Participation in Active Sport Tourism and Sense of Wellbeing: Comparing Golf, Snowboarding, and Long-distance Running

Brian Krohn, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis
Mona Mirehie, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

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Participation in active sport tourism has been linked to enhanced sense of wellbeing (Bosnjak, Brown, Lee, Yu, & Sirgy, 2016; Mirehie, 2018). Mechanisms such as positive emotions, increased social connectedness, self-actualization, sense of engagement, and meaning generated through active sport tourism experiences contribute to individuals’ sense of wellbeing (Fendt, 2015, Mirehie, 2018). However, active sport tourists partake in a diverse range of activities in distinct environments which is of particular importance to this study since different activities and environmental factors have been found to have different impacts on individuals’ wellbeing (Bosnjak et al., 2016; Downward & Rasciute, 2011; Kööts, Realo, & Allik, 2011). The purpose of this study was to investigate the sense of wellbeing generated through active participation in three different types of sport in a tourism context; snowboarding, golf, and long-distance running.

To collect data, an online survey was used that contained measures of global wellbeing (GW), active sport travel wellbeing (ASTW), and ancillary items such as participation and travel patterns, and demographics. Individuals who had taken at least one trip related to their sport over the last two years were recruited via an online panel (N = 225; 75 respondents per sport). The questionnaire was pretested through a panel of experts (N = 11) and a pilot test was conducted with a small group of respondents (N = 50). Data were analyzed using SPSS 25.0.

MANOVA was used address test differences in responses on measures of GW and ASTW for respondents who preferred the three different sports. Results show that there are no significant differences in measures of ASTW between participants in the three sports but there are significant differences in measures of GW (F=6.69, df=2, p=.002). Regression results indicate there is significant relationship between ASTW and GW (b=.629, t=8.280, p<.001). When examining if sport preference impacts the relationship, we find snowboarders indicate less of a predicted change of ASTW on GW (b= -.76, t=3.09, b= .002) than golfers and runners who are not significantly different than the model prediction.

Previous research tends to discuss sport tourism as a singular concept or presents research into one activity or a small range of similar activities. These results confirm the call to consider the unique contributions of participation in various sports on wellbeing. This study indicates that while golfers and runners are similar in how changes in wellbeing impact global wellbeing, snowboarders experience less of an impact. This study adds to literature identifying benefits of sport travel, and highlights that the impact on wellbeing may vary based on many factors.

This study represents a first step in developing a model that will identify socio-economic and psychological factors that might affect the connection between active sport tourism and overall wellbeing. These factors include motivations to participate, involvement with the sport, factors related to life satisfaction, skill level, experience, and others.