

Travel behaviors of active sport tourists versus passive sport tourists

Cory Kulczycki, University of Alberta

Elizabeth Halpenny, University of Alberta

**Sport tourism
Abstract 2009-004**

**May 28, 2009
8:00 AM**

**25 minute oral
(Richland B)**

Sport tourism refers to travel away from home to play sport, watch sport, or to visit a sport attraction including both competitive and non-competitive activities (Depley, 1998, p.23). Three types of sport tourism are typically noted, active sport tourism, which involves travel to participate within sport, event sport tourism where people travel to watch sport, and nostalgia sport tourism that includes visiting the facilities of sport (e.g., halls of fame and museums) (Gibson, 2003). The latter two categories are forms of passive sport tourism. The participants of Banff Bike Fest 2008 event represent active sport tourists who are involved in the sport of bicycle racing. The spectators and visitors to Banff National Park during Banff Bike Fest 2008 represent a sample of event sport tourists. Banff Bike Fest was held over the weekend of June 21 and June 22, 2008. The event included five events ranging from invitational time trials for experienced cyclists to races for families and children (Banff Lake Louise Tourism, 2008a). The Alberta Bicycle Association sanctioned one event, the Criterium, a circuit race on the streets of Banff. Licensed racers received points towards their provincial standings (Banff Lake Louise Tourism, 2008a). Bike Fest also encouraged the cyclists and visitors to experience Banff National Park over the weekend of racing.

The purpose of this presentation is to contribute to the typology of sport tourists by providing information about the importance of sport as a motivator for sport tourists while on vacation. The presentation will address a concern expressed by Jones (2008) that sport tourism research lacks a firm description of the sport tourist and their specific travel behaviors. Few studies have focused on small-scale events for sport tourism (Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2003), or have compared the motivations and travel behaviors of active sport participants, event sport tourists and non-sport participants who attended the same sporting event. Methods: Data was collected as part of a larger study that explored the hosting of special events within Banff National Park, Canada. The study was explained to each participant and they were asked to return the completed surveys in a postage paid envelop once they arrived home. The questionnaire was designed to examine experiences and motivations about visiting Banff National Park, bicycling behavior, and travel habits. Approximately 200 surveys were distributed to adult race competitors between June 20 and 21, 2008. Fifty-seven completed surveys were returned; 50 respondents were male and six were female. Participants' average age was 36.5 years. The majority of competitors had a university degree (undergraduate: n= 30; graduate: n= 11). Many racing participants were residents of nearby communities and provinces; travel distances and periods of visitation to Banff National Park varied greatly. During Bike Fest researchers also intercepted spectators and Banff National Park visitors who were asked to complete very similar surveys.

Approximately 1149 surveys were distributed and 262 completed surveys were returned. These passive sport tourists included 105 male and 142 females with an average age of 42.7 years. The majority of passive sport tourists had completed secondary education (college diploma: n= 63; undergraduate: n= 86; graduate: n= 65). It is expected that individuals who were entrants in the Banff Bike Fest events would demonstrate a more active behavior and stronger interest in sport when traveling than the passive sport tourists. Data presented here was analyzed using SPSS 16.0. Qualitative open-ended comments were used to enhance analysis of the quantitative data. Results: Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of sport in their motivation to travel on a 10-point scale (0 = No Influence; 10 = Entire Influence). Active sport tourists had a mean of 6.9 for importance of opportunities to participate in sporting events when choosing a vacation destination, while the passive sport participants reported an average score of 2.9 on the scale. The importance of opportunities to watch a sporting event when choosing a vacation destination received a mean of 4.9 from the bicycle racers and 2.9 from the passive sport participants. Furthermore, the bicycle racers demonstrated a greater interest in all aspects of sport; time spent participating in (mean= 50.2); watching (mean= 10.7); and volunteering (mean= 4.8), than the passive sport participants who averaged: 15, 8.3, and 2.6, respectively. As sport fans, bike racers indicated that they were frequent (32 %), casual (32 %), avid (26 %) and not (5%) sport fans. Differences are noted when they are compared to the passive sport participants who were casual (42 %), frequent (27 %), not (20 %), and avid (8 %) sport fans.

This study compares responses of active sport participants/tourists and passive sport participants/tourists who attended, watched, and visited Banff National Park during Bike Fest 2008. Specifically, data was analyzed around the importance of watching and participating in sporting events while on vacation; percentage of time watching, participating, and volunteering at sporting events; and sport fan type (i.e., avid, frequent, casual, not a sport fan). During the presentation the authors will elaborate on the theoretical and practical implications of these observations. This will include examining how these sport tourists view the importance of sport as a tourism motivator will provide theoretical insight into the travel behavior of active and passive sport tourists. Practically, the results will provide a deeper understanding for destination managers about the type of tourists

2009 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2009)

attracted to small-scale sporting events and the importance of sport while tourists are on vacation. Event coordinators will also gain insight into the individuals (e.g., demographics and motivations) who travel to participate in and watch sporting events.