Examining the Antecedents of Group-oriented Travel Behaviour to Large-scale Events: A Conceptual Model and Propositions

Nicole Regan, University of Newcastle, Nicole.Regan@studentmail.newcastle.edu.au
Jamie Carlson, University of Newcastle, Jamie.Carlson@newcastle.edu.au
P. J. Rosenberger III, University of Newcastle, Philip.RosenbergerIII@newcastle.edu.au

ABSTRACT

Major large-scale events, such as the Olympics and Ashes cricket series, attract tourists, resulting in increased consumer spending on accommodation, food and recreational activities. Formalised, fan-group event-tourism organisations - e.g. The Barmy Army and The Fanatics - play an increasingly visible role in organising fan-group travel to major sporting events around the world. However, a lack of understanding exists regarding attitudes and motivations to engage in group-oriented, event-based travel behaviour. A theoretical framework is presented that posits travel motivation, enduring involvement, fan identity and destination-image as significant factors influencing group-oriented, event-based travel intentions. Propositions to guide future research are also presented.

Key Words: Tourism, Travel motivation, Destination image, Involvement, Fan identity, Event-based tourism, Groups

Examining the Antecedents of Group-oriented Travel Behaviour to Large-scale Events: A Conceptual Model and Propositions
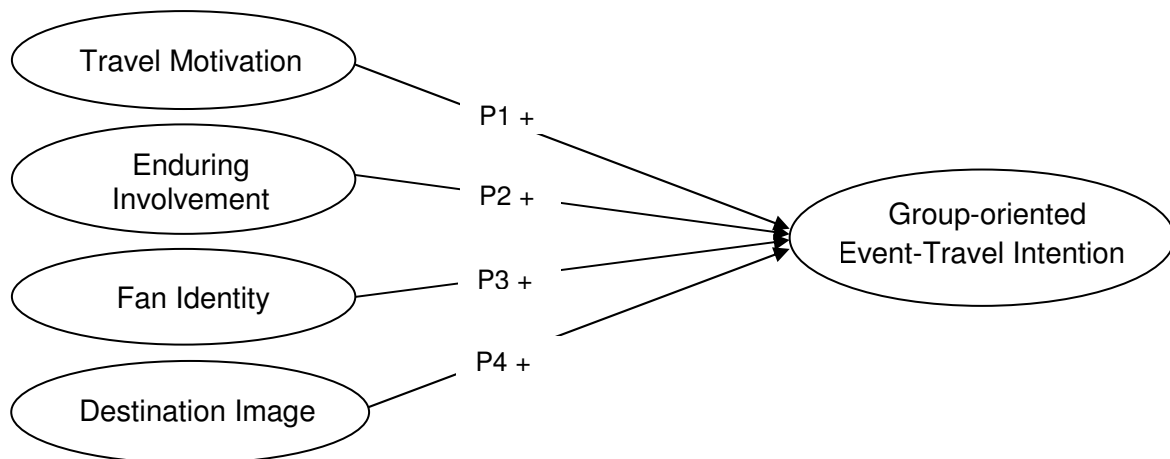
INTRODUCTION

Events are an important motivator of tourism activity and have become an increasingly significant component of destination marketing (Getz, 2008; van den Berg, Braun and Otgaar, 2000). Events are being used to increase visitation (Light, 1996; Ritchie, 1984), improve a destination's position in the market (Roche, 1994) and foster destination development (Bramwell, 1997; Chacko and Shaffer, 1993). Major events, such as the Olympics, international rugby tours, Ashes cricket series and the Australian Formula 1 *Grand Prix*, draw significant numbers of both domestic and international tourists to the regions in which events are hosted, resulting in increased consumer spending on accommodation, food and recreational activities (Dwyer, Forsyth and Spurr, 2005; Getz, 2008; O'Reagan, 2005; Tourism NSW, 2007). These major events are thus attractive to all levels of government due to the positive, economic flow-on effects they have (SRV, 2007; URS, 2007). For example, the Australian Formula 1 *Grand Prix* race costs the Victorian state government $47 million annually, but has a reported return to the state of $170 million to $200 million (Masters, 2009). Similarly, the 23,680 international visitors that came to Australia primarily for the 2006-07 Ashes and one-day cricket series spent an estimated $10,425 each on average, or $247 million in total (URS, 2007).

Despite this practical significance, a lack of scholarly attention has been given to the various factors that affect event-based tourism, which is a recently recognised phenomenon (Getz, 2008). More specific to this paper is the lack of understanding in the literature regarding attitudes and motivations to engage in group-oriented, event-based travel behaviour. Over the past 15 years, the emergence of formalised, fan-group event-tourism organisations—such as "The Barmy Army" (England), "The Fanatics" (Australia) and the "Trini Posse" (Trinidad)— have played an increasingly visible role in organising fan-group travel to major sporting events around the world. The Barmy Army alone has over 20,000 members, and it is difficult not to watch an Ashes or Test cricket series or other major sporting event (e.g. Rugby World Cup) featuring England or Australia without seeing The Barmy Army or The Fanatics visibly present (O'Reagan, 2005; Senewiratne, 2008). Thus, understanding who travels for events and why, is important in order to attract larger volumes of tourists to the destination (Getz, 2008; Weed, 2006), with particular regard to group-oriented, event-based tourism.

On this basis, the remainder of this paper seeks to enhance our understanding of factors that influence group-oriented, event-travel behaviour. To this end, a multidisciplinary research framework is presented (Figure 1), which posits travel motivation, enduring involvement, fan identity and destination-image as significant factors that should influence consumers' group-oriented, event-travel intentions. Propositions to guide future research are also presented.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents the framework of factors that should influence consumers' group-oriented, event-travel intentions (Figure 1). The literature is reviewed related to travel motivation, enduring involvement, fan identity and destination-image and the impact that these variables have on group-oriented, event-travel intentions.

1

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Group-oriented Travel Behaviour

Travel Motivation

In travel-motivation studies, the underlying assumption is that travellers' psychological needs and motivations shape travel behaviour and travellers choose the type of holiday to satisfy these internal needs (Fodness, 1994; Meng and Uysal, 2008; Yuan *et al.*, 2005). Internal factors can drive the tourist to search for signs, objects, situations and events that contain the promise of meeting their needs (Fluker and Turner, 2000; Gnoth, 1997). Various explanatory travel-motivation models have been proposed in the tourism-management-literature. For example, Crompton (1979) identified seven key dimensions of motivation to attend a sporting event: escape; relaxation; prestige; exploration and evaluation of self; regression; enhancement of kinship relationships and facilitation of social interaction. Hoye and Lillis (2008) explored the travel motivations of Australian Football League fans, identifying nine motives that drive sports-fan consumption behaviour: social interaction; skills of players; acquisition of knowledge; aesthetics; drama; escape; achievement; physical attraction and family. Importantly, the need for social interaction was the most significant motivating factor for sports-fan travel, with fans more likely to travel if they perceive they will be part of a group experience (Hoye and Lillis, 2008). In other studies, facilitation of social interaction, social motives, enhancement of human relations, socialisation, pleasure seeking (i.e. to mix with other tourists) and group affiliation have been repeatedly identified as major motivating factors to travel and attend events (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Kim and Chalip, 2004; Kozak, 2002; Wann, Ensor and Bilyeu 2001; Zhang and Lam, 1999).

Having established that travel motivations are vital to understanding tourist behaviour and predicting future travel patterns, it is argued that stronger travel motivations will have a positive influence on group-oriented travel behaviour. This is because the stronger an individual's travel motivation with reference to an event, the more compelling the event should be for the consumer to attend it. Thus,

> *Proposition 1:   Attributes of travel motivation will have a positive influence on group-oriented travel intention.*

2

Enduring Involvement

Involvement's importance is well established in the literature. Involvement is the extent to which the consumer views the object or activity as a central part of their life, and sees the object or activity as meaningful, engaging and important to them (Laverie and Arnett, 2000; O'Cass, 2000; Zaichowsky, 1985). Consequently, consumers involved with a particular product derive a great deal of pleasure from it (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). Essentially, involvement has been identified as being at the heart of the person-object relationship and largely based on the interaction of consumers with objects (Hill and Green, 2000; O'Cass, 2000). That is, the relative intensity of the consumer's thoughts about a focal object/activity, such as interest in a sport, a fashion brand or retail shopping.

Importantly, the literature differentiates between situational involvement and enduring involvement. Situational involvement is a passing increase in concern for an activity or product due to temporary circumstances, whereas enduring involvement is seen as an ongoing level of concern with an activity or product, independent of a specific situation or circumstance. On the other hand, high levels of enduring involvement are likely when an individual perceives an activity to offer hedonic benefits, such as attending a sporting event, a concert or retail shopping (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985; Laverie and Arnett, 2000). From a sports perspective, involvement primarily refers to the level of interest or importance the fan ascribes to sport (Pope and Turco, 2001; Pritchard and Negro, 2001; Shank and Beasley, 1998). Therefore, this paper adopts enduring involvement as the definition of the involvement construct in relation to the focal object of interest, namely the consumer's favourite sport.

Despite the extensive involvement literature, research is limited regarding the relationship between enduring involvement and group-oriented travel intentions. Nevertheless, drawing from the arguments found in the marketing and consumer behaviour literature in particular, it can be argued that an individual's level of enduring involvement towards a particular sport (i.e. the product category being the object of interest) may influence a consumer's propensity to attend a large-scale sporting event related to the sport (i.e. stimulus environment related to the object of interest). This is because an individual who has an ongoing enthusiasm and interest toward a specific sport (such as soccer) will be more likely to attend a large-scale event (e.g. Soccer World Cup) to watch the sport than those consumers who are less involved (Pope and Turco, 2001). On this basis, highly enduring involved consumers (e.g. with a favourite sport) will be more likely to engage in group-oriented travel. Thus,

> *Proposition 2: Enduring involvement in the sport will have a positive influence on group-oriented travel intention.*

Fan Identity

Social identification in consumer markets has gained growing research attention in recent times. Identification is an orientation of the self in regard to other objects, including a person or group, which results in feelings or sentiments of close attachment (Trail, Fink and Anderson, 2003). Recently, sports-based, social-identity studies have shown that the intensity of the connection between the sports fan and their team, club or player has a direct impact on fans' consumption decisions. The ideas of team identification and commitment in sports consumer loyalty can be related to the distinction between spectators and fans made by Pooley (1978):

> "Whereas a **spectator** of sport will observe a spectacle and forget it quickly, the **fan** continues his interest until the intensity of feeling toward the team becomes so

3

great that parts of every day are devoted to either his team or in some instances, to the broad realm of sport itself" (p. 14).

Pooley's distinction suggests that, whilst both types of sports consumers may demonstrate similar behaviours (e.g. attend games), spectators and fans have different thoughts, feelings and attitudes about sports and teams. Later research has also highlighted the important difference between spectators and fans, noting the psychological attachment of a loyal fan-team relationship developing most effectively when a patron identifies themselves with a team (Bhattachraya, Rao and Glynn, 1995; Pritchard, Havitz and Howard, 1999; Wann, Royalty and Roberts, 2000). Previous studies have verified that the degree to which a fan (i.e. consumer) identifies with a sporting team (identity of interest) does in fact predict the fan's loyalty and the extent to which the fan is prepared to sacrifice resources and time to engage in specific fan activities. For example, Pease and Zhang (1996) found that a high level of team identification was the best predictor of game attendance. Wann and Branscombe (1993) also found that sport fans with high team-identification levels spent more money and time in the process of watching their team play and were also willing to pay a price premium to see their team play in an important game. In addition, studies have also found that fans with high identification levels were more optimistic about the team's future and perceived attendance at games as a more enjoyable experience than fans with moderate or low identification levels (Madrigal, 1995; Wann and Branscombe, 1993; Wann and Schrader, 1997).

Despite the growing research on team identification in sport and its effects, little research has investigated the direct influence of team identification on group-oriented, event-travel attendance. Understanding consumer identification levels with a sporting team may be helpful in predicting commitment beyond the context of leisure and fan-specific activities, and extend to travelling to a sporting event, such as The Ashes cricket series or the Soccer World Cup. This reasoning leads to the following proposition:

> Proposition 3:   Identification with a sporting team event will have a positive influence on group-oriented travel intention.

Destination Image

Destination image is an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings and overall perception of a particular destination (Chen and Tsai, 2006; Crompton, 1979; Lee, Lee and Lee, 2005). Destination image can be conceptualised as having cognitive and affective elements (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007). Destination image can be formulated on the basis of cognitive inferences made by tourists about destinations from a variety of destination atmospheric cues, such as quality of services, price and attractions. Destination image can also be derived from an individual's attitude towards the destination's perceived attributes (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007; Ross, 1998; Sirgy and Su, 2000). The distinction here is that for a tourist to have a destination image based on cognitive elements, they would have had to have visited the destination before. In contrast, affective destination image is based on individuals' perceptions of a destination, whether or not they have visited before. Based on this discussion, this study adopts the affective perspective of destination image that attitudes are formed based on their overall perception of the destination despite not having direct experience.

Destination image has an important influence on tourist behaviours, including intentions to visit for the first time or revisit a destination (Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez, 2001; Chen and

Tsai, 2006; Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007). Tourists' behaviour can thus be expected to be partly conditioned by the image that they have of destinations. In the case of event travel for large-scale sporting events, individuals do not decide the event's location. Consequently, the destination image or its perceived appeal may influence the consumer's decision making as to their potential attendance at the desired event. Further, in the absence of prior experience and/or limited knowledge (i.e. an unvisited destination), image has a potentially critical decision-making role to play in this context (Keller, 2008). Therefore, an individual's affective destination image, whether a true representation or not, is seen to be a critical element in the destination visitation decisions (Ross, 1998). On this basis, we argue that consumers who have a favourable perception of the destination hosting the event will be more likely to engage in group-oriented travel behaviour. Thus,

Proposition 4: Destination image will have a positive influence on group-oriented travel intention.

CONCLUSION

Despite the significance of large-scale-event-based tourism, a theoretical gap exists as to what drives consumers to attend these events, particularly with regard to fan group-oriented, event-based tourism. To address this deficiency, a theoretical framework was presented that posited travel motivation, enduring involvement, fan identity and destination-image as factors influencing consumers' fan-group-oriented, large-scale-event travel intentions. Propositions to guide future research were also highlighted and discussed. A better understanding of the reasons why consumers travel to, and attend large-scale events will enable practitioners and policy makers to formulate more effective, consumer-centric, marketing strategies (e.g. destination advertising, demand forecasting) leading to larger event attendance resulting in greater economic activity.

References

Baloglu, S. and McCleary, K. W. 1999. A model of destination image formation. Annals of Tourism Research, 35(4), 868-897.

Bhattacharya, C., Rao, H., Glynn, M., 1995. Understanding the bond of identification: An investigation of its correlates among art museum members. Journal of Marketing, 59 (October), 46-57.

Beard, J.G., Ragheb, M.G., 1983. Measuring leisure motivation. Journal of Tourism and Leisure Research, 15, 219-227.

Bigne, J.E, Sanchez, M.I., Sanchez, J., 2001. Tourism image, evaluation variables and after purchase behaviour: inter-relationship. Tourism Management, 22, 607-616.

Bramwell, B., 1997. Strategic planning before and after a mega-event. Tourism Management, 18, 167-176.

Chacko, H., Schaffer, J., 1993. The evolution of a festival: Creole Christmas in New Orleans. Tourism Management, 14, 475-482.

Chen, C., Tsai, D., 2006. How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioural intentions?. Tourism Management, 28, 1115-1122.

Crompton, J.L., 1979. Motivations for pleasure vacation. Annals of Tourism Research, 6 (4), 408-424.

Dwyer, L., Forsyth, P., Spurr, R., 2005. Estimating the impacts of special events on an economy. Journal of Travel Research, 43, 351-359.

Fluker, M.R., Turner, L.W., 2000. Needs, motivations, and expectations of a commercial whitewater rafting experience, Journal of Travel Research, 38, 380-389.

Fodness, D., 1994. Measuring tourist motivation. Annals of Tourism Research, 21 (3), 555-581.

Getz, D., 2008. Event Tourism: Definition, evolution, and research. Tourism Management, 29, 403-428.

Gnoth, J., 1997. Tourism motivation and expectation formation. Annals of Tourism Research, 24 (2), 283-304.

Green, B.C., 2001. Leveraging subculture and identity to promote sport events. Sport Management Review, 4, 1-19.

Green, B.C., Chalip, L., 1998. Sport tourism as the celebration of subculture. Annals of Tourism Research, 25 (2), 275-291.

Hill, B., Green, B.C., 2000. Repeat attendance as a function of involvement, loyalty, and the sportscape across three football contexts. Sport Management Review, 3, 145-162.

Hoye, R., Lillis, K., 2008. Travel motivations of Australian Football League fans: An exploratory study. Managing Leisure, 13, 13-22.

Hunt, K.A., Bristol, T., Bashaw, R.E., 1999. A conceptual approach to classifying sports fans. Journal of Services Marketing, 13 (6), 439-452.

Kaplanidou, K., & Vogt, C. 2007. The interrelationship between sport event and destination image and sport tourists' behaviors. Journal of Sport & Tourism, 12 (3-4), 183-206.

Keller, K.L., 2008. Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity, International 3rd Edition, Pearson/Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Kim, N., Chalip, L., 2004. Why travel to the FIFA World Cup? Effects of motives, background, interest, and constraints. Tourism Management, 25, 695-707.

Kozak, M., 2002. Comparative analysis of tourist motivations by nationality and destinations. Tourism Management, 23, 221-232.

Laurent, G., Kapferer, J., 1985. Measuring consumer involvement profiles. Journal of Marketing Research, 22, 41-53.

Laverie, D.A., Arnett D.B., 2000. Factors affecting fan attendance: The influence of identity salience and satisfaction. Journal of Leisure Research, 32 (2), 225-246.

Lee, C., Lee, Y., Lee B., 2005. Korea's destination formed by the 2002 Wold Cup. Annals of Tourism Research, 32 (4), 839-858.

Light, D., 1996. Characteristics of the audience for "events" at a heritage site. Tourism Management, 23, 183-190.

Madrigal, R., 1995. Cognitive and affective determinants of fan satisfaction with sporting event attendance. Journal of Leisure Research, 27, 205-227.

Masters, R., 2009. Taming the tiger: Why Melbourne beat Sydney. The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 March, 18.

Meng, F., Uysal, M., 2008. Effects of gender differences on perceptions of destination attributes, motivations, and travel values: An examination of a nature-based resort destination. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 16 (4), 445-466.

O'Cass, A., 2000. An assessment of consumer product, purchase decision, advertising and consumption involvement in fashion clothing. Journal of Economic Psychology, 21, 545-576.

O'Reagan, M., 2005. The Barmy Army and other fanatics. The Sports Factor program, ABC Radio National, 3 June. Available from: http://www.abc.net.au/rn/sportsfactor/stories/2005/1381695.htm, accessed 1 July 2009.

Pooley, J. (1978). The sport fan: A social psychology of misbehaviour. Calgary: CAPHER Sociology of Sport Monograph Series.

Pope, N., Turco, D., 2001. Sport and Event Marketing, Irwin/McGraw Hill, Sydney.

Pritchard, M. P., Havitz, M. E., & Howard, D. R. (1999). Analyzing the commitment-loyalty link in service contexts. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 27, 333-348.

Pritchard, M., Negro, C., 2001. Sports loyalty programs and their impact on fan relationships. International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship, 3 (3), 317-338.

Ritchie, J.R.B., 1984. Assessing the impact of hallmark events: Conceptual and research issues. Journal of Travel Research, 23 (1), 2-11.

Roche, M., 1994. Mega-events and urban policy. Annals of Tourism Research, 21, 1-19.

Ross, G.F., 1998. The Psychology of Tourism, 2nd ed., Hospitality Press, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Senewiratne, H.H., 2008. Tourism recovers from earlier slump. Daily News, 13 March. Available from: http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/03/13/bus32.asp, accessed on 1 July 2009.

Shank, M., Beasley, F., 1998. Fan or fanatic: Refining a measure of sports involvement. Journal of Sports Behavior, 21 (4), 435-444.

Sirgy, M.J., Su, C., 2000. Destination image, self-congruity, and travel behavior: Toward an integrative model. Journal of Travel Research, 38, 340-352.

Smith, A. and Stewart, B. 2007. The Travelling Fan: Understanding the Mechanisms of Sport Fan Consumption in a Sport Tourism Setting. Journal of Sport Tourism. 12 (3/4), 155 – 181.

SRV, 2007. 12th FINA World Championships Summary Report. Sport and Recreation Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria. Available from: http://www.sport.vic.gov.au/web9/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/FINA_Summary/$file/FINA SwimmingSummaryFINAL.pdf, accessed 1 July 2009.

Tourism NSW, 2007. The Army went barmy - on spending. Insights, 27 April. Available from: http://corporate.tourism.nsw.gov.au/emailMarketing/Insights/2007_04_06/TourismNSW_email_223.html#The_army_went_barmy___on_spending, accessed 1 July 2009.

Trail, G.T., Fink, J.S., Anderson, D.F., 2003. Sport spectator consumption behaviour. Sport Marketing Quarterly, 12 (1), 8-17.

URS, 2007. Economic Impact of the 2006/07 3 Mobile Ashes Test and Commonwealth Bank One Day International Series on the Australian Economy. Available from:

http://www.tourism.australia.com/content/Events/Ashes%202006/ashes_economic_report_final_290507_version4.pdf, accessed on 1 July 2009.

van den Berg, L., Braun, E., Otgaar, A.H.J., 2000. Sports and city marketing in European cities. Euricur, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Wann, D.L., Branscombe, N.R., 1993. Sports fans: Measuring degree of identification with their team. International Journal of Sports Psychology, 24 (1), 1-17.

Wann, D. L., Ensor, C. L., and Bilyeu, J. K. 2001. Intrinsic and extrinsic motives for following a sport team and team identification. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 93, 451-454.

Wann, D.L. Royalty, J., Roberts, A., 2000. The self-presentation of sport fans: Investigating the importance of team identification and self-esteem. Journal of Sport Behavior. 23(2), 198-207.

Wann, D. and Schrader, M. 1997. Team Identification and the Enjoyment of Watching A Sporting Event. Perceptual and Motor Skills, pp. 84-954.

Weed, M., 2006. Sports Tourism and the Development of Sports Events. Available from: www.idrottsforum.org/articles/weed/weed061213.pdf, accessed on 1 July 2009.

Yuan, J., Cai, L.A., Morrison, A.M., Linton, S., 2005. An analysis of wine festival attendees' motivations: A synergy of wine, travel and special events?. Journal of Vacation Marketing, 11 (1), 41-56.

Zaichowsky, J.L., 1985. Measuring the involvement construct. Journal of Consumer Research, 12 (3), 341-453.

Zhang, Q.H. and Lam, T., 1999. An analysis of mainland Chinese visitors' motivations to visit Hong Kong. Tourism Management, 20, 587-594.