

MEASURING THE EXPERIENCE IN RECREATIONAL SPORT TOURISM EVENT'S PARTICIPANTS

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ABSTRACT

This work aims to study the recreational sport tourism events and the experience satisfaction level of participants in this type of events in Portugal. This kind of research has been scarce until today. After a thorough theoretical revision of these themes and particularly based on Getz (1998), Gibson (1998), Gammon & Robinson (2003), Weed & Bull (2004), Aspas (2000) and Nogawa, Yamguchi & Hagi (1996), a scale was developed to measure the experience of a recreational tourist event. Considering that, some of these events in Portugal were studied and, in a second phase, in-depth interviews with the managers of these events were conducted in order to define the variables that constitute the constructs "Activity", "People" and "Place" (based on Weed & Bull's theoretical model [2004]), being complemented with participant surveys in order to classify them. This study was the basis for the construction of a model identifying the interaction of the determinant variables in the experience of recreational tourism events from the perspective of the participant. This study allowed us to show that, from the three constructs, "Place" has a greater explanatory weight in the perception of the experience than the other two constructs "Activity" and "People". The results obtained revealed that the perception of the experience of a sports event does not change either with the type of event or with the type of participant. The experience of such an event varies according to the participant's assessment of the event's experience. It is clear that the "Activity" has a greater number of variables considered more significant for a positive experience than the other two constructs, being followed then by "Place" and finally by "People". Qualitative data were submitted to frequent statistical techniques in social sciences and may provide valid contributions for further analysis of the same nature. This study allowed us to show that, from the three constructs, "Place" has a greater explanatory weight in the perception of the experience than the other two constructs "Activity" and "People". Therefore, due to the importance of "place" construct, Portugal presents privileged conditions for this kind of tourism.

Keywords: Sports tourism, Recreational sports events, Participants, Experience, Activity, Place, People.

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