the nature of the sport involved in the trip but rather it is the quality of the facilities and the luxurious nature of the accommodation and attendant facilities and services (Monaco Grand Prix). The nature of provision in this market is exclusively commercial.

Although some sports tourism types could overlap with other sports tourism types this categorization eases the examination of the nature and extent of sports tourism provision and can assist in examining the range of strategies used by sports tourism providers.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Considering main sports tourism types, it is possible to map them into system of experiences schema and to propose some memorable sports events that could be organised in the destination. Such events should excite and inspire tourists in a way they will “take home” a memorable recollection of their travels.

Figure 2: System of experiences – Sports participation tourism



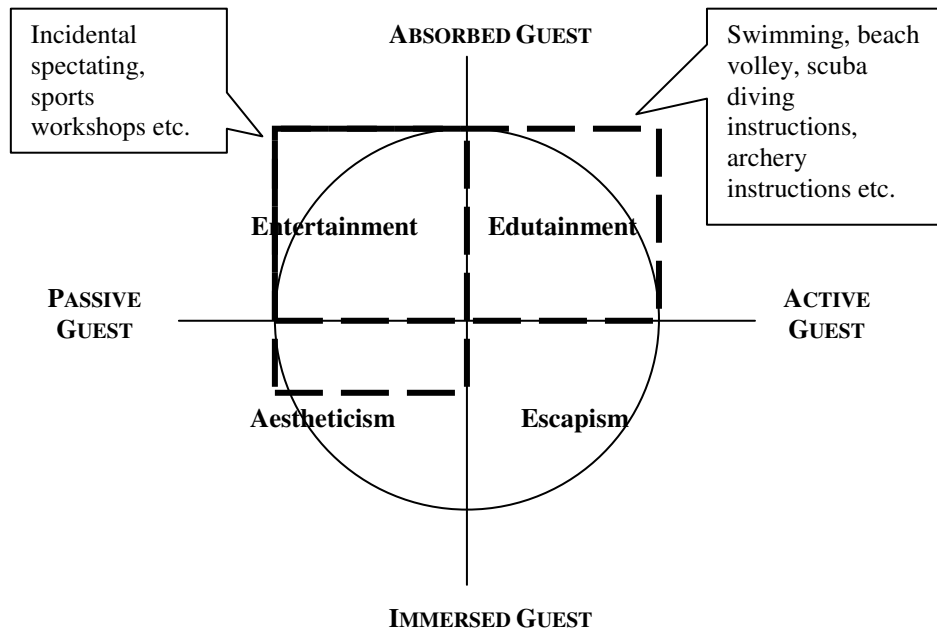
Source: Author’s research.

Sports participation tourism refers to multi- or single-sport sports participation tourism at the most basic level. Therefore, it involves only active participation in sports. It is possible to organize some instruction (e.g. advice about technique on mountain bike touring holidays) but the instruction is not the prime purpose of the trip. Mapping these features onto the system of experiences schema, it is possible to conclude that sports

participation tourism is placed on the right (active) side of the schema (Figure 2), including one small part of Entertainment experiences (where tourists are mainly passive) but excluding one part of Escapism experiences (hyper activity and involvement of elite athletes).

Tourism with sports content refers to sport as an incidental activity. It could be multi- or single-sport, active (a trip to the local swimming pool, beach volley) or passive (a trip to watch a tennis match as an alternative evening activity). It is possible to organize some instruction (e.g. scuba diving instructions on beach holidays) but the instruction is not the prime purpose of the trip. Mapping these features onto the system of experiences schema, it is possible to conclude that tourism with sports content is placed on the upper (absorbed) side of the schema including a small part of Aestheticism experiences but excluding Escapism experiences reserved to advanced and elite athletes (Figure 3).

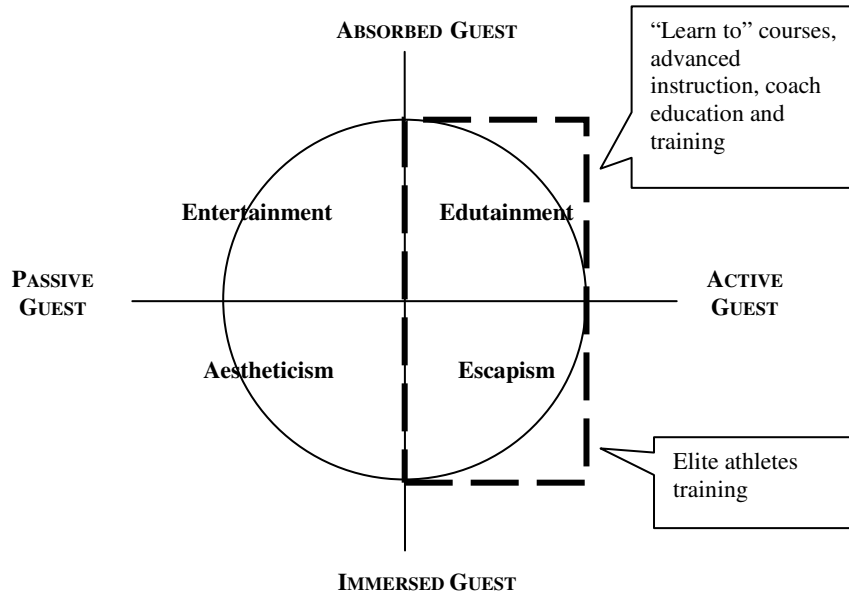
Figure 3: System of experiences – Tourism with sports content



Source: Author's research.

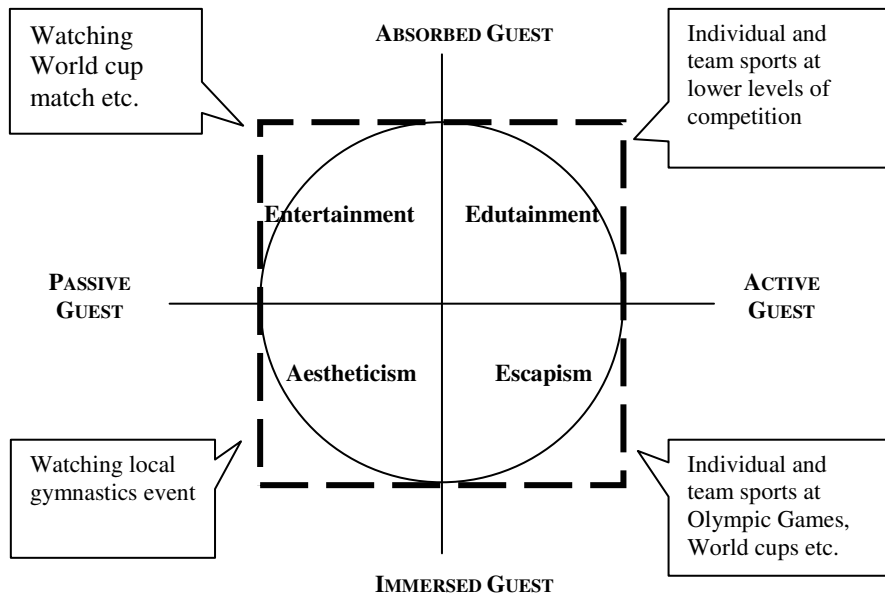
Sports training refers to sports tourism trips where the prime purpose is sports instruction and training. It involves only active participation in multi- or single-sport ranging from beginners to elite athletes. Mapping these features onto the system of experiences schema, it is possible to conclude that sports training is placed only on the right (active) side of the schema (Figure 4).

Figure 4: System of experiences – Sports training



Source: Author's research.

Figure 5: System of experiences – Sports events

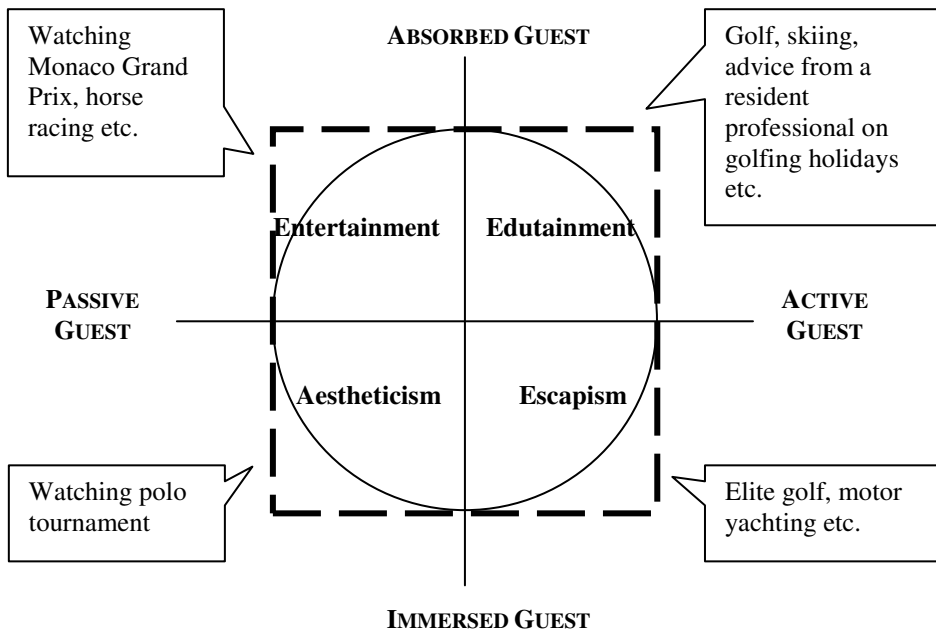


Source: Author's research.

Sports events refer to participants or spectators of sports events. It could be multi- or single-sport, active (participants) or passive (spectators) and is readily associated with elite sport although it also involves beginners and advanced sports. Mapping these features onto the system of experiences schema, it is possible to conclude that sports events are placed all over the schema (Figure 5).

Luxury sports tourism is defined by the quality of the facilities and the luxurious nature of the accommodation and attendant facilities and services. It could be multi- or single-sport, active (participants) or passive (as a corporate hospitality guest) ranging from beginners to elite athletes. Mapping these features onto the system of experiences schema, it is possible to conclude that luxury sports tourism is placed all over the schema too (Figure 6).

Figure 6: System of experiences – Luxury sports tourism



Source: Author’s research.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary tourist destinations offer to its visitors the opportunity to develop their personal potential through active involvement in various sports and sports events. In such a way, destinations create set of experiences in sport (Entertainment, Edutainment, Aestheticism and Escapism) which tourist can “take home” and share with the friends and families.

In order to develop an adequate system of experiences destination managers need to know and understand the motives and profile of participants and types of sports tourism. Main types of sports tourism were mapped into the system of experiences schema and it can be concluded that all of the five discussed here may be active involving Edutainment experiences while the four types of sports tourism (except tourism with sport content) may involve Escapism experiences. Passive participation involving Entertainment and Aestheticism experiences can only take place in the tourism with sport content, sports events and luxury sports tourism. Sports training and sports participation tourism are mainly active and may involve Edutainment and Escapism experiences while luxury sports tourism and sports events may involve all the four experiences.

Understanding, implementing and managing the proposed system of experiences may be crucial destination managers' tasks in attracting sports tourists and convincing them to stay in the destination.

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