

## Marketing Innovations for Sustainable Destinations

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# 18 Sports Tourism and Motorsports – an Exploration

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# 18 Sports Tourism and Motorsports – an Exploration

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## Introduction

Sport enriches the quality of tourists' experience (Harrison-Hill and Chalip, 2005) and has become a vital component in the marketing mix for many tourist destinations (Getz, 1998; Gibson, 1998c). Such tourism is generated during the event itself whilst also enhancing the destination's image with added exposure through news and advertising media coverage. In many cases the media coverage helps to encourage additional visits throughout the year (Dwyer et al., 2000). Media exposure on television, and through both event and destination advertising, affect dimensions of the destination's image. Research has shown that the event media coverage must have a positive effect on the viewer's image of the destination to have a positive effect on long-term tourist visits (Chalip et al., 2003).

But who is included in the definition of the sport tourist? Discussion surrounds whether just professional sports people should be included and over the position that recreational leisure activities occupy (Hall, 1992). Also, are sport tourists solely the active participants or are they just the spectators? (Glyptis, 1991). In practice a widely accepted definition of sport tourism is that it is 'leisure based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities' (Gibson, 1998c). It is therefore a much more inclusive term than has necessarily always been appreciated.

Sports events are an element of event tourism which was identified as the fastest growing component of the leisure travel market towards the end of the 20th century (Shifflet and Bhatia, 1999). Sports events have therefore become effective in the economic development mix of destinations including both cities and regions (Burgan and Mules, 2001; Chalip and McGuirty, 2004).

It has been said that the fundamental psychological theory of a schema or 'a cognitive representation of expectations about a domain' applies where both the destination itself and the sports event are domains (Chalip and Costa, 2005). The destination's image is a key factor in tourist development (Hunt, 1975) and plays a role in the consumer's choice (Dichter, 1985). The host destination's image, as projected through advertising and the sport event media, has in practice been found to be 'significantly related to intention to visit' (Chalip et al., 2003).

The increasing demand for accountability requires event organisers and destination marketers to demonstrate that their events add value to the life of the community in which they are held. The more effectively that each event is built in to the marketing strategy and communications mix of the host community, the more value the event can be expected to provide, and the more viable it consequently becomes.

(Chalip et al., 2003)

So powerful are the associations of destinations with events that the latter can overcome the former. For example, the Loire valley town of Le Mans is picturesque in its own right but the 24 Hours of Le Mans motor race has become better known worldwide than the place itself (Pryor and Brodie, 1998). Similarly, despite many other industrial and sporting activities, 'throughout the world, Indianapolis is most recognized as the racing capital of the world and home of the Indianapolis 500' motor race (Klacic and Cook, 2004).

In 2002 the 1.6 million overseas visitors to the UK who either watched a sporting event or participated in amateur sport spent £1.1 billion during their stay, some 9% of the total spending of all overseas visitors to the UK in 2002 of £11.7 billion. The average spend per visit was £674, considerably higher than the average for all overseas visitors to the UK in 2002 of £481. They spent less per day but stayed nearly twice as long as the average overseas visitor to the UK (Visit Britain, 2002)

## **Motorsport's Heritage**

The sophisticated and dynamic harnessing of competing machines on the 21st century race tracks of the world by global brand managers has evolved from the time the internal combustion engine was first invented. The brands represented by the brand managers are there to compete in front of an audience. Research shows that the sponsors of motorsport aim to position and to create a favourable impression of their brand whilst hoping to generate sales through these activities (Grant-Braham, 2009).

The competitive nature of the *homo sapiens* has previously been expressed through athletics, the racing of horses and chariots as well as sail and steam powered competitions prior to the internal combustion engine's discovery. In the future, alternative fuels ranging from solar to hydrogen will continue to provide means of transport and no doubt there will be a demand to make such technologies compete against each other as progress continues. Motorsport will continue to be used as a live laboratory to test the vehicles and their propulsion systems of the future.

Once the internal combustion engine had been created the vehicles into which it was to be implanted, following the capitalist model, needed to be marketed. The early vehicle manufacturers identified a desire to promote their primitive machines as being both reliable and fast.

At an early stage, competitive events were organized specifically to emphasize the elements of reliability and speed of a vehicle within the marketing mix. The media, then in print form, not only reported such events but also used them to promote their circulations, thus becoming some of the sport's first title sponsors. Their readership became an off-site audience for the events whilst large crowds were the curious on-site audience when early competitions took place on public roads.

As vehicles evolved, the manufacturers realized the benefits of association with motorsport. Tyre, oil and fuel suppliers started to use association with competition vehicles as a validation for their products. As media interest in competitive motorsport increased and a wider audience was generated, marketing refined too. The benefits of association became apparent to brands that had no obvious link to motoring. The impact of television coverage and its global reach would bring multinational brands into the sponsorship equation, which is the historical point which has currently been reached.

Various forms of sponsorship have been embedded within motorsport from its earliest days with many of those early participants still represented today. From outside the

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