

Motivational Dimensions of Equestrian Sport Tourists

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This paper examines competitive equestrian sport tourist motivations for attendance at competitive events in regional Australia. A survey of participants attending three separate competitive equestrian events was conducted and the resultant data were analysed using basic statistical techniques. Additionally, independent t tests were applied to the 7 point Likert scale to compare the results based on day visit verses overnight stay, gender and purpose/discipline for attending (event type). The value of both sport and tourism orientated motives was considered. It was found that these sport tourists are quite homogenous demographically and to some extent also in relation to motivational drivers. For the most part these competitive sport tourists are motivated to attend these events by traditional extrinsic motives relating to competition and the standard of the competition-scape. Less important are extrinsic sport motives relating to social and relationship development and leisure and recreational motivational drivers for the most part are found to be of little influence on the decision to attend a competition/event. These results provide valuable insight for site/event management, tourism and local Government decision makers into this potentially large sport tourism market that is ideally suited to rural and regional areas. With supply side competition predicted to increase, improved knowledge and understanding of this sport tourism and event market is vital to maintain and improve competitive advantage.

Field of research: Marketing, buyer behavior, motivation, tourism

1. Introduction

Traveling to attend sporting events as a competitor or fan is a common occurrence particularly in Australia where sport plays a pivotal focus for many. The motivation of the sport tourist has been debated regularly in the literature. Consideration has been given to identifying motivations that relate to sport tourism and the weighting that may or may not be applied to either the sport or tourism dimensions when making the decision to participate in a sports tourism experience. This balance is important as it has implications for the development of marketing strategy particularly when attempting to match the offering with the motivational bundle being sought by this sport tourist market.

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This study extends the knowledge and understanding of the sport tourist by exploring a unique cohort - competitive equestrians sport tourists who compete on an individual basis, by furthering the debate in relation to the motivational bundle and the importance placed on the components of this bundle as they relate to sport and tourism. To date the competitive equestrian sport tourist has received minimal attention. However, the segment has been found to offer significant opportunities particularly for regional and rural communities endeavoring to expand and develop their tourism product. The size of this market is evident when the contribution to Australia's GDP for expenditure associated with keeping event and recreational horses is calculated at approximately \$1.9 billion per annum, with the more serious competition end of the sector contributing close to \$1.3 billion per annum. This contribution to Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) exceeds the estimated contribution of the racing industry, not including wagering thus demonstrating the significance of this sector within the Australian economy (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), 2001). Further, Williams (2005) found that 3 large competitive equestrian events conservatively contributed by way of first round direct spending \$2.3 million to the local regional community hosting the event. Also the recent outbreak of Equine Influenza which has seen a complete shut down of the recreation and competition sectors in New South Wales and Queensland is estimated to cost these states considerably in regard to the economic stability of particularly regional areas (NSW Department of Primary Industries, 2007), thus demonstrating the potential value of this market segment.

This paper explores the motivations of the competitive equestrian sport tourist while attending and participating in competitive events in regional New South Wales, Australia. These aspects of the competitive sport tourist although receiving increasing interest by previous authors (Hinch and Higham, 2004; Gammon and Robinson, 2003; Green and Chalip, 1998; Maier and Weber, 1993), much of the emphasis has been on team competition such as Rugby (Ritchie, 2004) or motivations and spending of sport fans. Additionally, little imperial research has been undertaken in relation to smaller scale event sport tourism (Ritchie, 2004) particularly when staged in regional areas. Thus, by extending the study to the competitive equestrian sport tourist who compete on an individual basis at an event staged in regional New South Wales both expands present knowledge in this field and makes a significant new contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the individual competitive sports tourist and the importance placed on sport and tourism drivers by this cohort of sports tourists.

2. Literature Review

Sport and sporting based events that encourage participants and spectators to stay for at least one night away from their normal place of residence is increasingly becoming a major contributor within both the leisure and tourism industries (Bahatia, 1999; Kotze, 2006 and Schiflet). These sport based events whether serious structured competition at an international level or of a recreational non competitive nature have the potential to contribute positively to the economic mix of cities and regions (Burgan and Mules, 2001) by improving amenities both sporting and other (French and Disher, 1997), strengthening a destinations image in regard to its competitors (Brown, Chalip, Jago and Mules, 2002) and assisting in managing demand (Hingham and Hinch, 2002). Thus it is not surprising that the sport tourist has received considerable attention in a bid to gain a clearer understanding of characteristics, motivations and benefits sought by members of this market (Gammon and Robinson, 2003; Gibson, 1998; Hall, 1992; Hinch and Higham, 2004; Kurtzman and Zauhar, 2005; Robinson and Gammon, 2004). Many authors have debated the reasons 'why' and 'how' individuals participate in tourism, sport and sport tourism (Crompton,

1979; Deci and Ryan, 1985; Robinson and Gammon, 2004). One of the challenges with defining and understanding sport tourism is that one is dealing with two already distinctive disciplines that have to be compounded into one (Gammon and Robinson, 2003). However, it is commonly accepted among authors from all disciplines that motivation is an interaction of the individuals internal factors (conscious or unconscious) and external factors (social/family recognition or fulfillment) which combine to form a variety of drives (primary and secondary) (Recours, Souville and Griffet, 2004; Robinson and Gammon, 2004).

Research has shown that participation in both tourism and sport is unlikely to be influenced by one single motive. It is most likely that there are a number of motives influencing the decision. Frequently one or more of this bundle of motives will be weighted more highly or have more precedence over the others in the bundle (Swarbrook and Horner, 1999). Holidays tend to be designed based around either fulfilling the primary motive such as cultural, social or psychological dimensions (Krippendorf, 1987; McIntosh and Goeldner, 1990) or using a compensatory approach where most if not all motives are either fully or partially fulfilled (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999). Robinson and Gammon (2004) go on to state that these bundles of motives do not act independently but more often collectively resulting in primary and secondary drives which may be both conscious and unconsciously expressed. As with intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, secondary drives often have an enhancing affect on the primary drives. Similarly, motivations for participating in sport are highly diverse. Sport psychology literature supports the premise that participation in sport is motivated by the desire to achieve, master the task, self esteem and intrinsic factors such as the pleasure or joy of participation, and having fun. (Weiss and Chaumeton, 1992). Research into competitive versus non-competitive sport participation found a higher emphasis on the extrinsic motives of reinforcement and competing against others for competitive athletes (Ogles and Masters, 2003; Weed and Bull, 2004). While non-competitive athletes endorsed life meaning, social and participation motives (Croft, Gray and Duncan, 1999).

Thus it could be summarized that participation in sport is either competitive (heavily reliant on extrinsic drives) or recreationally (more closely tied to intrinsic drives) motivated (Kurtzman and Zauhar, 2005; Robinson and Gammon, 2004;). Also there is evidence of an overlap in the motives influencing participation in tourism and non-competitive sport such as; fun, self-esteem, social and participation. Thus for the sport tourist the challenge is to identify and understand the weighting placed on the components of the bundle with respect to either side of the equation; sport and tourism. Gammon and Robinson, (1997) in their sport tourism framework have attempted to accommodate both sport and tourism motivations and allow for a variety of weightings between sport and tourism. They proposed that sport tourism could be divided in two categories namely; 'sport tourism' where the prime motivation for travel is to participate in competitive or recreational sport, and 'tourism sport' where sport is the secondary motive. These categories were then split again with the use of the terms 'hard' and 'soft' to indicate the emphasis placed on either competition (hard) or recreation (soft) and in the 'tourism sport' category the difference between sport as a secondary (hard) or incidental (soft) motive. Previous research by the author (Williams, 2007) undertaken on a small co-hort of competitive equestrian sport tourist who specialized in dressage concluded that motivational drivers for this sport tourist were focused on the competition *per se* and competition site facilities. For this cohort of sport tourist intrinsic motivations such as social interaction was deemed to be less important than the extrinsic competition and competition-scape drivers.

This paper explores the motivations of competitive equestrian sport tourists while attending and participating as individual competitors in events at the Albury Wodonga equestrian centre which is located in regional New South Wales, Australia. This centre is the only purpose built publicly owned equestrian centre of international standard outside the metropolitan/urban area. In light of the potential size of this sport tourist market and the likely increase in new competitors entering the market with recent announcements of similar developments planned for Tamworth in New South Wales and Elmore in Victoria, a more detailed understanding of the motivational bundle will be valuable for venue and event management as well as the more broader tourist and Local Government decision makers. These motivational drivers of the sport tourists although receiving increased interest by previous authors (Gammon and Robinson, 2003; 1998; Hinch and Higham, 2004; Maier and Weber, 1993), much of the emphasis has been focused on team competition such as Rugby (Ritchie, 2004), large scale or international sporting events, non-competitive recreational sporting activities and motivations for 'sport fan' attendance. To date there has been little research undertaken on smaller regional sports tourism events (Ritchie, 2004) or the individual and competitive sport tourist. This study extends the knowledge and understanding of the sport tourist by exploring a unique cohort of individual and extremely committed sport tourist while furthering the debate in relation to the make up of the motivational bundle and the importance placed on sport and tourism motivational dimensions of the competitive sport tourist.

3. Research Method

The results detailed in this paper aim to identify and explain the motivational drivers, of the competitive equestrian sport tourist who are members and users of the Albury Wodonga Equestrian Centre. Located in regional Australia. Albury Wodonga has a population of approximately 75,000 residents. The immediate surrounding area, being predominately rural, is dispersed with small townships bringing the total population close to 100,000. The tourism industry generates approximately \$160 million revenue annually, and attracts 1,400,000 visitors per year (Investment Albury Wodonga, 2002). Additionally, Albury Wodonga has a strong history with sport in general and has hosted a large and successful 'Festival of Sport' for many years. Also, the region has a strong connection and involvement with the equestrian community demonstrated by the establishment approximately 10 years ago of the only purpose built publicly owned equestrian complex of international standard outside of the metropolitan area. The purpose of the study is two fold. Firstly it will provide valuable insight for the future management of the equestrian centre, infrastructure development and the broader tourism prospects of this market. Secondly, the study will provide insight into the motivational bundle driving the equestrian sport tourist and the emphasis placed on either the sport or tourism aspect of the decision to participate in this experience. Recent announcements of similar developments proposed at Tamworth in New South Wales and Elmore in Victoria strengthens the need for improved understanding of this potentially large sport tourist segment to ensure a competitive advantage is maintained in what is increasingly becoming a very competitive market.

The research was conducted in two phases comprising exploratory research and descriptive research. The exploratory involved a review of relevant academic and industry literature. This stage provided insight into the general context of sport tourism, sport tourists and general motivations for involvement in competitive sport. The exploratory phase in conjunction with previous research by the author (Williams, 2005, 2007) assisted with the development of the data collection instrument utilized in the second phase. In the descriptive research a survey was

conducted of persons competing at three different competitive equestrian events (dressage, horse trials and rodeo) held at the Albury Wodonga Equestrian Centre, located in regional New South Wales, Australia during 2006/07. The data was collected by way of a structured self-completion questionnaire that was returned via a reply paid envelope. Approximately 485 competition riders were given the opportunity to participate in the survey and the usable response rate was 16% (76). In order to focus on the competitive sport tourist only those respondents who stayed for at least one night were the primary focus of this paper. These numbered 46 respondents, which equates to 60 of total respondents. The survey collected predominately quantitative data, using nominal ordinal and interval scales; however, some qualitative data were also collected. A seven point Likert scale, where 1 represented very strongly disagree and 7 represented very strongly agree, was used to measure the motivations of competitors while attending the event. The data from the survey were analysed using basic statistical techniques. Additionally, independent t test was applied to the 7 point Likert scale to identify if there were any significant differences between the competitors motivations based on overnight stay verses day visit, gender and purpose/discipline basis.

4. Results and Discussion

The various cohorts of equestrian competitors attending these competitions appear to be quite demographically homogeneous; with 79% of those who responded being females with a large percentage being aged between 31 and 50 (47%). These demographics of equestrian competitors would be inline with competitors at similar Equestrian Federation of Australia (EFA) events held within Australia with national figures showing female membership accounting for 86.1% of all EFA members with senior members (those over 18 years) making up just under half the membership base (Equestrian Federation of Australia, 2005/06), thus any possible non-response errors are minimalised. Unlike many sport tourists who tend to travel in groups or teams, this cohort predominately travel and compete on an individual or paired basis with the mean travel party being 2.41 persons and 1.78 horses. The most likely combination of travel party comprised of 1 rider, 1 strapper (helper) and 1 horse and represented 37% of all participants. Other popular travel party compositions included competition riders traveling on their own (17%), and two competition riders traveling together (13%). Their level of commitment to their competition activities is high with 96% indicating that they compete either very regularly (compete on average 12 or more times per year) or regularly (compete on average between 6 and 10 times per year). Traveling long distances also seems to be quite common with 62% of those who responded indicating that they traveled between 2 and up to 20 hours to arrive at the event site.

Initial analysis of the means of the 26 factors relating to motivations for competing at these competitions by those who stayed for at least one night via a 7 point Likert scale where 1 equated to very strongly disagree and 7 to very strongly agree appear in Table 1. The results demonstrate that competitive equestrian sports tourists are on the whole motivated by extrinsic competition and standards competition-scape factors. The event provides them with the opportunity to demonstrate and hone skills in the competition environment and the attainment of these motives are enhanced by high standards of competition-scape infrastructure. These motivational factors all returned a mean of 5.05 or above demonstrating their influence on the decision to attend a competition at this site/complex. Other extrinsic factors relating to prize value and team selection do not appear to be key motivational factors for this sport tourist when deciding on entering and competing at these events.

Table One: Motivations and Benefits Sought by the Competitive Equestrian Sport Tourist - Participants who stayed for at least one night

Description of motivational factor	Mean N = 46	Std. dev.
Extrinsic competition and skill development factors		
I have entered this competition as it allows me to test my skills against others at my level	6.33	.871
I have entered this competition as attendance here is good for me professionally	4.47	2.07
I have entered this competition as it is likely that I will do well	4.09	1.38
I have entered this competition as the prizes are very generous	3.61	1.82
I have entered this competition as it is a necessary event for me to compete to ensure/maintain team selection	2.47	1.84
Infrastructure/competition-scape factors		
I have entered this competition as the facilities at the equestrian centre make it very pleasing to compete	5.44	1.79
I have entered this competition because I always enjoy coming to this equestrian centre	5.14	2.02
I have entered this competition as the competition and practice area surface are excellent	5.33	1.81
I have entered this competition because the equestrian centre where it is held has good stable/yard facilities	5.05	1.78
Although we have to travel a long way to get to this competition it is worth it as the facilities are excellent	5.18	1.73
Intrinsic competition factors (social/personal interaction)		
I have entered this competition as it provides me with the opportunity to watch, meet and talk to others who are successful	3.32	2.21
I have entered this competition as it provides me with the opportunity to rub shoulders with some of the best rider/horse combinations going around at present	4.51	1.9
I have entered this competition as it is a tradition that we always compete here	3.10	1.95
I have entered this competition to have a day out with my horse and equestrian friends	4.77	1.88
A group of us come to this event every year so it is a good opportunity to catch up with friends	2.60	1.75
We always attend the competition dinner/party if provided as it provides a great opportunity to socialize with fellow competitors and friends	3.36	1.97
Leisure and recreation off - competition site factors		
I have entered this competition as it provides me with the opportunity to get away from home for a few days	3.34	1.94
I have entered this competition because my partner likes to come with me as there are lots of nice places to have a meal	2.12	1.56

I have entered this competition because it is a 2 day event and it gives me an opportunity to get away and relax for a few days	3.55	2.02
As we do not go on holidays attendance at this competition is really like a holiday	2.67	1.9
As Albury Wodonga has a good selection of night life it is a good opportunity to compete and have a social weekend away with my partner and or friends	1.93	1.39
During the competition we usually go into town and do some shopping or have a coffee with other friends at the competition	2.5	2
At some stage during the time we are here we usually visit something 'non-horsy' like wineries, art galleries or the movies	1.73	1.19
Local/loyalty and sponsorship factors		
I have entered this competition as it is relatively local for me	3.11	2.42
My club runs this event so I always compete	1.68	1.62
We always attend this event/competition as we are sponsors	1.52	1.45

Participants indicated that intrinsic competition factors were less important in their motivations and decision to enter and compete at these events. The competitive equestrian sport tourist tend to be highly individual and social/personal interaction, mixing with other successful competitors are only felt to be marginally important motivational influences (with means of 4.77 and 4.51 respectfully) on their decision to attend. Additionally, little if any emphasis was placed on leisure and recreational activities off site and or outside of the competition timetable. These factors which included opportunity to get away and relax, the trip is like a holiday, wine and dine in town and enjoy the night life on offer appear to provide minimal motivation for attending the event as they all returned means of 3.55 or less. The competitive equestrian sport tourist is primarily motivated by the competition *per se* and the competition site facilities. They appear to be not interested in pursuing other interests or activities while on the competition trip. However, it is interesting to note that when those participants who stayed overnight are compared with those who only attended for a day it is evident that there are a number of significant differences between the motivations of these to groups. Results of the independent *t* test appear in Table 2. Although leisure and recreational drivers were not indicated to be strong influences on the decision to attend competitive events, those that stayed for at least one night responded significantly more positively when asked if attendance at the competition was like a holiday than those who only attended for a day. Similarly those that stayed at least one night were more likely to be motivated by the opportunity to go out to dinner with a partner, utilize shopping and off site entertainment facilities and indicated attendance at an event dinner as a more positive influence on the decision to attend. Also it is not surprising that those that stayed at least one night were motivated more strongly by the standard of facilities at the competition site as the majority would leave their horses on site, and camp at the competition ground.

Table 2: Results of Independent *t* Test Between Competitors Who Stayed for at Least One Night and Those Who attended for the day.

Motivational Factor	Stayed over	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Sig
Worth the long travel/facilities	Yes	4	4	2.106	.00
	No	4 2 7	. 9 3 3 .5 9	2.561	6
Partner wine and dine	Yes	4	2	1.546	.00
	No	4 2 7	. 0 7 1 .3 7	.792	1
Shopping/coffee/entertainment	Yes	4	2	1.900	.00
	No	4 2 7	. 3 0 1 .4 4	.698	0
Usually attend competition dinner	Yes	4	3	1.960	.00
	No	4 2 7	. 1 4 1	1.340	7

			. 8 9		
Attendance at the comp. is like a holiday	Yes	4	2	1.771	.03
	No	4 2 7	. 4 5 1 . 7	1.382	4

Analysis of the various discipline groups (dressage, horse trials and rodeo) and comparisons between genders showed no significant differences in the motivational drivers for attendance at this event. The competitive equestrian sport tourist appears to be a very homogenous segment in regard to demographics and motivations for attendance at the competitive events.

5. Conclusions, Implications for Marketing and Limitations

Results of this larger and more detailed study of the competitive equestrian sport tourist both supports and extends previous studies on this group of sport tourists (Williams, 2007) and contributes to the general understanding of the competitive sport tourist. There is no doubt that these sport tourists are initially motivated to visit a destination in order to compete and thus fulfill traditional extrinsic and to a lesser degree intrinsic sport goals. Also, horse husbandry is very important to competitive equestrian sport tourists, thus the standard of all facilities and infrastructure that relate to the health and well being of the horse both at rest and while competing appears to have a significant influence over the decision to attend a competitive event. Competition site managers need to ensure standards of infrastructure are maintained to a level that will be acceptable to competitors needs. Superior competition site facilities have the potential to provide a strategic competitive advantage against competition from other regions wishing to develop this sport tourism market such as Tamworth and Elmore. This has implications for infrastructure development for both local Government and the tourism decision makers as both have an active role in maintenance of any competitive advantages these sites may have, particularly as most are partially if not fully supported by public funds.

However, the final decision to enter for those who are traveling over 2 hours and thus frequently staying for at least one night may be positively influenced by the social and recreational opportunities available outside of the competition site and environment. Particularly relevant to this competitive sport tourist would be social activities that encouraged linking or networking with like minded others at competition dinners or other such functions both on and off the competition site. Also, these sport tourists would likely receive social possibilities that enhance the experience of partners or friends who attend as helpers and supporters in a positive light. Event organizers and tourism advocates are encouraged to work together to develop strategies that may increase attendance and increase the importance of the leisure and recreational aspects of

the experience. Such strategies might include increased length of events to encourage higher numbers of competitors to stay over night, timetabling changes to allow gaps in the competition program enabling competitors to participate in the leisure and recreational activities available and developing relationships with leisure and recreational providers to create opportunities to more actively promote these activities as options to enhance their competition experience while in the region.

As discussed in the literature motivations are rarely singular, more often than not they are a bundle of primary and secondary drives manifesting in a variety of activities, behaviors and perspectives. Competitive equestrian sports tourists are no different, with a variety of motives being identified. What is clear however is that motives traditionally related to sport appear to hold a stronger weighting on the decision to attend a competitive event, other recreational type motivations are less important. Thus, event organizers, site management, local Government and tourism decision makers need to remain strongly focused on fulfilling these traditional extrinsic competition motives and maintaining competition-scape standards. However, there is opportunity to increase the influence applied to these more intrinsic drivers by providing suitable and appealing intrinsic experiences based on leisure and recreation to those who stay for at least one night. In this way value may be added to the core competition experience thus improving the competitive advantage over competing regions looking to tap into this competitive sport tourist market. Conclusions drawn from this study should be considered in light of limitations imposed by the small sample size and that the study was conducted in a regional location therefore the results may not be transferable to urban and metropolitan areas. In order to be able to draw more conclusive conclusions the study should be duplicated at a number of similar events catering to a variety of different cohorts of equestrian sports tourist. This will then provide a more detailed profile of the motivations for this market and enable a more generalized application of the findings.

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Table 2**Results of Independent *t* Test****Between Competitors Who Stayed for at Least One Night and Those Who attended for the day.**

Factor	St ay ed ov er	N	Mean	Std Deviat ion	Sig
Worth the long travel/facilities	Ye s No	44 27	4.93 3.59	2.106 2.561	.006
Partner wine and dine	Ye s No	44 27	2.07 1.37	1.546 .792	.001
Shopping/c offee/ entertainment	Ye s No	44 27	2.30 1.44	1.900 .698	.000
Usually attend competition dinner	Ye s No	44 27	3.14 1.89	1.960 1.340	.007
Attendance at the comp. is like a holiday	Ye s No	44 27	2.45 1.7	1.771 1.382	.034