

Chapter 42

Sport Events as a Tool for City Marketing: The Case of the Spanish Swimming Master Championship

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ABSTRACT

Sport events are characterized by their economic potential. Therefore, they have become a key element in revitalizing tourism and a valuable instrument for city marketing managers. This is true not only for mega events but also for medium and small-size events. This chapter focuses on a sport event as an example of how it can be used for these purposes. The authors have chosen the Spanish Swimming Master Championship celebrated in the city of Pontevedra in 2011. The choice of the city is justified by its concern about celebration of sporting events during the last decade as a means of promoting the city and increasing tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between sport and tourism has been amply shown by the literature and seems unquestionable (Hinch & Higham, 2011). Sport and physical activity have long been considered key motives for travel and tourism.

Tourist destinations tend to build their offering with a particular focus on tourist behavior and what tourist is looking for. Thus, sport tourism development is a relevant strategy carried out by

many tourism destinations. As Griffin and Haylar (2007) state, the aims of such a strategy are manifold: product differentiation, enhancement of competitive advantages and promotion of socio-economic development.

According to this, sport events are increasingly used in the marketing of cities (Green, 2002). Cities have justified the use of sport events as a component of their marketing mix on the basis of their power to attract visitors and increase exposure of the city. Such events give an opportunity

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to promote destination and represent an occasion to build, enhance or reposition the host destination image (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007).

It is possible to consider positive effects both in short-run and in long-run (Sorrentino, 2013). In short-run perspective, sport tourists can create value added through their expenditures and the indirectly induced increases in value. On the other hand, in the long-run, they can improve an important benefit generating free publicity for destination if they are satisfied from their tourist experience.

Therefore tourist satisfaction appeals as a key factor when considering this strategy in order to contribute to the overall marketing of the destination by helping to create or maintain an image for a destination. As Chen et al. (2011) point out sport events verify the relationships among the variables of the participants' background, the attractiveness of local sport tourism, participation motives, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Thus, sport events have been used by cities as tools that are beyond mere tourism products to generate additional visits to a destination. Indeed, they can yield extraordinarily high levels of tourism, media coverage, prestige, or economic impact for the host community or destination (Getz, 2012). Sport event tourism is recognized as a desirable niche market and many cities along the world have established sport commissions to promote this special tourism.

Cities become responsible for their economic development by marketing a sporting event. In doing so, they not only establish strategic alliances with other cities or promote their tourism, but sponsoring sporting events to create powerful brands (Seisdedos, 2007). For this purpose it is necessary a knowledge of who the potential sport-tourists are, what types of services and what they expect to get out of the experience itself. In general, we can summarize the profile of sport tourists as the following: male, affluent individuals, college educated, willing to travel long distances, likely to

engage in active sport tourism and tend to engage in repeat activity (i.e., not a 'one-off' vacation).

Our study focuses on a small-size sport event as an example of how it can be used as a marketing tool. For this purpose we have chosen the Spanish Swimming Master Championship celebrated in the city of Pontevedra (Galicia) in 2011. The choice of the city is justified by the fact of its concern about celebration of sport events during the last decade as a means of promoting the city and increase tourism. With this aim, the chapter is structured as follows. In section two, general features of sport events are presented. In section three, we deal with sport event tourism as particular case of sport tourism. In section four events are presented as a strategic tool of city marketing. Section five focuses on the particular sport event studied. Section six concludes with some relevant implications for further studies about tourism planning and city marketing.

SPORT EVENTS

González and Morales (2009) collected some event definitions. As an example, Goldblatt (1997) offered one of the first attempts of definition of a special event stating that it 'is a unique moment in time celebrated with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs'. According to this definition two central ideas could be extracted (Getz, 1997 cited in Shone & Parry, 2004). The first one is that each event is unique and therefore if we do not attend it, we miss an opportunity (maybe the only one if our life). The second point is based on the idea that to the customer or guest, an event is an opportunity for leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience.

'Events are an important motivator of tourism, and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations' (Getz, 2012). Thus, events can be understood as a tourism opportunity where the experience of participating

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