Insights from across the Pond: UK Perspectives on Sport Tourism and Sport Events Research
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Sport tourism

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75-minute symposium, roundtable, or workshop (Herring Gull)

In the United Kingdom, the increasing importance and profile of sport tourism and sport events as valuable areas of research has been recognised by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) with the awarding of grant funding for an international sport tourism project entitled ‘The STORMING Initiative’. This grant scheme forms part of the ESRC’s International Training and Networking Opportunities Programme. The project, being undertaken during 2010, offers seventeen travel and conference bursaries for UK-based early career researchers to each attend one of three international conferences and specially arranged sport tourism and sport events international networking meetings. One of the designated conferences chosen for the project is the NASSM (North American Society for Sport Management) 2010 Conference. As a result, seven successful ESRC bursary recipients will attend the NASSM Conference to outline their sport tourism and sport events research findings to a wider international audience. The purpose of this 75-minute workshop is to explore a selection of these empirical studies before inviting comparative discussions with fellow NASSM delegates that will be grounded in both European and North American contexts.

The three key underlying themes for the ESRC project are ‘Identities, Issues, and Impacts’, which will all be explored in greater depth during this proposed 75-minute workshop. The workshop will commence with the ESRC project manager providing a brief overview of the scheme and highlighting additional emerging research themes within the context of the overall project. A selection of the presenters will then outline their emerging research findings. These initial presentations will incorporate empirical findings, respective reviews of existing literature, and explanations of the research methodologies adopted.

With reference to the first underlying theme of the ESRC project, Identities, empirical research to be outlined include two qualitative studies; one with a focus on the lived experiences of triathletes as active sport tourists, alongside findings from a second study linked to the more passive Olympic tourism experiences and behaviours of international spectators at the Beijing 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Both studies suggest that in order to understand sport tourism experiences, research that is qualitative in nature is paramount.

In contrast and linked to the second main theme of the ESRC project, Issues, a further selection of empirical findings will be introduced into the workshop. These studies include an analysis of the security issues associated with the London 2012 Games and how the increasing deployment of various security measures represents a potential threat to human rights and individual freedom. Secondly, empirical data collected at the 2008 Beijing Games will be introduced which considers the role of the media at mega sport events and investigates the interconnected nature of media consumption as part of the spectator/consumer experience. In contrast, additional research findings will also be explored that look at the carrying capacity of selected major sport events, and these findings will consider some of the contemporary issues related to transport, accommodation, funding, community impacts, sustainability, and the environmental footprint of sport events.

With reference to the third main theme of the ESRC project, Impacts, the emphasis will be on sport event legacy. Firstly, empirical findings will examine the concept of sporting legacy within the context of the inaugural 2010 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) in Singapore. This will be contrasted with a second study which comprises ongoing data collection exploring the sport participation legacies of a series of major events within the United Kingdom. The latter study findings will examine the often quoted, but seemingly unsubstantiated, claims about the positive sports development potential of hosting a sport mega-event. Both legacy based studies look at how the concept of legacy has been constructed, the processes involved, and whether sustainable sport events legacies can genuinely be delivered.

Following completion of the 75-minute workshop, feedback will be provided to the audience in the form of a written report to be circulated to the ESRC as the funding body for the project, and also to NASSM members. As such, it is...
anticipated that the workshop will also facilitate long-term comparative sport tourism and sport events research collaborations from one side of the Atlantic to the other.