

Athletes as Event Tourists: Consumption Patterns of Participants at the University Games in Turkey

Etkinlik Turisti Olarak Sporcular: Türkiye Üniversite Oyunlarındaki Katılımcıların Tüketim Örnekleri

Rıdvan EKMEKÇİ¹, Serkan BERBER²

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate participants' consumer behaviors of 2010 Turkish Summer University Games. Total 307 male, 118 female participants (N: 426) was joined to study voluntarily. A questionnaire which includes 15 question (demographic and consumer information) applied to participants. The questionnaire designed to find participant consumer behavior includes travel, expenses, accommodation and general ideas about games, and facilities. 311 participants were athletes, 13 were referees, 38 were managers, 31 were trainers and 32 were volunteers. Participant average overnight stay mean was 3.5 days. 67 participants stayed 2 nights, 151 participants stayed 3 nights, 100 participants 4 nights, 70 was 5 nights. Average travel expenses were 446 Turkish liras (TL). Participants spent average 90.5 TL for food, 187 TL for accommodation, 81 TL for shopping, 42 TL for transport, 20 TL for facilities and 18 TL for other expenses. Participants' average age was 23.3 years old and average monthly income was 921 TL.

Keywords: Sport events, consumer, university games

ÖZET

Bu araştırmanın amacı 2010 Üniversiteler Arası Yaz Oyunları katılımcılarının tüketici davranışlarını belirlemektir. Çalışma 307 erkek, 118 kadın (N:426) katılımcı gönüllü olarak yer almıştır. Katılımcı tüketici davranışını ölçmek için geliştirilmiş anket Seyahat ve konaklama ile ilgili harcamaları ve oyunlar ve tesisler ile ilgili genel düşünceleri içermektedir. Katılımcıların 311'i sporcu, 13 tanesi hakem, 38'i yönetici, 31'i antrenör ve 32'si gönüllülerden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcıların konaklama ortalamaları 3.5 gün olmakla birlikte bunlardan 67'si 2 gece, 151'i 3 gece, 100'ü 4 gece ve 70 tanesi 5 gece konaklamıştır. Ortalama seyahat harcaması 446 TL olarak bulunmuştur. Katılımcılar ortalama olarak yeme içme amaçlı 90.5 TL, konaklama için 187 TL, ulaşım için 42 TL, tesisler için 20 TL ve diğer giderler için 18 TL harcama yapmışlardır. Katılımcıların yaş ortalaması 23.3 olmakla birlikte aylık gelirleri ortalama olarak 921 TL bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Spor etkinlikleri, tüketici, üniversite oyunları.

1. INTRODUCTION

The competition to host the worldwide mega sporting events like Olympic Games or FIFA World Cup is very intense; as intense as the athletic competition on the track, in the pool or on the pitch. Just like the worldwide competition for hosting mega sporting events, the competition is intense amongst cities to host other large sport events including the UEFA Euro Cup, Formula One races, IFAA World Championships, and the World Universiade.

Countries and cities via to host these kind of sports events just like the other types of mega events in different fields with the expectation that spending by participants, spectators, sponsors and developers will boost their economies and will bring many other benefits to the cities, to some regions or the whole country.

Smaller sport events in smaller cities have the potential to create relatively larger impacts than

the bigger events. The direct economic impact of the 2005 Little League Baseball World Series, an international tournament for 12-13 year old boys held annually in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, was \$US 35 million, and a significant percentage of the county's (provincial) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the year (Scott & Turco, 2007).

Big numbers of different research has been devoted to examine sport mega-events including the FIFA World Cup, Olympic Games, FIBA World Cup, and Commonwealth Games (Kaplanidou, 2007; Preuss, Seguin, & O'Reilly, 2007; Preuss, 2004; Baade & Mathieson, 2002; Carlsen & Taylor, 2003), yet few studies have focused on for the sporting events happening only around Turkey to understand participant consumption patterns and impacts.

This study examine participants at a recurring sport event held in Turkey under the control of Turkish University Sports Federation. Organized

¹ Assist. Prof., Pamukkale University, School of Sports Sciences and Tehcnology, Department of Sports Management, rekmecki@pau.edu.tr

² Res. Ass., Anadolu University, School of Physical Education and Sports, serkanberber@anadolu.edu.tr

under the patronage of International University Sport Federation (FISU), the University Games are held every year in a different city in Turkey.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Few research studies have examined participants as visitors to sport events in national level. University sports participants though not significant spenders, serve an important role in the sport tourism system, attracting spectators and their spending to the destinations, visitors who would not otherwise visit. In this regard, competitions involving university sports can be valuable assets worthy of investment for a host community.

Since the 1980s, hosting sport events has become an urban economic regeneration strategy supplanting more social motivations i.e., youth sport development, improved public health, enhanced quality of life, etc. (Carlsen & Taylor, 2003; Jones & Stokes, 2003; Lynch & Jensen, 1984). The purpose of staging sport events has shifted from entertainment for locals to attracting tourists and encouraging their local spend. Writes Gratton, Shilbi, & Coleman (2005:985):

Investment in sport infrastructure in cities was not primarily aimed at getting the local community involved in sport, but was instead aimed at attracting tourists, encouraging inward investment and changing the image of the city. The first example of this new strategy was seen in Sheffield with the investment of £147 million in sporting facilities to host the World Student Games of 1991. Sheffield, Birmingham and Glasgow used sport as a key driver in promoting urban regeneration. Each city was designated as a National City of Sport in 1995. Similarly, Manchester spent over £200 million on sport facilities to host the 2002 Commonwealth Games, with an additional £470 million spent on non-sport infrastructure in east Manchester. Manchester's transformation from a working-class port city to international sport tourism destination was initiated by hosting the Commonwealth Games. It is an understatement that the popularity of Manchester United has significantly aided the city's sport and tourism image (Turco et al, 2010).

Urban regeneration through sport events, Smith (2005) claims, leads to a reimagining of the city. Nowhere has this been more renown than Barcelona, host of the 1992 Olympic Games. The European Cities Monitor ranks the top cities in which to locate a business on the continent. In 1990, Barcelona was ranked eleventh; in 2007, it ranked fourth, ahead of Amsterdam, Brussels, and Madrid. The Olympic Games in Barcelona generated an estimated US\$16.6 billion for the national economy between 1986-

1993 (Visit Britain, 2004). Tourism accounts for over 12% of the city's GDP, compared to 1-2% before the Olympics (Cabrini, 2004).

Barcelona increased its capacity of hotel beds by 34.9% in the build-up to the Olympics and continued to do so following the Games. Between 1992-2002, 75 additional hotels were built, resulting in an additional 47% expansion of available bed space (Duran, 2002). Overnight stays rose by 110% between 1990 and 2001, outperforming the 98% increase in beds during that period. Concerning the image makeover Barcelona experienced from the Olympic Games, Pere Duran, General Director, Tourisme de Barcelona Consortium states (2002:7): "Barcelona was a grey and boring city. The Games were the excuse, perhaps the incentive, for a general process of analysis of the city in general and in particular its role as a tourist centre."

Athletes are not included in some sport tourism studies for a number of reasons. One, for economic impact studies, athletes often stay in lodging accommodations paid for by their national sport federations and with cafeteria-style meal services; consequently, their local spend is therefore much less than other tourists. Second, researchers may find it difficult to access athletes because of their competition and practice schedules. Third, event organizers may want the athletes distracted from their competition focus by researchers asking invasive questions.

3. RESULTS

The purpose of the study is to examine the participants of the Turkish University Games in terms of their profile and their consumer behaviors. 2010 Turkish University Games was the biggest university sports event until 2010. More than 3000 participants attended to the games as an athlete, coach, manager, volunteer and staff.

3.1. Research Design

A questionnaire modeled after the once used by Cox et al. (2007) and by Turco and Dimitru (2009) was used to facilitate the purpose of the study. Questionnaire includes 15 questions with demographic in the study to reach the desired data, total of 426 surveys were completed by participants before and after the games on-site during selected days of the event.

3.2. Findings

3.2.1. Participant Spending

Participants spent average of 537 TL in Denizli during the Turkish University Games, respectively, primarily for, shopping, transportation, and other goods and services. Per night spend by participants

approximately 45 TL not exactly spend of high-end tourists. It must be remembered that most of the participants are students and amateur athletes. They may not have been employed at the time or had the previous opportunity to acquire a high-paying job thus impacting downward their tourist spend. Participants' spent average of 90 TL for food, 187 for accommodation, 81 TL for shopping, 42 TL for transportation, 19 TL for expenses during the event and 18 TL for other expenses.

Though the focus of this research has been on the World Universiade, it must be remembered that different sport events stimulate different spectator spending behaviors. For example, youth sporting events may benefit an economy more than those for university athletes, since youths are often accompanied by parent/guardians, thereby attracting a larger visitor group. Friends of student athletes may likely be students and therefore in similar financial circumstances with little disposable

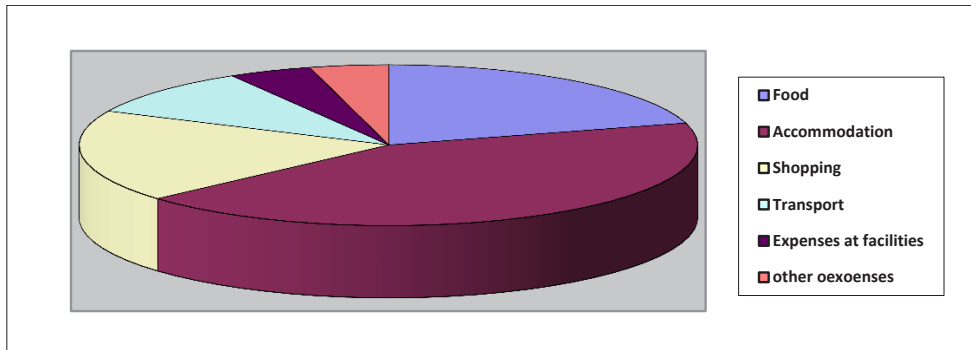


Figure 1: Participants Spending Chart

The implications can be important to tourist destination marketers. As the geographic origins of event spectators changes from year-to-year, so too will their economic impacts on the host economy. For the University Games, it appears that the average participant spend is approximately 537 TL in the local economy of Denizli. An athlete's costs for lodging and some meals are typically paid for by their University Sports Clubs and therefore their personal spend locally will be less than other sport tourists. Given the nature of the University Games with practices and preliminary competitions in some events, an athlete may not have the time to spend additional money in the host city. More directly, student athletes may simply not have the spending power (income) yet to add more to the local economy (Turco et al, 2010).

income available to travel to a Universiade and watch their friends (Turco et al,2010).

3.2.2. Participant Profiles

Turkish University Games participants in 2010 in Denizli was as follows. Age 23,3 , Gender 307 male, 119 female. 265 participants was athletes, 26 was officials, 22 was managers, 24 was coaches, 79 was volunteers. Participants average income was 921 TL.

3.2.3. Length of Stay

Participants stayed an average of 3 nights. 74 participants traveled daily and didn't stay over the night. 11 participants stayed 1 night, 50 stayed 2 nights, 105 stayed 3 nights, 79 stayed 4 nights and 107 stayed 5 nights and more.

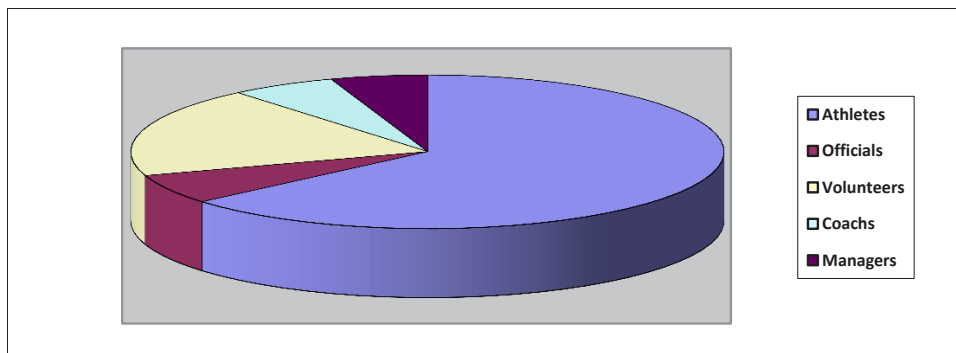


Figure 2: Participants' Profile

4. CONCLUSIONS

This research offers a glimpse at Turkish University Games participants and their consumer behaviors. University games is a once in-a-lifetime experience for most athletes given their stage in life. Most participants had positive perceptions of Denizli as a host city. 199 participants (46,7%) mentioned that the organization (event) was better than they expected. 128 (30%) was told that organization seemed to expect. 99 (23%) was told that organization was not as expected.

Mega events like Olympics, Universiades, World Championships are mostly value events which can not measure with all demensions. With the big events host cities can get new facilities, promotions and reputations as well. But financially there are short term revenues for the host people and investors. There were more then 3000 participant in 2010 Turkish University games. There are transportation expenses, accomdation, food and drink, shopping and other expenses like equipment, health.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study reveals the market characteristics and consumer behaviors of participants at a national sport event. It is recommended that researchers replicate studies of sport events held in different host countries and different cities in the same countries to determine the similarities and differences in sport participant characteristics and impacts across time and cultures.

One of the most vexing questions for sport event and destination marketers is "How much does the average sport event tourist spend per trip?" The answer depends on the nature of the sport event, spectator market, and characteristics of the host economy. The spatial proximity/distance of sport tourists in relation to the host economy, and whether or not they are first-time visitors, influences their spending. International visitor groups to the 2005 Little League World Series spent, on average, \$700 more in the Williamsport economy than domestic visitor groups (Scott & Turco, 2007).

Future research should examine the extent to which repeat visitation, perceived event prestige, and participant age influence sport event tourist attendance and spending behaviors. Further, the extent to which the tourist images of the host city have been influenced by hosting the Turkish University Games should be examined more closely. University games participants expressed a willingness to recommend visiting the cities to their friends and relatives. Denizli is well known for its cultural and historical attractions and not for hosting premier sporting events. Neither is an applicant city for bigger sports events this decade. Reimagining a city is a process that cannot be completed overnight or a few weeks time. Cities have the benefit of years of planning and preparation, weeks of competition and media coverage, and a post-Games legacy that may last for years. These elements are void or considerable less intense in the case of the University Games in Turkey .

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