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Sport Tourism: a Framework for Research

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ABSTRACT

Sport-based travel has grown dramatically over the past two decades but it has only recently become the focus of concentrated academic inquiry. This paper contributes to the emerging body of literature by conceptualising sport in the context of tourism's activity, spatial and temporal dimensions. A definition of sport tourism based on these dimensions and featuring a sociological perspective of sporting activity is presented. The distinguishing features of sport as a tourist attraction are then highlighted through the use of Leiper's systems model of attractions. Finally, the paper proposes a framework which highlights a series of research questions that emerge as the relationships between the fundamental dimensions of sport tourism are systematically explored. Copyright © 2001 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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INTRODUCTION

One has only to look at the score board at most team sporting competitions to see reference to the fundamental tourism concepts of the hosts and visitors. The prominent position of these concepts within sport implies a travel dynamic that has until recently been largely ignored by scholars in both tourism and sport. Yet the affinity between sport and tourism has not been ignored by the travelling public nor by the vibrant industry that has emerged in response to this demand.

Until the 1990s, sport tended to be treated as a general or even accidental context for tourism research rather than as a central focus. For example, research associated with hallmark events such as the Olympic Games has added significantly to our understanding of the impacts of mega events but it has provided much less insight into the features that distinguish the nature of sport-based events from other types of events. A similar criticism can be made related to other areas of related research, such as outdoor recreation and health-based tourism. The purpose of this paper is therefore to conceptualize sport tourism by positioning sport as a central attraction within the activity dimension of tourism and then considering its relationship with the spatial and temporal dimensions of tourism.

Despite the benefits of an explicit focus on sport tourism, it should be appreciated that the conceptual boundaries that are articulated or implied in this article are in fact permeable and dynamic. The paper is not an attempt to position sport tourism as an isolated field of research but rather to capture the synergies associated with the treatment of sport tourism within the broader realms of sport and tourism. It is meant to add to an emerging literature and to provide a unique perspective for productive research in this area. The paper therefore has been organised into three sections including: (i) clarification of the conceptual domain of sport tourism, (ii) articulation of the distinguishing features of sport as a

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tourist attraction based on Leiper's (1990) systems model of attractions, and (iii) the presentation of a research framework for the continued examination of sport-focused tourism.

THE DOMAIN OF SPORT TOURISM

As befits an emerging area of scholarly study, sport-tourism researchers have dedicated a substantial amount of their energy toward clarifying the conceptual foundations of this field. This section of the paper will review the key contributions of these individuals and will build on the foundation that they provided by considering the independent concepts of sport and tourism prior to focusing on their confluence. Like most social science concepts, there are no universally excepted definitions of sport or tourism that would make this exercise easy. Each concept is rather amorphous and a variety of definitions have been developed to address a broad range of needs. Despite the lack of definitional consensus, there are commonalities associated with each concept that help to clarify their relationship.

Current lines of inquiry

Although this subfield is still in its infancy, a number of important publications exist that explicitly focus on sport tourism. It is not the intent of the authors to duplicate these efforts but rather to focus on those aspects of the literature that are particularly relevant to understanding the conceptual base of sport tourism.

Especially noteworthy advances in the study of sport tourism have included the proceedings of a 1987 conference on Outdoor Education, Recreation and Sport (Garmise, 1987), the establishment of an electronic journal titled the *Journal of Sport Tourism* in 1993, and seminal articles in other tourism journals such as *Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research* (Glyptis, 1991; Weed and Bull, 1997a, b). The major contribution of these publications was to highlight the significance of sport tourism and to legitimise it as an important focus for academic study.

A good example of this body of work was provided by Glyptis (1991), who drew attention to the fact that sport and tourism are 'treated by academics and practitioners alike as separate spheres of activity' (Glyptis, 1991, p. 165). She went on to identify the close behavioural relationship between sport and tourism participants but argued that this relationship was not reflected in journal publications, academic departments, learned societies or government agencies. Glyptis (1991) presented a compelling case for the integration of the two in terms of government policy, strategic planning, the development of facilities and services, urban planning and promotion.

This contribution stimulated further in-depth studies of sport tourism, although such studies remained the exception rather than the rule throughout the early 1990s. The most notable attempts to rectify this situation were undertaken by Kurtzman and Zauhar (1995) and later by Gammon and Robinson (1997), who developed early models of sport tourism.

Although these contributions provided valuable insights into the dynamic nature of sport tourism, they failed to harness the potential synergies of the field in a comprehensive manner. As a consequence, directions for future lines of inquiry are notably rare. The clearest call for a systematic approach to this subfield came from Kurtzman and Zauhar (1995), who presented agency report on the Sport Tourism International Council (STIC) in *Annals of Tourism Research* identifying the emergence of sport as a 'touristic endeavour' in the 1980s and 1990s. Since that point, special issues of *Tourism Recreation Research* (Stevens and van den Broek, 1997) and *Vacation Marketing* (Delpy, 1997) have been devoted to the topic and have clearly attempted to be more systematic and integrative in their approach.

Gibson's (1998) comprehensive review of publications in this area highlights the connections between what on the surface is a very disparate literature. Not only does she provide a critical analysis of existing literature in this area, she articulates the need for better coordination among agencies at a policy level, more multidisciplinary research approaches, and more cooperation between tourism and sport-centred units in academic settings. Further advances in this direction can be seen in the work of Standeven and De Knop (1999)

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and De Knop (1998). A series of frameworks are presented in their publications that highlight the interdependent relationship between sports and tourism, beginning with the basic premise that not only does sport influence tourism but that tourism influences sport. They then build on this starting point with a classification matrix based on key touristic and sport characteristics. The major contribution of this classification system is that sport tourism is recognised as offering 'a two-dimensional experience of physical activity tied to a particular setting' (Standeven and De Knop, 1999, p. 63). Furthermore, each of these dimensions is articulated in terms of its key components, thereby allowing a more in-depth analysis of the concept of sport tourism than has been generally been the case to date. A limitation of their typology is that it tends to treat each sport as a homogeneous entity even though many internal variations may exist within a sport. Faulkner *et al.* (1998) avoid this limitation by classifying sports tourism in terms of motivational, behavioural and competitive dimensions. Each of these dimensions is presented as a continuum and individual sports are illustrated as fitting into a range rather than being represented as a single point on each continuum.

These attempts to articulate the relationships between the unique characteristics of tourism and the unique characteristics of sport are the key to scholarly advances in this field. By clarifying these relationships, more probing research questions can be asked and the findings of individual studies can be placed within the broader contexts of the field as a whole. In doing so, the potential synergies of the field are more likely to be captured.

The domain of tourism

Tourism definitions can be classified into those associated with the popular usage of the term (e.g. WH Smith/Collins, 1988), those used to facilitate statistical measurement (e.g. WTO, 1981), and those used to articulate its conceptual domain (e.g. Murphy, 1986). Although the last of these has the most direct relevance for this paper, all of the definitions tend to share key dimensions. The most prevalent of these is a spatial dimension. Tourism involves the 'travel of non-residents' (Murphy, 1985, p. 9). To be considered a tourist, individuals must leave and then eventually return to their home. Although the travel of an individual does not constitute tourism in and of itself, it is one of the necessary conditions. A variety of qualifiers have been placed on this dimension including a range of minimum travel distances, but the fundamental concept of travel is universal.

The second most common dimension involves the temporal characteristics associated with tourism. Central to this dimension is the requirement that the trip be characterised by a 'temporary stay away from home of at least one night' (Leiper, 1981, p. 74). Definitions developed for statistical purposes often distinguish between excursionists who visit a destination for less than 24 h and tourists who visit a destination for 24 h or more (WTO, 1981). Often, however, the term visitor is used to refer to both groups.

A third common dimension of tourism definitions concerns the purpose or the activities engaged in during travel and it is within this dimension that many subfields of tourism find their genesis (e.g. eco-tourism, urban tourism, and heritage tourism). Of the three dimensions, this is perhaps the one characterised by the broadest range of views. For example, dictionary interpretations of tourists tend to focus on leisure pursuits as the primary travel activity (WH Smith/Collins, 1988), whereas definitions developed for statistical and academic purposes tend to include business activities as well (Murphy, 1985). Specific reference is made to sport in the tourism definition of the World Tourism Organisation (1981), which lists it as a subset of leisure activities.

The domain of sport

Defining sport has proven equally as difficult, but as in the case of tourism, common dimensions have emerged. The popular perception of sport is best reflected by the adage that sport is what is written about on the sport pages of daily newspapers (Bale, 1989). A typical dictionary definition of sport describes it as 'an individual or group activity pursued for exercise or pleasure, often taking a compe-

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titive form' (WH Smith/Collins, 1988).

Definitions arising from the realm of the sociology of sport are particularly insightful when combined with the concept of tourism. One of the most influential definitions of sport to emerge within this area is that of Loy *et al.* (1978), i.e. the game occurrence approach. From this perspective, sport is conceptualised as a subset of games, which in turn is a subset of play. Sport is described in terms of institutionalised games that require physical prowess. In a similar fashion McPherson *et al.* (1989, p. 15) have defined sport as 'a structured, goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic physical activity'.

Sport is structured in the sense that sports are governed by rules that relate to space and time. These rules may be manifest in a variety of ways, including the dimensions of the playing area and the duration and pacing of the game or contest. They also tend to be more specific in formal variations of a sport, especially as the level of competition increases. In informal variations of a sport these rules are often very general.

Sport is also defined as being goal-oriented, competitive and contest-based. All three characteristics are closely related. Sport is goal-oriented in the sense that sporting situations usually involve an objective for achievement in relation to ability, competence, effort, degree of difficulty, mastery or performance. In most instances this goal orientation is extended to some degree of competition. At one extreme this competition is expressed in terms of winning or losing combatants. Alternatively, competition can be interpreted much less rigidly in terms of competing against individual standards, inanimate objects, or the natural forces of nature. In the context of sport tourism, the latter interpretation of competition offers a much more inclusive concept that covers recreational sports, such as those commonly associated with outdoor pursuits. It is also inclusive of the 'sport for all' concept of participation (e.g. Nogawa *et al.*, 1996). Essentially, competition is probably best conceptualised as a continuum that ranges from recreational to elite both between and within sports. Closely associated with competition is the contest-based nature of sport in which outcomes are determined by a combination of physical prowess, game strategy and, to a lesser degree, chance. Physical prowess consists of physical speed, stamina, strength, accuracy and coordination and when viewed in these terms, across the whole competition continuum, it is one of the most consistent criterion used to define sport.

The final aspect of sport that is highlighted in the definition is its ludic nature, a term which is derived from the Latin word *ludus*, meaning play or game. Sport is, therefore, rooted in, although not exclusive to play and games. This derivation carries with it the ideas of 'uncertainty of outcome' and 'sanctioned display'. Uncertain outcomes create excitement and are consistent with the concept of play. Sanctioned display allows for the demonstration of physical prowess and broadens the realm of sport involvement to spectatorship as well as direct athletic participation.

The confluence of sport and tourism

Clearly the concepts of tourism and sport are related and overlap. Sport is an important activity within tourism and tourism is a fundamental characteristic of sport. The specific confluence of the two concepts varies as to the perspectives of those dealing with the topic and the definitions that they adopt. Attempts to articulate the domain of sport tourism have also resulted in a proliferation of definitions (Table 1). These definitions tend to be written along the same lines as those presented for tourism in that they often include activity, spatial and temporal dimensions. Sport is generally positioned as the primary travel activity, although Gammon and Robinson (1997) make a distinction between sport tourists and tourism sports. The latter recognises sport as a secondary activity while travelling. Most definitions include spectators as well as athletes and recreational as well as elite competition. They also tend to include explicit requirements for travel away from the home environment along with an implicit, if not explicit, temporal dimension that suggests that the trip is temporary and that the traveller will return home within a designated time. The temporal dimension is usually inclusive of day visitors as well as those that stay overnight. Somewhat surprisingly, the major limitation of

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Table 1. Selected definitions related to sport tourism

Dimension	Definition and source
Sport tourism	Travel for non-commercial reasons to participate or observe sporting activities away from the home range (Hall, 1992a, p. 194)
	An expression of a pattern of behaviour of people during certain periods of leisure time—such as vacation time, which is done partly in specially attractive natural settings and partly in artificial sports and physical recreation facilities in the outdoors (Ruskin, 1987, p. 26)
	Holidays involving sporting activity either as a spectator or participant (Weed and Bull, 1997b; p. 5)
	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 activity (Gibson, 1998, p. 49)
	All forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organized way for noncommercial or business/commercial reasons, that necessitate travel away from home and work locality (Standeven and DeKnop, 1999, p. 12)
Sport tourist	A temporary visitor staying at least 24 h in the event area and whose primary purpose is to participate in a sports event with the area being a secondary attraction (Nogawa ***et al.***, 1996, p. 46)
	Individuals and/or groups of people who actively or passively participate in competitive or recreational sport, while travelling to and/or staying in places outside their usual environment (sport as the primary motivation of travel) (Gammon and Robinson, 1997)
Tourism sport	Persons travelling to and/or staying in places outside their usual environment and participating in, actively or passively, a competitive or recreational sport as a secondary activity (Gammon and Robinson, 1997)

existing definitions is that the concept of sport is rather vague. In an attempt to capture the strengths and address the stated limitations of these definitions in this paper, sport tourism is defined as: *sport-based travel away from the home environment for a limited time, where sport is characterised by unique rule sets, competition related to physical prowess, and a playful nature.*

This definition parallels the underlying structure of most tourism definitions in terms of their spatial, temporal and activity dimensions with the difference being that the activity dimension is specified as sport. Sport is recognised as a significant travel activity whether it is a primary or secondary feature of the trip. It is seen to be an important factor in many decisions to travel, to often feature prominently in the travel experience, and to often be an important consideration in the visitor's assessment of the travel experience.

Sport tourism is further clarified by drawing on the previous discussion of the domain of sport. First, each sport has its own set of rules that provide characteristic spatial and temporal structures. Second, competition related to physical prowess is a consolidation of what McPherson *et al.* (1989) described as the goal-orientation, competition and contest-based aspects of sport. It is used here in a broad sense to indicate a continuum of competition inclusive of what is often thought of as recreational sport or 'sport for all'. Finally, sport is characterised by its playful nature. This element includes the notions of uncertainty of outcome and sanctioned display. In more competitive versions of sport, one of the basic objectives is that the competitors should be evenly matched, thereby making the outcome uncertain. If, on the other hand, the outcome is predetermined as in 'all-star wrestling', the game or contest is a form of spectacle rather than sport and therefore falls outside of this definition. Sanctioned display is, however, distinct from spectacle. It is characteristic of sport in as much as sport is not limited to acts of physical prowess but is also inclusive of the demonstration or display of these acts. Many different types of sports involvement are therefore possible for sports tourists.

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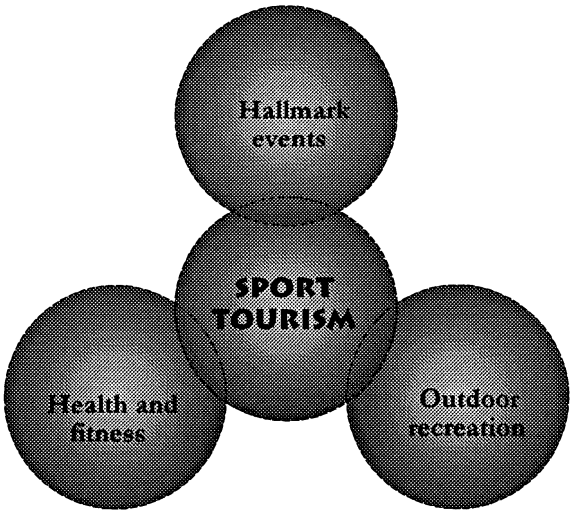

Figure 1. Related contextual domain

To a large extent, it is these three characteristics that make sport tourism such an interesting area for research. The systematic exploration of the relationship between these characteristics of sport and the characteristics of the spatial and temporal dimensions of tourism has the potential to provide significant insight into this phenomenon. Prior to this discussion, however, it is necessary to consider the merit of sport as a central attraction of tourism.

SPORT AS A TOURIST ATTRACTION

A review of the early academic literature that spans the disciplines of both sport and tourism confirms a disparate approach to this topic. Before the 1990s, insights to sport tourism were mainly provided through research in related domains. As the academic study of sport tourism has progressed, sport began to receive much more targeted attention as reflected in the assortment of sport tourism typologies that have recently emerged. Despite increasing focus on the basic nature of sport within a tourism system, there has been very little explicit discussion of the fit of sport within current theories on tourist attractions.

Related domains

Hall (1992a, b) not only identified sport as a major special interest of tourism, he also articulated three related tourism domains including hallmark events, outdoor recreation (adventure tourism) and tourism associated with health and fitness (Figure 1). Of these three related domains, the area of *hallmark events* is probably the most direct link to sport as epitomised by national championship competitions, such as American football's Superbowl and international sport mega-events such as the Olympic Games. The profile and scale of these sport events attracts the attention of both tourists and tourism researchers. This attention is reflected in the prominence of sport-based articles published in the journal of *Festival Management and Event Tourism*. However, Ritchie's (1984) classification of hallmark events identifies sport as just one of seven event categories, although it is arguably one of the most significant of these categories (Getz, 1997; Ryan *et al.*, 1997). Although providing significant insight into sport tourism, publications in this area seldom highlight the distinguishing features of sporting events relative to other types of events.

Outdoor recreation represents a second related area that is inextricably linked to sport tourism. The essence of this contextual domain lies in recreational activities that occur within natural settings, many of which are commonly classified as sports, such as canoeing, skiing and surfing. One of the most dynamic components of outdoor recreation is adventure tourism. Hall (1992a) identifies adventure tourism as a rapidly growing segment of the special interest tourism market. As in the case of hallmark events and sport tourism, there is a clear overlap between outdoor recreation and sport tourism both conceptually and in terms of research activity. However, these domains are not synonymous. A substantial amount of sport activity occurs outside the realm of the natural environment, whereas conversely, many tourism activities that occur in natural settings are inconsistent with the definition of sport used in this paper (e.g. camping and picnicking).

Health and fitness activities provide a third related domain of relevance to sport tourism. The essence of this domain is presented from both historical and contemporary perspectives. The former is illustrated most commonly

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by the tourist activity associated with the therapeutic spas of Eastern and Mediterranean Europe in Roman times (Hall, 1992a). In a contemporary context, travel to partake in therapeutic spas continues but it has broadened to resorts focusing on activities such as tennis and golf (Redmond, 1991; Spivack, 1998). Although the realm of health and fitness can be defined in very ubiquitous terms, it generally has been treated much more narrowly in the literature. In particular, characteristics such as the nature of the rule structure of sports have not been a dominant feature in the literature on health and fitness.

Although research in all three of these areas has contributed to the understanding of sport tourism, the essence of sport extends beyond the collective parameters of these related domains. The defining characteristics of sport are not the central interest of research in hallmark events, outdoor recreation or health tourism.

Emerging typologies

A noticeable shift in the source of insights into sport tourism has occurred over the past decade but especially in the past five years. Manifestations of this new source include the development of a series of sport tourism typologies. Redmond (1991) presented one of the first typologies of sports tourism featuring categories associated with resorts and vacations, sports museums, multisport festivals and sports facilities in national parks. Increasingly sophisticated versions of this typology followed, including that of the Sport Tourism International Council (STIC), which identified five categories including: (i) attractions such as heritage sport facilities, (ii) resorts with a sports focus, (iii) cruises that centre around sport celebrity themes, (iv) sport tours such as playing several golf courses at a particular destination, and (v) major sporting events (STIC Research Unit, 1995; Kurtzman and Zauhar, 1997). An interesting variation of this pattern was presented by Gammon and Robinson (1996) with their distinction between sport tourism and tourism sport on the basis of contrasting trip motivations. One of the most recent typologies was published by Standeven and De Knop (1999) in which the complexity of sport tourism is recognised through additional distinctions, such as: holiday versus non-holiday, passive (spectatorship) versus active (athletic participation), organised versus independent, high versus low motivations, and single versus multiple sport holidays.

Leiper's attraction framework

A logical extension of the development of these typologies is the examination of sport as an attraction within the tourism destination system. This examination is facilitated by using Leiper's (1990) systems perspective, which builds on the earlier work of MacCannell (1976) and Gunn (1988). Under this approach, a tourist attraction is defined as 'a system comprising three elements: a tourist or human element, a nucleus or central element, and a marker or informative element. A tourist attraction comes into existence when the three elements are connected' (Leiper, 1990, p. 371).

The first component of Leiper's (1990) attraction system is the *human element*. Like other types of tourists, sport tourists seek to satisfy a variety of needs and wants in their search for leisure away from home. Two characteristics of these sport tourists are particularly noteworthy in the context of the destinations and typologies just reviewed. The first of these involves the inconsistency between the understanding of visitors from a sport and from a tourism perspective. For example, from a tourism perspective, spectators at an international sporting occasion who reside outside of the host city would normally be classified as tourists in that city. From a sport perspective, however, these spectators view their national team as their 'home team'. At a psychological level, these spectators feel at 'home' even though they may have travelled a substantial distance to attend the game.

A second distinguishing aspect of sport tourists in terms of the human element of attraction systems is that they can be categorized into several groups: e.g. spectators and players. One of the more interesting aspects of this division is the inverse relationship that may exist between the size of each group, ranging from elite through to recreational sporting events. For example, at World Cup Football matches there are only a handful of

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players who may arguably be referred to as tourists during their visits to foreign countries. In contrast, when defined from a tourism perspective, a high proportion of spectators attending one of these matches may be classified as tourists. The opposite situation is likely to occur at the recreational levels of football competitions in that the number of tourists is much greater in terms of the participating athletes relative to spectators. By recognizing competition as a continuum, the differences between types of involvement (e.g. spectator versus athlete) can be explored for elite versus recreational versions of the sport. These are just two unique characteristics of sports tourists that can be addressed under the human element of attraction systems. They illustrate the types of research questions that can be articulated by using attraction frameworks to examine sport tourism.

The second major element of Leiper's (1990) tourist attraction system is the *nucleus* or any feature of a place that a traveller wishes to experience. This is the site where the tourist experience is ultimately produced and consumed. It is the site where the tourism resource is commodified. Individual sports and more particularly, individual sporting events, become unique attractions based on their defining characteristics.

Unique rules and institutional sporting structures have evolved over time, often reflecting and sometimes influencing the country's culture. Sport therefore can act as a powerful symbol of a destination's culture (e.g., ice hockey in Canada, Nordic skiing in Norway). In contrast, trends such as the globalisation of sport may erode the distinction between places in terms of the culture of sport. Each sport is characterised by its own types of physical competition and playful nature. One of the most significant implications of these characteristics is that sport competition outcomes are uncertain. This inherent uncertainty means that sporting attractions tend to be authentic and renewable. Although value-added entertainment such as pre-game concerts have been coupled with sporting events at the elite levels of competition, the core product remains the excitement of the sport itself. The question of what the optimum balance is between the game and the added entertainments is likely to become increasingly important in the future.

Leiper (1990) also raised the idea of a nuclear mix and hierarchy of attractions. A nuclear mix refers to the combination of nuclei that a tourist wishes to experience, and the hierarchy suggests that some of these nuclei are more important in influencing visitor decisions than others. This aspect of the attraction is very similar to the categories of sport tourism typologies associated with multiple sport trips and levels of motivations (Standeven and De Knop, 1999; Gammon and Robinson, 1996). For many sport tourists a specific sporting event may function as the primary attraction in a destination, but the cluster of other nuclei found in the surrounding area may be needed to finalise the decision to travel. Alternatively, sports can also serve as an important albeit secondary nuclei. Appreciating the place of sport within a destination's attraction mix and hierarchy is likely to have significant management implications.

Markers are items of information about any phenomenon that is a potential nuclear element in a tourist attraction (Leiper, 1990). They may be divided into markers that are detached from the nucleus or those that are contiguous. In each case the markers may either consciously or unconsciously function as part of the attraction system. Examples of conscious generating markers featuring sport are common. Typically, they take the form of advertisements showing visitors involved in destination-specific sport activities and events. Perhaps even more pervasive are the unconscious detached markers. At the forefront of these are televised broadcasts of elite sport competitions and advertisements featuring sports products in recognisable destinations. Although sport broadcasts may result in some spectators choosing to watch the game from the comfort of their home rather than in person, in a broader sense, television viewers have the location marked for them as a tourist attraction, which may influence future travel decisions. Chalip *et al.*'s (1998) paper on sources of interest in travel to the Olympic Games lends itself well to this framework, although markers were not specifically mentioned in the paper. However, reference to the

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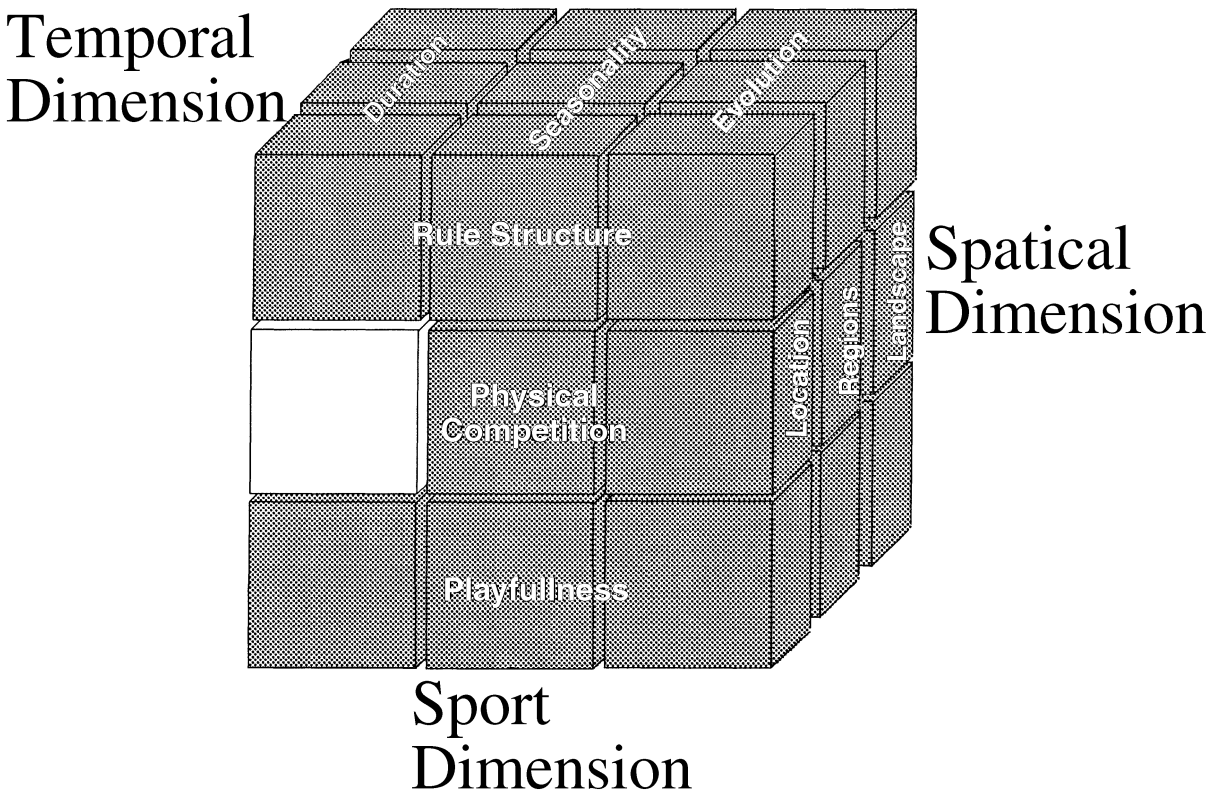

Figure 2. Framework for sport tourism research

influence of Olympic narratives, symbols and genres essentially addresses issues that emerge in the context of detached markers within the tourist attraction system. Contiguous markers include on-site signage that labels the attraction. Other on-site markers include game programmes, team mascots, and even the products of commercial sponsors of the subject sports.

Leiper's (1990) tourist attraction system does provide insight into the relationship between sport and tourism. Although space limitations have not allowed an in-depth examination of the characteristics of individual sports, the theory-based attraction system enables a more methodical examination of this topic than has occurred to date. The insights gained by using this type of framework can be used to identify important research questions that should be pursued. Yet even though the attraction system framework allows for a greater focus on sport within tourism, it does not directly address the spatial and temporal dimensions.

FRAMEWORKS FOR RESEARCH

A new framework is required to not only capture the synergies of existing contributions to the subject but to identify future directions for research. Attractions do not function in isolation of the tourism system as a whole. By retaining a focus on sport as an attraction, it is possible to return to the original definitions of sport tourism and develop a guiding framework for research that can systematically explore the relationships between sport, space and time.

Figure 2 provides a graphic representation of the sport tourism research framework proposed in this paper. Sport is positioned as the central focus and attraction. In a sense, sport becomes the first among equals in relation to the other two dimensions. It therefore will be addressed first in this discussion. Three research themes are presented within each dimension. These themes are meant to be illustrative rather than definitive. Researchers

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with different backgrounds and interests are encouraged to identify additional themes as well as to project their own perspectives within each theme.

Sport dimension

The sport dimension gives this framework a unique focus on sport as an attraction. Each sport theme reflects the elements that emerged from the earlier discussion of the domain of sport. Under the first theme, individual sports are characterised by their own rule structure, which dictates their spatial and temporal characteristics at the attraction level. A variety of research questions therefore can be pursued that have direct bearing on the management and design of sport attractions. For example, what are the implications of rule changes on the essence of the sport's attraction? Will the changes have an impact on the propensity of spectators to travel to the sporting event?

Competition forms a second theme within the sport dimension. A variety of issues exist in this area that have received little attention to date. One example is whether the level or type of competition associated with a particular sport, influences the nature of the travel experience. Using skiing as a case in point, how important is the nature of competition as a determinant of the visitor's perception of the destination? For example, do highly competitive skiers develop similar perceptions of a ski destination in comparison to less competitive skiers? Alternatively, sport performance may be a more significant factor in terms of its influences on the sense of place that a competitive skier develops for a particular ski destination in that the athlete's view of the destination may be more positive the better that he or she performed while at that destination.

The playful nature of sport represents the last major thematic area represented within the sport dimension of the research framework. It encompasses a broad range of potential lines of inquiry, including but not limited to the uncertainty of sport outcomes, sanctioned display, and the utility and seriousness of sport. One of the most intriguing characteristics of sport tourism in this regard is the relationship between the uncertainty of sport outcomes and the concept of authenticity as it has been discussed within the field of tourism. Given trends toward the positioning of professional sport as part of the entertainment industry and in extreme cases, as spectacle, the competitive advantages related to the authenticity of sport needs to be studied carefully.

The sanctioned display aspect of this theme also suggests a number of research possibilities that converge around the type of involvement that sport tourists may have with sport. At a very basic level, the distinction between athletes and spectators as sport tourists needs further attention. However, this distinction represents only two of many types of sport involvement (Kenyon, 1969), including that of coaches, management and officials. A broad range of research questions can be raised about the socio-demographic characteristics, travel behaviours and impacts of each of these groups of sport tourists.

An additional line of inquiry under this theme is whether the nature of the travel experience varies between amateur and professional sport tourists. Perhaps a prerequisite question is whether professional athletes should even be considered tourists given that they are remunerated for their travel. Similarly, the whole issue of commodification of sport poses some interesting questions that have been raised in the context of other types of tourism.

Spatial dimension

For illustrative purposes, the spatial themes that have been highlighted include location, region and landscape (Figure 2). There appears to be considerable potential to build on the work of Bale (1989), with his focus on the geography of sport, and the work of Pearce (1987), whose focus is the geography of tourism. These authors base their discussions on similar spatial theories but they hold contrasting perspectives. In terms of location themes, basic geographical theories, such as central place theory and distance decay theory, offer much potential for gaining an understanding of practical issues, such as where to locate sport facilities and the determination of threshold levels of players and/or spectators needed to sustain a given sport, team, or

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facility. Such insights would be of direct relevance to both private and public sector investors in sport facilities and programs.

Regional studies represent a second major thematic area within the spatial dimension. The myriad of significant research questions that could be raised within this theme include those relating to the influence of a sport, team, or an individual athlete on the image of a destination. One aspect of region that needs further attention is scale. Although sport tourism has been examined in the context of the host sites of international and national sporting events, little published literature exists on sport tourism associated with smaller scale events within the region. This lack of attention may be due to the lower profile of sport in these regions, even though it is possible that the cumulative impact of these sporting activities is of equal or more significance than that associated with international and national events.

The third theme identified within the spatial dimension of the framework concerns landscape, both in terms of the dependency of particular sports on the presence of certain physical resources and, conversely, the impact of sport on tourism landscapes. In terms of resource dependency, a basic distinction exists between sports that are highly dependent on the presence of specific natural resource features and those that function independently of them. The spatial distribution of these two types of sports is therefore likely to be quite distinct. At the same time, sports appear to have significant impacts on a tourism landscape in terms of its cultural and physical dimensions. In many cases the differences between international sportscapes are decreasing owing to the application of facility design standards by international sport governing bodies. This trend raises Bale's (1989) spectre of uniform 'sportscapes', which are divorced from the very place in which they are situated. Alienation from place introduces fundamental issues about the propensity of sports fans to travel to a generic sportscape, especially if the game or contest can be experienced through television.

Temporal dimension

Temporal themes make up the final dimension of the framework (Figure 2) and trip duration (day visitors as well as those who stay one or more nights) is the first theme to be highlighted in this group. This trip characteristic not only serves as a basic element of most definitions of tourism but holds significance in terms of such diverse issues as the extent of the economic impact associated with a visit and the nature of the relationship formed between hosts and guests. For example, in a Japanese study of participants in cross-country skiing and walking special events, it was found that participants were likely to leave the hosting community soon after their sporting activity was finished rather than extending their trip for post-competition tours (Nogawa *et al.*, 1996). The authors of this study did, however, speculate that this behaviour was due to external factors rather than an inherent characteristics of these particular sport tourists.

Tourism seasonality represents a second temporal theme that merits further attention. The vast majority of tourism destinations are characterised by significant fluctuations in tourism activity throughout the year that have been attributed to a variety of natural and institutional factors (Allcock, 1989; Butler, 1994; Snepenger *et al.*, 1990). This fluctuation is typically viewed as a problem by tourism operators who must address the challenge of meeting ongoing expenses in the face of fluctuating flows of revenue. Sports are also characterised by seasonal patterns such as those manifest in the placement of various sports into the Summer or the Winter Olympic Games. Trends in professionalisation, globalisation and technology have all acted as modifying factors for the seasonality of sport and much work is needed to assess the impact and management potential of these changes for tourism.

Finally, the third temporal theme in the framework concerns the pattern of development or the evolution of tourism products and destinations over time. This evolution has particular significance in the context of the current research trends in sustainable tourism and the need to consider process as well as form in tourism studies. Butler's (1980) idea of a life cycle associated with tourism destinations complements Bale's (1989) discussion of the

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evolution of various types of sport. Changes in either sphere of activity will have implications in the other. By understanding the changes likely to occur in one sphere, stakeholders will be better able to understand the probable impacts in the other sphere and perhaps be in a position to manage these impacts.

Synergistic benefits

Although there is utility in examining each theme in isolation, a higher level of insight can be achieved if these themes are examined in conjunction with themes from each of the other dimensions. The thematic dimensions of sport can be used to anchor research in this area and may even suggest testable hypotheses about the relationship between sport characteristics as independent variables relative to spatial and temporal characteristics as dependent variables. This potential is illustrated graphically in Figure 2, which can be viewed as a cube made up of multiple component blocks. Each of these component blocks represents a unique combination of themes from each dimension and therefore, a unique set of relationships between variables.

The highlighted block represents just one of twenty-seven unique combinations of themes that can be examined. It should, however, be appreciated that the value of exploring the specific relationships found in each block of the cube is not uniform. Some of these relationships will be of more interest and utility than others. In Figure 2, one possible investigation would be to explore the impact of performance (competition) relative to the length of stay and the willingness of sport tourists to travel. Specific measures of these variables would have to be identified and hypotheses about the likely impact of performance on length of stay and distance travelled could be tested. Alternatively, the impacts of different types of recreational versus elite competition could be studied. This type of information would be useful in the development of management strategies for sport and tourism. The point is that a variety of possible research questions could be asked depending on which variables are chosen within these themes. Once these variables have been selected, the framework suggests the key relationships that can be investigated. Interchanging themes creates new directions for sport tourism research. Rather than posing research questions in one dimension, this framework enables researchers to systematically consider the relationships between themes across either two or three basic dimensions.

CONCLUSION

This article conceptualises sport tourism in the context of its activity, its spatial and its temporal dimensions. Sport tourism is defined as *sport-based travel away from the home environment for a limited time, where sport is characterised by unique rule sets, competition related to physical prowess, and a playful nature*. Sport was then examined as a tourist attraction using Leiper's (1990) systems model and the paper concludes with a proposed framework for research in this area.

In terms of the definition of sport tourism, the major contribution of this paper is to anchor a sociological approach to sport within a generalised three-dimensional definition of tourism. Sport is positioned as the activity dimension thereby highlighting its relationship to tourism's spatial and temporal dimensions. One of the key differences of this definition relative to most existing ones is that the distinguishing characteristics of sport are explicitly stated in terms of sport's institutional rule structure, competitive continuum, and basis in play. Sport is seen as being more than physical activity. Furthermore, competition is seen as a defining characteristic of sport and is presented as a continuum ranging from recreational to elite. The inclusion of this continuum is one of the strengths of this definition, as it allows for comparisons between different levels of competition in terms of specified spatial and temporal variables. For example, under this definition it is possible to address questions such as 'what are the spatial and temporal implications of a ski resort's decision to focus on elite versus recreational skiers?'

By considering sport within an attraction system framework, this paper has presented an alternative perspective to the typologies that have been presented to date. Although

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these typologies have identified specific groupings of travel products and have made explicit and implicit reference to attractions, much of this has been done with no conscious linkage to existing attraction theory. Anchoring this discussion within an attraction system framework has allowed some of the more distinct features of sport to be highlighted in a systematic fashion. One example of this is the advantages that sport presents as an attraction in terms of fulfilling tourists search for authenticity. Although this issue was not discussed in detail, the use of an attraction system framework enables the identification of these types of important issues.

The last section of the paper presents and explains a research framework for sport tourism that addresses the criticisms of the existing literature raised by Gibson (1998). More specifically, it is developed as an attempt to help the authors make sense of a broad-based literature and to identify future research avenues in this area. It extends the two-dimensional framework offered by Standeven and De Knop (1999) to three dimensions based on the underlying structure of many broadly accepted definitions of tourism. Each dimension is then subdivided into selected themes. The next logical step in this process is to breakdown the themes into specific variables. The relationship between these variables can then be hypothesised and tested in a systematic fashion.

The framework is intended to be flexible so that other researchers can find some utility in it, whether they are managers looking for practical solutions to real problems, graduate students just initiating a research programme in this area, or established scholars in the field. All of these researchers are encouraged to substitute their own themes into this framework or to make further modifications as they see fit. What is most important is that research recognises not only the breadth of sport tourism but that it is also characterised by an increasing depth of analysis. Furthermore, depth and breadth must be linked. The framework presented in this paper represents an instrument that can be used to address this challenge.

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