

The Role of Sport in the Development of Tourism: A Study on Awareness, Opinion, Preference and Selected Stakeholders Contribution by Sport Tourists and Non-Sport Tourists in Bangkok and Pattaya City

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Abstract

Thailand is a developing country that depends heavily on the tourism industry; therefore for the development of Thailand in the long run, it is crucial for Thailand to understand the sport tourism market as sport tourism. Sport tourism is a growing market. This study aims to analyze and determine the role of sport towards the development of tourism through understanding awareness, opinion, preference and selected stakeholders contribution by sport tourists and non-sport tourists in Bangkok and Pattaya City. This study has a total of 400 respondents; 200 sport tourists and 200 non-sport tourists. The data were collected from five major sport events and sport facilities in Bangkok and Pattaya City using non-probability sampling (quota, judgmental and convenience). Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to demonstrate the relationship between the variables. Independent sample *t*-test and SPSS statistics analysis were applied as research method and measurement for this study. The result showed difference between sport tourists and non-sport tourists' demands and expectations towards sport tourism vary; out of six hypotheses, two hypotheses found items with significant differences which were related to the dependent variable "preferences" towards sport tourism in Thailand, and "the contribution of the General Public in Thailand Sport Tourism development". It can be concluded that sport tourists and non-sport tourists are different, but both are important components for sport tourism development

Keywords: awareness, general public, Ministry of Tourism and Sport, non-sport tourists, opinion, private tourism sector, preference, sport tourists

Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important global industries, allowing travelers to explore new cultures, languages, traditions and ways of life. The most common type of tourism that interested tourists was leisure tourism. Nowadays, there are many other types of tourism that have emerged including sport tourism which is the focus of this study. This study focuses on Thailand which is more sport events-oriented, meaning that tourists are becoming more and more attracted by sport events, organized throughout the country. However, sport events organized in cities like Bangkok and Pattaya City seem also to encounter some problems in management and strategy planning. These problems seem to slow down the process of developing tourism in Thailand and does not add significant value to the national economic growth. Therefore, this research mainly focuses on analyzing and examining the relationship between the selected variables based on the researcher self-developed conceptual model and composed hypotheses.

Review of Literature

The Domain of Tourism and the Domain of Sport

Murphy (1985, p.9) stated that, “tourism involves the travel of non-residence”. This is support by Hinch and Hingham (2001) who stated that “to be considered a tourist, individuals must leave and eventually return home”. From both statements we can define that the domain of tourism is to consider all travelers outside their usual environment. On the other hand the domain of sports consider the statement by McPherson, Curtis, and Loy (1989, p.15) who define sport as “a structured, goal oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic physical activity”.

The Concept of Sports Tourism

Schwark (2007) stated that sport tourism is related with the gradation of sport tourism/ sport travel and their participation levels of sporting events. Schwark (2006b) named four forms of predication levels of sporting events. This research study can be categorized within the third form of participation level of sporting events as “Sport-oriented” category

because our focus group traveler holiday packages are predominantly oriented to sports participation.

Segmenting Sport Tourists

Hallman, Feiler and Breur (2012) segmented sport tourists to be sport tourists and non-sport tourists. The difference between sport tourists and non-sport tourists are as follows:

1. Sport tourists are active sport tourists group including spectators, sport participants and sport attraction visitor
2. Non-sport tourists are classic tourists group which include leisure tourists and business tourist

Awareness toward the Difference in Sport Tourism Demand and Supply

De Knop and Standeven (1998) defined sport tourism as travel for non-commercial (holiday) or for commercial (non-holiday/business) with the reason to participate in or observe sporting activities.

Thwaies (1990) suggested to be aware of the difference between sport tourism group supply and demand. Supply is related to intangibility, inseparability and perishability of certain aspects of the offer like staff issues because tourism is a “people industry”, while demand is related to high elasticity, seasonality, changing needs, attitudes and preference of customers.

Preference and Opinion toward Sport Tourism

Mihalic (2003) stated that sustainable sport tourism should take into account the preference and opinion of local inhabitants, tourists and business in developing and promoting development of sport tourism. Thus not all sport activities are appropriate in all destinations – some destinations may have comparative advantages in developing certain kind of sport activities, such as existing infrastructure, support of local industry, lower financial leakages for certain activities, higher acceptance among local people or natural advantages such as for hunting or wind-surfing. Activities, based on comparative advantages should be defined and promoted in development of tourism sports.

Government Intervention in the Market of Tourism Products

Gilbert (1990) suggested that the breadth and impact of tourism worldwide, it is inevitable that national governments will involve themselves in decisions affecting both the development and promotion of tourism products. However, the extent to which individual governments directly intervene in tourism marketing depends on a number of factors. The stage of economic and social development which the state has reached, as well as its own conception of what role it should play, will largely determine the political values of the government. This will lead to particular forms of intervention in the marketing of national tourism. The government intervention can be associated with regulation of tourism product as means of consumer protection (safety, standardization and service quality).

Lack of Hotel Contribution toward Sports Tourists

Herstein and Jaffe (2008) suggest that the demand for sport tourism throughout the world has risen in recent years primarily because of a greater emphasis on health and fitness and the increased use of sport events by cities in order to attract sport tourists. In light of the great interest of tourists in sport vacations, several sport clubs, such as Club Med, have been established in recent years. They offer a variety of sports activities. Despite the increasing demand for sports vacations, only a handful of hotels throughout the world actually market themselves as a sports-lover's paradise of any kind.

The Positive and Negative Disposition toward Sport Events Effects the Contribution of the General Public

Getz (1997) suggests that, the interest in hosting events can be attributed to the contribution that they make to important initiatives such as place branding, tourism promotion, generating publicity, improvement of occupancy, encouraging repeat visitation, and overcoming seasonality. Deccio and Baloglu (2002) stated that events can benefit community well-being through increases in employment, income, output, investment, extra services as well as new sources of entertainment and enhancements to quality of life. Walo, Bull, and Breen (1996) said that sports events can generate substantial costs, including increased garbage, policing costs, traffic congestion and pollution, and security problems.

Presenza and Sheehan (2013:2, p125-126) suggested that, both positive and negative impacts influence the residents' attitudes and perceptions toward events. Yang, Zeng, and Yingkang (2010) reflect that, growing concerns over the social impacts of tourism development have drawn attention to the appropriate weighting of residents' wellbeing in destination strategies, while Zhou (2010) said that it is commonly recognized that residents who are positively disposed to the development of tourism and related products – such as events – will enhance the tourist experience and contribute to the destination's attractiveness.

Research Framework

According to the research purpose and literature review discussed, the research presents the conceptual framework in Figure 1. Sport tourists and non-sport tourists are the independent variables. Awareness, opinion and preference towards sport tourism in Bangkok and Pattaya City, and the contribution of the Ministry of tourism and sport, the private tourism sector and the general public in Thailand sport tourism are all dependent variables.

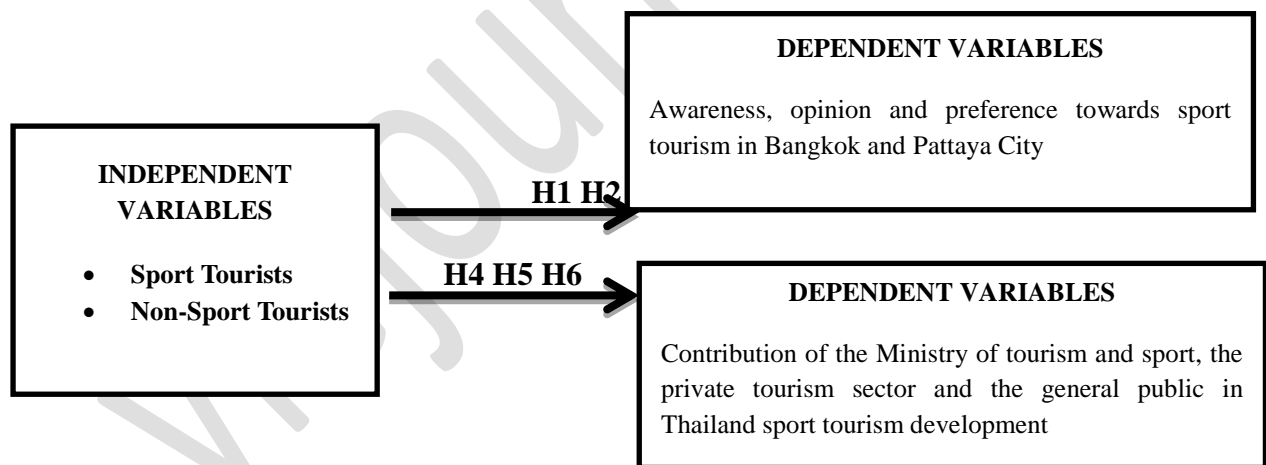


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on Figure 1, there is a total of six hypotheses, which are as follows:

- H 1 a: There is a significant difference in the awareness of sport tourism based on type of visitor
- H 2 a: There is a significant difference in the opinion of sport tourism based on type of visitor

H 3 a: There is a significant difference in the preference of sport tourism based on type of visitor

H 4 a: There is a significant difference in contribution of the Ministry of tourism and sport based on type of visitor

H 5 a: There is a significant difference in contribution of the private tourism sector based on type of visitor

H 6 a: There is a significant difference in contribution of the general public based on type of visitor

Research Methodology

The purpose of this research is to examine the difference between sport tourists and non-sport tourists related to their awareness, opinion and preference towards sport tourism in Bangkok and Pattaya City. It also examines the difference in ideas toward the contribution of the Ministry of tourism and sport, the private tourism sector and the general public in Thailand sport tourism.

A total of 400 questionnaire surveys with the construct of 5 points Likert scale were delivered to 200 sport tourists and 200 non-sport tourist participants at sport events and sport facilities. The researcher used the non-probability: quota, judgmental and convenience sampling to collect the primary data from the five major sport events and sport facilities in Bangkok and Pattaya City. The data were collected from 10th May 2015 to 1st June 2015. The researcher applied descriptive analysis in order to present a demographic profile and general information of the respondents.

Zikmund (2013) stated that descriptive statistics technique is employed to define the calculation of average, frequency distribution and percentage distribution as common forms of summarizing data of the population or samples in an investigation.

The Cronbach's Alpha was applied to test the reliability of variables of this research. Sekaran (2000) stated that in the reliability test, if Alpha value is greater than or equal to 0.6 then the variables will be considered as reliable, effective and consistent to apply as the research instruments. The detailed Cronbach's Coefficient reliability analysis of each variable can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha Values Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Measurement items
Awareness	0.921	3
Opinion	0.941	3
Preference	0.928	3
Ministry of tourism and sport	0.919	3
Private tourism sector	0.933	3
General public	0.926	3

Research Findings

According to descriptive analysis results, the demographic profile of the 400 respondents from 200 sport tourists and 200 non-sport tourists can be summarized as follows:

- 135 (67.5%) sport tourists are male, while only 104 (52.0%) non-sport tourists are male
- 74 (37.0%) sport tourists are aged between 18-25 years old, while only 65 (32.5%) non-sport tourists are aged between 18-25 years old

Based on the conceptual framework, the researcher has tested six hypotheses in this study using the independent sample *t*-test. The hypotheses test research findings are summarized in Table 2. There were two items with significantly differences: one in hypothesis 3 and one in hypothesis 6. The item with a significant difference was in hypothesis 3 (p -value = 0.031) - "Thailand takes into concern the preference of tourists while

managing sport tourism”. This item is rejected and explains that sport tourists and non-sports tourists have a different idea toward their preference being taken into concern by Thailand in managing sport tourism. The item with a significant difference is hypothesis 6 (p-value = 0.033) - “The general public has an important role in creating a positive image of Thailand as a sport tourism destination”. This item is rejected and explains that sport tourists and non-sports tourists have different opinions on the role of the general public role towards sport destination in Thailand.

Table 2

Summary of the Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis Statement	Employed Statistical test	P-value Sig. Level (2 tailed)	Hypotheses Testing Results
H1 a : There is a significant difference in the awareness of sport tourism based on type of visitor	Independent Sample <i>t</i> -test	0.305	Failed to reject H1 o
H2 a : There is a significant difference in the opinion of sport tourism based on type of visitor	Independent Sample <i>t</i> -test	0.181	Failed to reject H2 o
H3 a : There is a significant difference in the preference of sport tourism based on type of visitor	Independent Sample <i>t</i> -test	0.198	Reject H3 o in 1 item (P-value 0.031 in 1 item)
H4 a : There is a significant difference in contribution of Ministry of tourism and sport based on type of visitor	Independent Sample <i>t</i> -test	0.730	Failed to reject H4 o
H5 a : There is a significant difference in contribution of private tourism sector based on type of visitor	Independent Sample <i>t</i> -test	0.449	Failed to reject H5 o
H6 a : There is a significant difference in contribution of the general public based on type of visitor	Independent Sample <i>t</i> -test	0.113	Reject H6 o in 1 item (P-value 0.033 in 1 item)

Managerial Implications

According to the analysis of results, this research has proved that there is a difference in the ideas of sport tourists and non-sport tourists toward awareness, opinion, preference and selected stakeholders contribution. The results in this research helps to better understand the sport tourism market in Thailand and develop better planning to gain more competitive advantage in the market.

Based on the research of the tested hypotheses, the researcher has discovered differences in the preferences of sport tourism in the eyes of sport tourists and non-sport tourists, and also a difference in contribution of general public toward sport tourists as well as non-sport tourists. Therefore, the researcher would like to point out some suggestions as follows:

The finding in this study point out a significant difference in one item (p -value = 0.031) related to preference of sport tourism. This finding can be related with the previous studies by Mihalic (2003) who suggested that “Different types of visitor group have different type of preference”. In this research it is clear that customer satisfaction differs, therefore an effective management of sport tourism destination must better understand the two group differences as the key toward long term development of sport tourism in Thailand.

This study also points out a significant difference in one more item (p -value = 0.033) related to difference in contribution of general public toward sport tourists as well as non-sport tourists. This finding can be related with the previous studies by Presenza and Sheevan (2013) who recommended that “The involvement of general public is crucial toward sport tourism development”. From this research it is clear that the general public has a significant role in development of tourism, but the finding that is crucial for this research is the way sport tourists and non-sport tourists see the role of the general public involvement is different, therefore Thailand sport tourism development planning must survey more into what the differences are. Understanding the significant role of general public in sport tourism development is crucial for the tourism industry in Thailand.

Regarding the previous researches mentioned earlier and findings related to this study, the researcher has some recommendations related to sport tourism in Thailand as follows:

Awareness toward sport tourism: there are differences in the demand of sport tourists and non-sport tourists, planning sport tourism development must consider the differences of these two groups.

Opinion toward sport tourism: there are differences in the opinion of sport tourists and non-sport tourists, for the growth of the sport tourism market we must consider the differences of these two groups when planning sport tourism development.

Preference toward sport tourism: preferences of sport tourists and non-sport tourists had one item rejected, this means that there is a significant difference between sport tourists and non-sport tourists. Therefore, the development of sport tourism in Thailand must take into concern the differences of sport tourists and non-sport tourists seriously. From this research it is clear that the differences in preference of sport tourists and non-sport tourists is significant and that more research need to be done to better understand these differences.

Ministry of tourism and sport on the future of sport tourism in Thailand: this study points out that there is a lack of understanding between “What is provided, and what is wanted”. In modern society, the client is king. To meet up with sport tourists and non-sport tourists’ demands and expectations is more crucial than in the past. This is also due to the fact that in the modern society tourism industry the bargaining power of buyer is higher than before, so these are issues that can be look into more. For the future of sport tourism in Thailand the Ministry of Sport and Tourism must change their marketing planning, and listening more to demands of people can be done by using surveys and other means.

Private tourism sector role in Thailand tourism development: this research points out a lack of communication between the private tourism sector and the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, local event organizers and so on. The researcher therefore recommends cooperation among all effected parties with the development of sport tourism and to cooperate for a more efficient sport tourism development planning in Thailand.

General public involvement in sport Tourism development in Thailand: involving the general public to feel part of an event will make them feel proud and happy. This will have a direct effect on the sport events because participants will feel the friendliness and want to come back, this in turn will create a positive word of mouth further on.

Gender interested for sport tourists and non-sport tourists: this study points out that the gender of sport tourists is mainly male, while non-sport tourists are almost equally male and female. The person's gender can indicate their personal travel preferences.

Limitations and Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following as a reference for future research studies:

The researcher is aware that the research scope is limited to the number of sport tourists and non-sport tourists available within the period of time during which the sport activities were organized in Bangkok and Pattaya City. This research cannot give a fully precise idea of sport tourism in the Thailand due to the narrow area of the study into two sites only.

Also in this study the researcher collected only 400 data (200 sport tourists and 200 non-sport tourists equally). The data collected represent only the idea of sport tourists and non-sport tourists from five major sport events and sport related facilities in Bangkok and Pattaya City. Further this research also only investigated 6 dependent variables related with understanding the different perception of sport tourists and non-sport tourists toward factors influencing sport tourism in Thailand. Thus, there might be other variables which reflect the difference between sport tourists and non-sport tourists' idea toward sport tourism in Thailand.

Therefore, further study should investigate larger amount of data, different variables and it could be worth paying attention on other sites in Thailand or even in ASEAN regions. This will help to better understand the possibility of the sport tourism market. This study only used the quantitative method research (survey questionnaire). There can be deeper research done to gain more personal feeling, emotion, ideas from sport tourists and non-sport tourists toward their satisfaction about sport tourism in

Thailand thought using the qualitative method (observation, in-depth interviews, focus group and etc.).

The researcher also suggests other variables that require more investigation in further studies; the following topic will be suggested for further research as follows:

1. Suggestions for marketing, branding and public advertising of sport tourism
2. Suggestions for long term development planning for sport tourism in Thailand
3. Suggestion for better understanding about the difference in sport tourists and non-sport tourists expectation
4. Suggestions for improving sport tourism policies and strategies planning
5. Suggestions for leadership in sport tourism education development
6. Suggestions for sport institution role toward developing tourism industry

With all the suggestions it is clear that sport tourism is not a simple study, understanding sport tourists and non-sport tourists is important. It is also clear that 'sport' and 'tourism' have a strong relationship with one another. Future findings and implication will be useful towards the development of sport tourism in the long run.

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