Football as a Boon for Global tourism

Ellerique Kharpor Iangngap¹ and Shiny Raizada²*

¹Student, MBA, ²Assistant Professor, Symbiosis School of Sports Sciences, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune, Maharashtra, India

*Corresponding author: shiny.raizada@ssss.edu.in (Raizada)

Abstract

Background: One of the most complex socio and economic phenomena in contemporary times is Tourism. It is not easy to define it in the right sense. This research focuses mainly on Sports tourism which is another important branch of tourism. Methods: This study is qualitative, exploratory and interpretative in nature. The qualitative data were collected via Google forms and the questions were structured and close-ended. Interviews were also taken from different hotel managers. The study is conducted to identify the factors that would help in boosting the tourism of a city or a country through football. Conclusion: The techniques that were used for this study is through questionnaire and secondary data of other studies that have been conducted in other countries, so as to bring about the same goal, which is to see whether football is a boon for tourism or not.

Keywords: Football, Ground hoppers, Sports Tourism, Tourism

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1. Introduction:

In today’s world it is more complex to define tourism than it was before. It has garnered the status of the most complex, colossal and dynamic social and economic phenomenon in contemporary times. Tourism has an influence in every socio-economic development and it also acts complementary as well as complex and it is espoused in our day to day life. This has to be one of the reasons why most of the people think that they know most of the things about tourism and also give their relevant as well as irrelevant views about tourism. One of the youngest social and economic phenomena in the second half of the twentieth century (20th) is tourism.

One of the very imperative branches of tourism is Sports tourism. Sports tourism has proved to be coherent to people from all works of life irrespective of their social and economic backgrounds. Sports tourism also have a role in the making of new products or even new tourist destination.

The significance of the study is to see that if the main intention of the travelling fans who comes to see the matches is purely just for the match or also to explore tourist attractions in the city. And also, how the ground hoppers contribute towards sports tourism. This research is also significant because it broadens the researcher’s as well as the reader’s knowledge about how football contributes towards tourism.

Sports Tourism can be divided into different groups- hard and soft sports tourism. While on the other hand there are some theories which says that Sports Tourism can be divided into three types-

1. Sports event tourism, nostalgia and celebrity sports tourism.
2. Active Sports tourism
3. Outbound and inbound sports tourism⁽¹⁾. 

Hard sports tourism comprises umpteen number of people who take part in competitive sports such as FIFA WC, Olympics\(^{(1)}\).

Although hard sports are competitive, the soft sports are formed the entertainment of the tourist. This is called Sports event tourist. This takes into the ambit only individuals who planned to visit the place with the sole purpose of experiencing the Event\(^{(1)}\). The other one is travelling to well-known and excellent sports related places and this is also called nostalgia Sports tourism. Individuals usually feel astounded by the well-known places and also visit these places in many occasions. The next one is active sports tourism and here the individuals travel to participate in the events. We also have celebrity sports tourism whereby people visit a sporting event just to see the celebrity\(^{(1)}\).

In contemporary times football has become a universal phenomenon and it is also a place where rivalry and winning meets each other.

For football players, football is their work to which they are obliged to put their full effort and stand out to become the best and also at the same time they entertain the masses. From the supporter’s point of view football is a delightful game which has an influence on the life of the people. One reason why football has become one of the most viral “secondary thing in the world” is discussed in sociological terms and we do not have a full explanation of it.

Football also has a big influence in politics. In contemporary time football as politics has its influence in many countries of the world. From the time of its inception football has undergone many changes. And these changes started in some places where football was discovered.

Football has allowed individuals to conduct research on its beginnings and its forms from Greece to Roman Empire from some Brazilian tribes to England, China etc. So, we can conclude that the beginning of football can be traced back to several centuries back. There has been some proof that a particular form of playing ball was known in primordial China even before the Romans had brought a kind of ball playing to Britain.

Evidence suggest that the beginnings of football can be said to have originated in old Florence in between the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Here the people from many districts played against each other. At this time, it was called “II calico” which has now an amusement street for human regiment and aristocracy, and is now similar to a “football derby”. Thus, an umpteen number of historians say that the birth of football was in the year 1565 in a place know as Piazza di Santa Croce\(^{(2)}\).

As per research, there are many leagues and football clubs across the world ranging from Real Madrid and Barcelona in Spain to Chelsea and Manchester United in the United Kingdom to Bayern Munich in Germany to Paris Saint Germain in France and Bengaluru FC in India. These clubs play in different leagues in their own country.

As per research, we see the popularity of the clubs around the world. In terms of popularity Real Madrid proves to be the most popular club in the world with 13 Champions League title followed by FC Barcelona with 5 Champions League title in their bag.

In Spain the biggest rivalry is between two clubs Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, when these two clubs play against each other, their match is regarded as “El classico”. While in England there are many rivalries between clubs. There is the London derby which is usually between Chelsea, Tottenham Hotspurs and Arsenal. Another is between the two clubs in Manchester and also there is a Merseyside derby which is between the two clubs based in Liverpool.

Footballers contributes hugely towards the marketability of the sport and lure as many supporters to the stadiums. We have seen many nations around the world produce many exemplary football players over the years. Two of the most famous and extremely acknowledge players are Pele and Diego Maradonna. Both South American players paved their way to the world and set a milestone. They won the World Cup during their playing...
time for their respective nations. In present day, Cristiano Ronaldo and Messi are proven to be the best players and has won many individual titles.

Around the world, we can see that the fair weather fans and the bandwagon fans, but fans generally can be divided into six types namely- The know it all fan, The overly enthusiastic fan, The bleeding heart fan, The should have been a coach fan, The diehard fan and The what’s the score fan\(^3\).

Giulianotti’s\(^4\) has done a study on the spectators of football resulted into four types of fans which he further divided into fans, supporters, followers and flaneurs. He also uses two scales to classify the spectators of football that is hot-cool and traditional-consumer. This therefore produces another model: traditional-cool follower, consumer-hot fan, traditional-hot supporter and consumer-cool flaneur.

Active sports tourist are the ones who participates actively in sporting events while on their holidays\(^5\). Some examples of these are skiing and golf. In this research he found that there is a relation between the age of the travellers and also the likelihood of them participating actively and this decrease as they get older. Here we can also see that there is a transformation of the traveller from being an active tourist to being a passive tourist. Passive tourist is everything but they do not actively participate in sports competition.

Ground hopping is an amalgamation of two words ‘ground’ and ‘to hop’. It originated in the late 80’s. This term first came up in England and Great Britain. Ground hoppers are the type of football fans who usually are not fans of a particular club but they are fans who are neutral and they attend as many matches in as many stadiums as possible just to pass their time\(^6\).

On the other hand, ground hopping can also be seen as a way of life which includes travelling to different cities and countries\(^7\).

In this way the ground hoppers also contribute a lot to football tourism at large.

One of the most important categories in Sports Tourism is Football tourism. Crisp\(^8\) proves that this sport is the most popular one amongst all the sports all over the world and is rapidly becoming more popular over the years. On weekends, all over the world football lovers witness a football match on game weeks in football stadiums or at community football grounds. Billions of people worldwide follow different leagues on Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, You Tube etc. And they watch them play on different channels available in their country or region\(^9\).

Over the last decade, almost 2 million travellers from all across the world have travelled to different cities to see a football match. According to the world’s visitor economy, it has been found that football had a considerable pull for travellers that the other sports. This indicates that football’s ability to drive the people by encouraging travellers to explore different part of the cities as well as the world.

In the United Kingdom, the office of National Statistics has published International Passenger Survey, the results of which were that nearly one in 44 visitors and over 45,000 international visitors who visited for business purposes managed to go and watch a football match during their stay in any city of country. Around the world we see that there are many sports being played, but football draws the attention of a lot of people from around the world\(^10\).

In contemporary world football has given a makeover to different leagues and even clubs and turned them into brands that are popular globally and this has been done because of commercialisation in football. This has made a huge impact in football tourism as the sport started becoming a big part in the everyday lives of the people and the reason for this is the spiking up of branding and marketing (globally) in the industry of football and also people want to travel to different locations to witness football matches. The industry of football is getting ‘McDonaldized’ or rather it emphasizes majorly on the profits financially and is on the other hand not really focussing on the game and in this way, they are losing the ‘original

Due to commercialisation, football is a huge part in the day to day life of billions of people worldwide and these people are influenced by football as well as its branding and marketing. Therefore, nowadays we can see that a lot of multinational corporations (MNC’s) spend a huge amount of money on football teams in order to make them as brands that are popular globally\(^{12}\).

As it has been seen in the above paragraph, football is the foremost reason for people to travel from one city to another and also from one country to another.

2. **Material & methods:**

This study which is conducted is qualitative, exploratory and interpretative in nature. The qualitative data were collected via Google forms and the questions were structured and close ended. Interviews were also taken from the different hotel managers.

2.1 **Selection of Subjects**

This research study, the author has focused on Sports management professionals and football fans of different clubs. The reason for selecting them is that they have a better understanding of football and tourism. To understand better of how football helps tourism, the author chose a qualitative approach this study. There were a total of 80 participants from people residing in India, Amsterdam, Barcelona, London and Dubai. The age category ranged between 18 to above 30. Focused groups interviews were also taken from few experts in the hospitality industry and they have expressed their own views.

**Sample Size:**

1. People between the age group of 18-25 – 75.9%
2. People between the age group of 25-30 – 21.5%
3. People above the age group of 30 – 2.5%

**Educational Qualifications:**

1. Sports Management- 60.8%
2. Others- 39.2%

2.2 **Data Collection Process:**

This research is qualitative in nature where the data was collected through an online survey.

For this research the author had adopted the technique introduced by Kozinets - netnography. This is a method of data collection which focus on an online medium for the purpose of research. The author has used a questionnaire survey which consist of multiple choice questions. There were 15 questions in the survey. The reason for adopting this method was to make the respondents more comfortable while answering the questions as they can answer the questions at any time that they want to without having any time restrictions and also without anyone intervening.

The survey was a voluntary option and no one was forced to do it. The anonymity of the respondents was kept as no personal information was collected. Google forms were used for the research and were circulated online through emails, Facebook and WhatsApp and the answers were recorded. Interviews were also taken from few hotel managers.

2.3 **Statistical Techniques:**

As the questions have been self-made, so the survey that was conducted was kept simple so that the majority of the people could understand and also the high technical words were not used.
This study which is conducted is qualitative, exploratory and interpretative in nature. The qualitative data were collected via Google forms and the questions were structured and close ended. Interviews were also taken from the different hotel managers.

3. Results and Discussion:

3.1 Fans Preferences

This talks about the leagues, clubs, players and tournament preferences of the people and from the observation it has been said that the Premier League was the most preferred league. When it comes to club preferences, Manchester United was the most preferred club. Of all the football player options that were given in the questionnaire, Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi stood as the favourites. From the observation, we have seen that the most favourite football competition is the FIFA World Cup (82.5%) while UEFA Euro Cup (17.5%). Both FIFA World Cup and the UEFA Euro Cup is held every four years. FIFA World Cup is competition where all the best teams in the world compete against each other for the ultimate title.

3.2 Travellers Willingness

Travellers contribute towards global tourism at a very large scale. In this study it talks about the willingness of the fans to travel to tourist destinations while visiting a particular place for a football match. Most of the fans have said that they would consider visiting tourist destination when they go to another city to watch a match. Some of the fans have said that they would visit these tourist attraction a day prior to the match while some have said that they would visit a day after the match. There were also some fans who have expressed that they would travel only for the match and not visit any tourist destinations.

3.3 Ground Hoppers

These ground hoppers has a massive contribution towards football tourism as these are the people who have a neutral opinion about football clubs and they attend as many games in as many stadiums as possible. This in turn helps in boosting the tourism of a place at large. As per findings, people who actually travels to places for football matches which are termed as ground hoppers does contribute to tourism of a place by eating out, staying and moving around the city to explore and experience different culture.

3.4 Economic Growth

The next principle talks about the peak time hotels experience during a football matches, how ticketing prices affect the travelling of the fans to another city, how bandwagon effect among millennials helps football tourism, how the climate of a place can act as a deterring factor. From the respondents and the interview conducted it was found that most of the hotels do experience a peak time during football matches. Majority of the people have said that the cost of the ticket will affect their travelling to another city as we can see most of them have chosen the scale 3 to 5. As we know sometimes the tickets become very costly and this can in turn hinder the fans from travelling for the match. Sometimes we can see that most of the people travel to watch a football match just to match up with their friends although they may not be as interested in it, this in turns helps boost the tourism of a place, this have a huge impact on the economy of a city or a country. The climate of a city is one of the most important factor and some of the fans have said that this will affect their travelling whereas the others have said that the climate of a place will not stop them from travelling.

Sports and tourism are synonymous to each other especially in contemporary times. The reason for this relation between sports and tourism in the rising interest of the people to travel for sports related activities. Stand even and De Knop (1999) suggests that a sporting activity could be anything from a FIFA World Cup to a local or regional football game for example, if the people are required to leave their homes and travel in order to visit the event.

One of the study concludes that Sports Tourism is of so remarkable for the economy put aside the unblended madness of the sport. The whole industry has its significant share in the income bringing in about billions annually. A massive number of football fans, travellers who visits to watch a match delivers millions towards the economy of a city or a country yearly\(^\text{14}\).

Ground hoppers or just hoppers are the football fans who mostly have an opinion which is neutral regarding football clubs and also try to attend as many games as possible also contribute a lot towards boosting tourism of several places in which the matches are held\(^\text{15}\). The hotels experience a peak time during football matches, this in turn has a huge impact on tourism of a city/country. The climate of a place also has a drastic effect on the fans and the fans travelling if the climate of a place is not extreme then there is more possibility that many fans would travel to that place as compared to places with extreme hot or cold climate\(^\text{16,17}\).

Nowadays we can also see an increase in football tourism as football has become a part in the daily lives of the people because of the increase in marketing and branding in the industry of football and people want to travel places to witness certain games. Footballing nations like England, Spain, Germany, France in recent years have attract millions of people from across the globe to visit their country and explore the country thereby improving facilities like stadiums, transportation etc\(^\text{18}\).

Football clubs have also started developing and improving their infrastructure as it may act as a key problem for away visitors visiting the stadium. Parking space in close proximity to the stadiums is focused concretely as lack of parking area making logistics more complicated.

4. Conclusion:

The study is conducted to identify the factors that would help in boosting tourism of a city or a country through football. The techniques that was used for this study is through questionnaire and secondary data of other studies that has been conducted in other countries, so as to bring about the same goal, which is to see whether football is a boon for tourism or not. As the name of the paper suggests “Football: A boon for tourism?” we get to see that most of the travelling fans would actually visit tourist attractions while travelling to another city for a match even when their favourite teams is playing. From interviews with hotel managers, we get to know that hotels experienced peak time during football matches. Also, in contemporary times we see that the bandwagon effect takes place whereby many of the youths want to fit in and they go watch football matches even if they are not really a big fan. In this regard, they are boosting the economy of a place. On the other hand, ground hoppers also help in boosting the economy of the place as they go watch as many football matches in as many stadiums as possible for leisure purpose.

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References:


