

University of Massachusetts Amherst  
**ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst**

---

Travel and Tourism Research Association:  
Advancing Tourism Research Globally

2009 ttra International Conference

---

# Senior Games as Serious Sport Tourism

Jinmoo Heo

*Department of Tourism, Conventions, and Event Management* Indiana University - Indianapolis

Carina King

*Department of Tourism, Conventions, and Event Management* Indiana University - Indianapolis

Naoko Yamada

*Department of Tourism, Conventions, and Event Management* Indiana University - Indianapolis

Amanda K. Cecil

*Department of Tourism, Conventions, and Event Management* Indiana University - Indianapolis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra>

---

Heo, Jinmoo; King, Carina; Yamada, Naoko; and Cecil, Amanda K., "Senior Games as Serious Sport Tourism" (2016). *Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*. 10.  
[https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2009/Illustrated\\_Papers/10](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2009/Illustrated_Papers/10)

This is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@library.umass.edu](mailto:scholarworks@library.umass.edu).

Senior Games as Serious Sport Tourism

An Abstract Submitted for the 2009 Annual TTRA Conference

Jinmoo Heo

Department of Tourism, Conventions, and Event Management  
Indiana University – Indianapolis

Carina King

Department of Tourism, Conventions, and Event Management  
Indiana University – Indianapolis

Naoko Yamada

Department of Tourism, Conventions, and Event Management  
Indiana University – Indianapolis

Amanda K. Cecil

Department of Tourism, Conventions, and Event Management  
Indiana University – Indianapolis

Contact Information

Jinmoo Heo

Department of Tourism, Conventions,  
and Event Management

Indiana University - Indianapolis

Email: [jheo@indiana.edu](mailto:jheo@indiana.edu)

Phone: 317-278-5737

Keywords: sport tourism, serious leisure, aging

The specific topical area: The tourism experience

Preference for Presentation Format: (b) Review first for an oral presentation and second for display as an illustrated paper presentation

## Senior Games as Serious Sport Tourism

### Introduction

Sport tourism is a type of special interest tourism trend that is gaining in popularity. According to Gibson (1998), active sport tourism involves people who travel in order to participate in sporting events. An example of active sport tourism may be participating in Senior Olympic Games, a state and national competition for individuals 50 and older. The Administration on Ageing (October 2008) reported that the proportion of the older population – 65 and older – is projected to increase from 12.4% in 2000 to 20% in 2030. Similar to world population trends, Americans enjoy increased lifespan and the growing number of older adults will have greater impact in the future. Hence, research on senior citizens' participation in sport tourism becomes increasingly important. Every state in the U.S. hosts senior athletic events annually, and these events are dedicated to encouraging senior citizens to lead a healthy lifestyle. Research shows that participating in athletic events provides both personal and social benefits among senior citizens (Siegenthaler & O'Dell, 2003; Smith & Storandt, 1997).

Perhaps the behavior of older adults participating in Senior Games could be understood using Stebbins' (1992) serious leisure concept. Serious leisure is characterized as the systematic pursuit of amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is substantial and interesting for the participants involved. Serious leisure provides a sense of belonging through membership, or identification of self through activities and with a group of participants with distinct values and beliefs. Further, serious leisure expands participant's social circle, fosters responsibility and creates the opportunity to feel valued and needed by other members. Serious leisure has been examined through a variety of leisure activities such as runners (Shipway & Jones, 2008), shag dancers (Brown, 2007), older golfers (Siegenthaler & O'Dell, 2003), people with disabilities (Patterson, 2000), volunteers (Stamer, Lerdall, & Chao, 2008), football fans (Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2002), and tourists (Kane & Zink, 2004). Green and Jones (2005) later discussed the link between sport tourism and serious leisure, and coined the term "serious sport tourism."

Taken together, serious leisure and involvement in sport tourism have been recognized as important aspects of understanding behavior of older adults. While there has been increasing number of researches in sport tourism, few studies however have investigated the involvement in sport tourism and how that relates to serious leisure. Thus, this study sought to examine the relationships of serious leisure and sport tourism using participants of Senior Games. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine if indicators of sport tourism discriminate between high and low serious leisure participants.

### Methodology

#### *Respondents*

The sample for this study was athletes participating in the 2008 Indiana Senior Games. To qualify as a senior games participant, individuals must be over 50 years of age. Approximately, 600 seniors participated in the 2008 Indiana Senior Games. The games consisted of a four-day event that gave older adults the opportunity to compete in various activities such as archery, badminton, basketball, golf, horseshoes, tennis, as well as track and field events. The investigators first mailed the survey instrument to potential participants along with the registration packet. A total of 125 surveys were returned by mail. Additionally, the investigators intercepted participants at the event's registration area and only those individuals that did not complete initial survey were asked to complete a survey. 135 surveys were collected during the registration days. The researches collected a total of 260 surveys and 215 of them were used in data analysis.

### *Instrumentation*

*Serious leisure.* The dependent variable was level of serious leisure participation indicated by group membership. Serious leisure was measured using the Serious Leisure Inventory and Measure (Gould, Moore, McGuire, & Stebbins, 2008). It is a 54 item questionnaire that measures six qualities of serious leisure (perseverance, career development, effort, personal and social benefits, unique ethos, and identity). Cronbach's alpha for serious leisure items was .96. Based on the scores on the serious leisure items, two groups were created: high serious leisure and low serious leisure. A median value was used to split into two groups.

*Sport tourism involvement indicators.* Six variables were used to describe the nature of respondents' involvement in sport tourism participation. It consists of five open-ended questions, and respondents were asked to provide answers to the following questions: How long have you been participating in the Senior Games? How many hours per week do you spend participating in or training for your sport? How many miles did you travel to the Senior Games? How many people are in your party? Including food, accommodations, dining, and travel how much money do you and your party plan to spend at the event throughout the weekend?

### Results

The largest group of the respondents was between the ages of 60 and 69 (36.1%); while those 70-79 made up the second largest group (31.6%) and those 50-59 represented the third largest group (24.8%). A small percentage, 6.9%, represented those over the age of 80. A majority of the participants were men (72.1%) with women representing 27.9% of the group. Athletes in the Senior Games tend to be Caucasian (94.7%); less than 5% were minority participants. Sixty percent of the respondents were retired, while 39.4% of the group was still working full or part-time. A large percentage, 81.7%, of the group was married and 17.3% indicated they were divorced, widowed or single. Pearson correlations coefficients showed that there were a number of statistically significant relationships among variables (see Table 1). Serious leisure was significantly positively related to independent variables. Participants who scored high on serious leisure tended to report more time spent on training for the Senior Games, traveled more miles to participate in the event, spent more money for the event, had longer history of participating in the event, and came with more people to the event. Other correlation coefficients reveal that amount of money spent was positively related to miles traveled and number of people in the group, which seemed to be expected results.

A simultaneous discriminant function analysis was conducted to determine the ability to predict the group difference of serious leisure using the study variables. The analysis generated a significant function ( $Wilks' \lambda = .901$ ,  $\chi^2(5, N=215) = 21.93$ ,  $p < .01$ ). It indicates that the overall predictors differentiated between the two groups. Table 2 indicates that the discriminant function correctly classifies 61.4% of the cases. Given that random assignment in this two group situation would result in approximately 50% correct classification, the discriminant function offers improvement. Further examination of the classification results indicates that the discriminant function is more accurate in classifying those who are high serious leisure participants (53.7% correctly classified) as opposed to those who are low serious leisure participants (69.2% correctly classified).

### Discussion

Discriminant function analysis identified miles traveled, number of people in the group, and amount of training as most important discriminating variables for serious leisure. This finding supports Stebbins' (1992) conceptualization of serious leisure as well as other previous serious leisure researches (Brown, 2007; Green & Jones, 2005; Shipway & Jones, 2007; Shipway

& Jones, 2008). Serious sport tourism participants are likely to invest significant personal effort and persevere through training (Shipway & Jones, 2007). The high serious leisure group in this study indicated the likelihood of travelling further and devoting more time to train for the event than low serious leisure group. In addition, social attraction as well as the maintenance and development of the group are important aspects of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007). Based on discriminant function analysis, high serious leisure group were likely to attend the event with more number of people than low serious leisure group. While the composition of the group is not identified by the respondents (whether they were spouse, children, or friends), it confirms Stebbins' connotation that participants of serious leisure are benefited through social rewards. Several issues should be considered when interpreting the result of the study. The majority of the participants in this study were Caucasian (91.7%), and many of them had a high education level. In addition, participants in this study are limited to people residing in Midwest area. It should also be noted that sampling was not a probability method, and thus generalization of the results should be made with caution. Future studies may expand the geographic coverage in data collection because senior games participants in other states may have different opinions and different levels of involvement in serious leisure.

Table 1. Zero-order Correlation Coefficients

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Training hours/wk	6.23	4.31	1.00	.05	-.03	.05	-.16*	.15*
2. Miles traveled	115.17	140.52		1.00	.32**	.11	.15*	.25**
3. Money spent	118.71	148.43			1.00	.05	.37**	.16*
4. Years participated	6.29	6.27				1.00	.01	.17*
5. No. of people in party	2.14	1.77					1.00	.15*
6. Serious leisure	6.96	1.09						1.00

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 2. Discriminant Function Analysis of Serious Leisure

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Canonical Correlation	Wilks' $\Lambda$	$X^2$	df	p
1	0.110	100.0	.315	.901	21.93	5	>.001

Variables	Standardized Function Coefficients	Structure Coefficients
1. Training hours/wk	.507	.443
2. Miles traveled	.634	.713
3. Money spent	-.084	.285
4. Years of participation	.323	.393
5. No. of people in party	.492	.448

Group Centroid = Low Serious Leisure, -.331; High Serious Leisure, .328

#### Classification Results for Serious Leisure Participation

Actual Group	No. of Respondents	Predicted Group (Percentage)	
		Low Serious Leisure	High Serious Leisure
Low Serious Leisure	107	74 (69.2%)	33 (30.8%)
High Serious Leisure	108	50 (46.3%)	58 (53.7%)

Percentage of groups correctly classified = 61.4%

## References

- Administration on Aging (2008, October 17). *Statistics on the Aging Population*. Retrieved December 15, 2008, from <http://www.aoa.gov/prof/statistics/statistics.aspx>
- Brown, C. A. (2007). The Carolina Shaggers: Dance as serious leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research, 39*(4), 623-647.
- Gibson, H. (1998). Sport tourism: A critical analysis of research. *Sport Management Review, 1*, 45-76.
- Gibson, H., Willming, C., & Holdnak, A. (2002). "We're Gators...not just Gator fans": Serious leisure and University of Florida football. *Journal of Leisure Research, 34*(4), 397-425.
- Gould, J., Moore, D., McGuire, F., & Stebbins, R. (2008). Development of the serious leisure inventory and measure. *Journal of Leisure Research, 40*(1), 47-68.
- Green, B. C., & Jones, I. (2005). Serious leisure, social identity, and sport tourism. *Sport in Society, 8*(2), 164-181.
- Kane, M.J., & Zink, R. (2004). Package adventure tours: Markers in serious leisure careers. *Leisure Studies, 23*(4), 329-345.
- Patterson, I. (2000). Developing a meaningful identity for people with disabilities through serious leisure activities. *World Leisure Journal, 2*, 41-51.
- Shipway, R., & Jones, I. (2007). Running away from home: understanding visitor experiences and behavior at sport tourism events. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 9*(5), 373-383.
- Shipway, R., & Jones, I. (2008). The great suburban Everest: An 'insiders' perspective on experiences at the 2007 Flora London Marathon. *Journal of Sport Tourism, 13*(1), 61-77.
- Siegenthaler, K. L., & O'Dell, I. (2003). Older Golfers: Serious leisure and successful aging. *World Leisure Journal, 1*, 47-54.
- Smith, C.L., & Storandt, M. (1997). Physical activity participation in older adults: A comparison of competitors, noncompetitors, and nonexercisers. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity, 5*, 98-100.
- Stamer, D., Lerdall, K., & Chao, G. (2008). Managing heritage volunteers: An exploratory study of volunteer programs in art museums worldwide. *Journal of Heritage Tourism, 3*(3), 203-214.
- Stebbins, R.A. (1992). *Amateurs, professionals, and serious leisure*. Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University.
- Stebbins, R.A. (2007). *Serious leisure*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.