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# The Metalanguages between Sport and Tourism

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## Abstract

*Sport tourism extends sport to leisure-holiday activities and reflects the need felt in tourist markets to develop complementary services and products. It offers a valid alternative to the traditional 'sea, sun and beach' holiday.*

*Sport tourism links the experience of sport travel with associated cultural aspects by combining them, in a novel way, to the travel and stay concept.*

*The growing interest in this new way of considering the sport-tourism link is manifested by sector specialists (tour operators, hoteliers, promotion authorities, sport clubs and associations, etc.) continually on the lookout for new products to satisfy the changing needs of 'holiday sport people'.*

**Keywords:** Sport Management; Sport Tourism; Leisure Sport Tourism; Events Sport Tourism; Business Sport Tourism; Metalanguages

## 1. Sport Tourism

Sport tourism extends sport to leisure - holiday activities and reflects the need felt in tourist markets to develop complementary services and products. It offers a valid alternative to the traditional 'sea, sun and beach' holiday and exploits some of the country's attractions all year round – counter-seasonal tourist flows. It involves (along with environmental and park tourism) about 4% of tourism as a whole and is one of the few tourist sectors exhibiting an increase (+0.77%) in terms of people present: from 8.428 million in 2002 to 8.494 million in 2003<sup>1</sup>. The total business linked to it can be cautiously estimated at between 4 billion (Federalberghi-Cirm 2003) and 5 billion euro (Nomisma 2003). It can be said that sport tourism links the experience of sport travel with associated cultural aspects by combining them, in a novel way, to the travel and stay concept<sup>2</sup>.

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## **2. The Conceptualising of Sport Tourism: the Beginnings of Systematisation**

The relationship between sport and tourism was first considered in 1971 during sessions (seminars, conferences) of the International Council for Sport, Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE). The first scientific sport tourism publication, the *Journal of Sport Tourism*, appeared in October 1983. The first world conference on the subject was organised jointly by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) and the Barcelona International Olympic Committee in February 2003.

Yet even today, the WTO classification<sup>3</sup> still does not consider sport tourism as an independent niche market but places it in the ‘leisure, relaxation, holiday’ category. Literature does not include a common, shared definition of this phenomenon, as scholarly interest is still too new. There are, however, three definitions proposed in the literature:

1. Standeven and De Knop (1999): ‘All forms of active or passive involvement in sports, undertaken casually or in an organised manner, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, and requiring that the subject leaves his/her home or workplace’.
2. Gibson (1988, 2002): ‘Leisure trips that take individuals out of their residential community temporarily to actively participate in a sport or as sport spectators or for events based on sport’. Sport tourism thus takes place during leisure activities requiring movement and are based on participation (doing, watching, commemorating).
3. Charles Pigeassou (2002) The definition of sport tourism depends on a combination of two factors: destination and type of activity. With respect to a destination chosen specifically from within sport culture phenomena, sport tourism is conceived as the expression of physical activity (competition, fun, adventure sports, etc.) and/or cultural events (sport events, shows, conferences, congresses, etc.). It is an independent discipline based on three points: a tourist experience (travel and duration) with a subordinated link to the main activity made up of a cultural experience within sport. A tourist stay simply accompanied by an interlude or by a sporting ‘discovery’ that does not have sport as the reason for the trip is not, however, part of sport tourism within the exact meaning of the term. Travel, destination and stay must inevitably be for the sport experience. If that is not the reason for travelling and is a replaceable activity, then sport tourism is not involved. (I must leave home to go and watch a football match. If I decide to watch a match because I happen to be there, then that is not sport tourism).

Gibson, Standeven and De Knop seem, however, to place sport tourism in the normal classification used for the more ‘traditional’ types of tourism. Alternatively, Pigeassou suggested a concept that declares it to be totally independent.

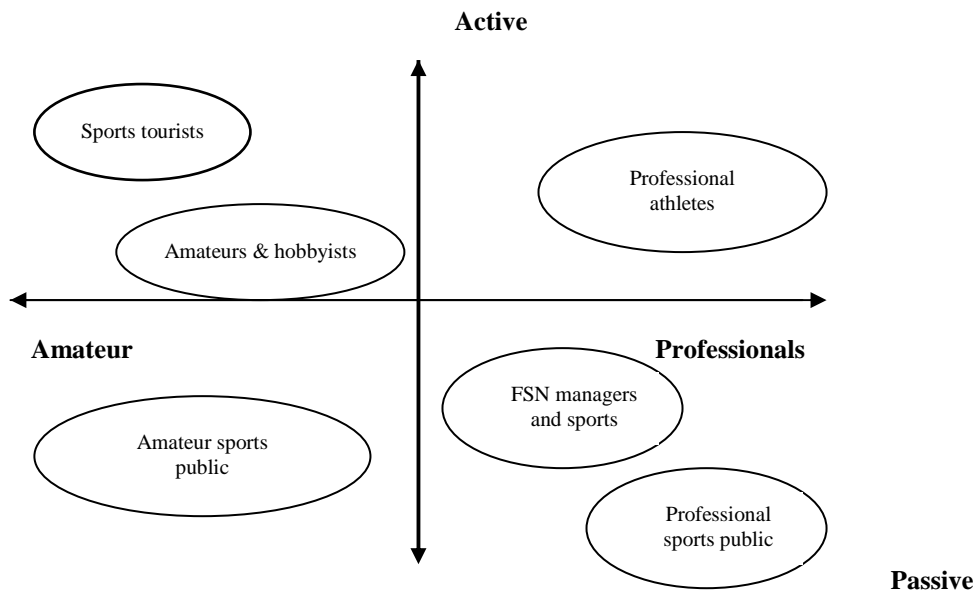
## **3. Make-Up and Positioning of Demand for Sport Tourism**

To talk about sport tourism (if C. Pigeassou’s approach is to be followed), requires that travel be involved for a sport experience. The place travelled to is where the sport experience is to take place. The destination itself thus becomes the site for behaviour identified as follows (Figure 1):

**Sport Tourist:**

- active-amateur (participants in amateur sports who travel to take part in a race, tournament, etc.);
- active professional (participants in professional sports who travel to take part in a race, tournament, etc.);
- passive amateur (people travelling to watch an amateur sport event);
- passive professional (e.g. FSN (National Sports Federation) managers when they travel for sport conventions).

**Figure 1: Positioning of Sport Tourists**



These four sport tourist types can be aligned to correspond to four different types of sport tourism as part of two macro-categories: sport-tourism and sport tourism in its exact meaning (Table 1). These types differ in the subjects involved, choice of destination, duration of stay (excursion = day trip; short stay = 2 or 3 nights; real holiday = more than 3 nights and less than a year) and the economic results generated.

### 3.1 Sport Tourism

The definable forms of 'sport tourism' are those where the potential to combine relaxation with doing one or more sports inevitably influences a person's choice of destination from an infrastructure standpoint (presence of sport facilities) and a natural standpoint (mountains to climb or ski on, rivers for rafting etc).

**Table 1**

S P O R T  T O U R I S M  I N T E R N A T I O N A L  M E A N I N G		Type of sport tourism	Main subjects involved
		1) Sport tourism	All travellers who influence their choice of trip by the potential to actively participate in a certain sport.
		1) Leisure Sport Tourism Doing a certain sport, at an amateur level, is the reason for travelling.	Amateur sport people
		2) Business Sport Tourism Add the professional/work aspect to the sport component.	Active: professional FSN and sport club athletes. Passive: Managers and employees of CONI, FSN and sport clubs.
	3) Event sport tourism	Public for live sports, both amateur and professional.	

□ *Data seems to confirm the continuing spread of this sport and holiday combination:*

*1 Italian out of 4 factors in the sport facilities offered when choosing his/her holiday destination (Source: Censis Servizi)*

*According to ENIT (National Tourism Authority, there are now at least 531 hotels in Italy supplied with covered swimming pools and tennis courts (in 279 holiday resorts) and about 1000 with fitness centres and a sauna (out of 432 holiday resorts)*

*Sport is also an important part of the reason for taking holidays: going to the seaside 26%, to the mountains 20%; to lakes 6% (Source: ISTAT 2002 (National Statistics Institute).*

## 3.2 Sport Tourism

All the cases in which sport in its various forms of practical activity, events, training and/or improving, etc. is the main reason, the *conditio sine qua non* for travel, represent sport tourism in its real meaning. There are 3 different types of sport tourism within this macro-category: leisure, events, and business.

### 3.2.1 Leisure Sport Tourism

Leisure sport tourists are amateur sportspeople who travel to take part in local and national competitions: they take part actively - not as professionals - in marathons, fitness competitions, etc.

□ *This is a big group: in 2003 5.1 million amateur adult sportspeople spent nights in hotels to do one or more sports (58.3% men, 41.7% women).*

*35.2% of these amateur sportspeople travelled just once, 15.8% travelled twice and 15.7% three times. (Federalberghi CIRM 2003).*

*407,000 children aged between 6 and 17, do amateur sports and travelled away from home and stayed in hotels to take part in competitions. Their trip average was the highest of all amateur sport trips, with 5 trips and a per capita expenditure (just for the trip, board and lodging) of 285 euro. This generated tourist turnover of more than 116 million euro<sup>4</sup>.*

A truly interesting sport that is able to bring about change in one of the most important leisure sport tourism sectors is the marathon. The most classical of sport events has changed through the ideal 'excuse' of being able to visit new places. From a paradigm perspective, the Rome Marathon alone recorded a 10-15% yearly increase and a final explosion from 2000 onwards. For the 2003 Rome Marathon, 4000 sport tourists (out of 8000 runners in total) arrived in Rome from abroad. The revenues for that Rome event practically doubled going from 5 to 10 million euro if we consider the business generated by tourism linked to the event.

### 3.2.2 Event Sport Tourism

This is an extremely interesting part of sport tourism that generates direct income for the area involved and is a good opportunity for tour operators from all over the world. It involves spectators travelling to watch a specific sport event live. It includes both the public attending great events (Serie A matches, Formula 1 Grand Prix races) and all the competitions and tournaments held all over the country every year. Hence it is really difficult to quantify them:

□ *According to a Federalberghi-CIRM survey, 3.8 million sport fans (43.9% men and 56.1% women), took an average of 2.8 trips a year, and stayed at least one night in a hotel to attend a live sport event. According to the same survey, people spent a total of about 1 billion euro, 260 euro per capita, just for hotel and board on these trips in 2002. It is further estimated that the A and B Championships move*

*1000 athletes and 20,000 supporters every Sunday (Censis Servizi) and that the two Formula 1 Grand Prix races, Monza and Imola, generate 350,000 attendances - most of them lasting a few days – with about 30% of attendees arriving from abroad.*

### **3.2.3 Sport Tourism for Business**

Sport tourism for business is when the sport and professional-work factors are closely linked. The Serie A footballer (soccer player), for example, whose profession is sport can be considered a sport tourist (he travels to compete or train) but is also a ‘business’ tourist (competing is his business). The sport professionals ‘passive’ tourist movement is also part of this sector (as it is not centred on doing sport actively). Here we are talking about FSN managers and employees, staff in the professional sport clubs and sport promotion authorities etc., as they travel to take part in Conferences, Sport Fairs, training and/or improvement courses, etc. This is the most difficult flow to quantify, especially as far as the flow of non-participating professionals is concerned:

□ *However, we can estimate around 31 million euro is spent by athletes from 38 National Sport Federations (excluding football (soccer)) on travel, board and lodging - 14% of total costs sustained (with respect to football, the figure goes up to around 50 million euro). The 38 FSN (football excluded) are estimated to spend six million euro on travel, board and lodging for manager participation in conferences, conventions, training courses, etc.<sup>5</sup>.*

## **4. The Paradigm of Sport Tourism Today**

Today, sport tourism linked to golf is a perfect example of the phenomenon analysed above.

□ *Golf is a widely played game in Europe (6.5 million players) and is about to spread widely in Italy too. Starting from a base of 44,802 members in 1992, it reached 77,907 members in 2003, a 60.5% increase. In 2003 alone, the Italian Golf federation saw a 7% increase in membership, the highest increase amongst all the CONI sport federations. During the same period, the number of golf courses (certified, promotional and practice) went from 169 to 310, an increase of 83.4%.*

Golf, more than other sport, has been able to stimulate and increase sport tourism, even attracting overseas visitors from, in particular, northern Europe (Norway, Sweden and Denmark). The golf tourist, by his very nature, continually travels in search of new courses: an average of 75% of golfers holidaying abroad say they always choose different courses. The desire to try him/herself out on new courses combined with wanting to visit new countries or places in the same country, wins over comfort offered by what they already know.

- *Golf tourism can generate good income for the host area as:  
 A golf tourist stays an average of 7 days, more than for other tourists  
 (3-4 days for foreigners)  
 Per capita expenditure by golf tourists is 150-180 euro, higher than  
 that of other tourists 50-55 euro)  
 People travelling with a golfer are not involved directly in play and  
 spend their holiday ‘consuming’ environmental-cultural-food speciality  
 attractions found in the golf course area<sup>6</sup>.*

In order to apply the right marketing strategy to attract new golf tourists, we need to know their demand profiles based on status, financial capacity, ‘greediness’ (collecting new golf courses), interest in the geographical area. (Figure 2)

**Figure 2: Demand Profile Matrix for Golf Tourists**

	England	Germany	Austria	Holland	Denmark	Norway	Sweden	France
Status	Medium	High	High	Low	Low	High	Low	Medium
Financial capacity	Medium	High	High	Low	Low	High	Medium	Medium
‘Greediness’	High	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	High	Medium
Geographical area interest	Medium-high	High	High	Low	Low	High	Medium	High

## 5. The Future of Sport Tourism: Outdoor vs. Indoor

The growing interest in this new way of considering the sport tourism link is manifested by sector specialists (tour operators, hoteliers, promotion authorities, sport clubs and associations, etc.) continually on the lookout for new products to satisfy the changing needs of ‘holiday sport people’. With this in mind, we need to consider some new trends representing new resources and challenges for sport tourism in constant need of new offerings.

If there is an increase in holidays linked to adventure sport (kayaking, mountain biking, rock climbing, etc.) that combine contact with nature, flight from daily routine, the search for strong emotions, then there is also an increase in ‘internalisation’. That takes risk-tolerant fans closer to destinations that are often too far away. Hence the creation of indoor golf courses, indoor rowing, and water parks with pools simulating Pacific ocean waves where you can surf without ever touching unreachable destinations.

This means the continuous monitoring of sport developments to see whether this type of tourism will manage to create a specific independent market niche – given the link between a hedonistic way of living sport as a call from nature and main leisure activities. In a continually growing tourism market, we will need to see whether sport can create specific independence for itself and whether the internalising or externalising trends linked to it will prevail.

In short: will the market try to bring sport fans closer to those destinations, too far away for some, by building high technology installations that simulate natural characteristics? Or will we go on exploiting exclusive holiday attractions (climate, mountains) for certain tourist resorts in order to increase the tourist flow and carry out effective counter-seasonal strategies? Will the chance to be able to do or not do

a certain sport go on being a *conditio sine qua non* in the choice of holiday destination for so many travellers?

In opposition to the statement of 'any place', we want to keep on hoping (instinctively and in defence of country system interests) that the 'place' choice prevails.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The more traditional winter mountain and cultural/art city tourism is falling, respectively by 1.10% and 1.88% - Source: 'Report on Italian Tourism' Mercury 2004.

<sup>2</sup> C. Pigeassou, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> The classification recommended by the WTO and in existence for more than 50 years gives reasons for visiting based on 6 tourism groups: leisure-relaxation-holiday, visiting friends-relatives, business and professional reasons, missions-meetings, medical treatment, pilgrimage, other.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Federalberghi-CIRM 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Censis Servizi estimate on FSN data.

<sup>6</sup> Data Acciari Consulting and Censis Servizi Survey, 2004.