



Demand for Information among Tourists -Participants of Huge Sports Events: An Example of UEFA Euro 2012

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Abstract

Appropriately sought and obtained information is of a strategic significance to all those tourists that visit a destination. This problem is equally important to those people who arrive to participate in a huge sports event. An overall satisfaction of tourists in their stay may depend on the efficiency of obtaining information and satisfaction in this information, which consequently translates into a potential decision concerning another arrival to a destination. An attempt to assess the significance of information to the participants of a huge sports event is the purpose of this article. An assessment and an analysis of the problem was made based on the UEFA EURO 2012 European Football Championship in Poland and in the Ukraine. The research was carried out in Gdansk, i.e. in one of the four cities-organizers of this event in Poland. The research covered a total of 786 people representing 19 countries including 13 European countries and 6 non-European countries (China, the United States, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Armenia, Canada). In terms of the value of this study, those people for whom their participation in the European Football Championship UEFA EURO 2012 was the primary purpose, were of a particular significance. It became evident that among the group covered by the research (N=786), a decided majority (N=565, 71.9%) came to Gdansk for this very purpose. The remaining people (N=221) arrived for some other purposes, i.e. typical tourism (N=113), visits to relatives and friends (N=35), business trips (N=31) and other purposes (N=42). Thereby, those people (N= 565), for whom participation in the UEFA EURO 2012 was the primary objective of their arrival constituted the most essential research sample for the needs of this study. Based on the information obtained, a diversification was presented of the opinions provided by the participants of the event under research as compared with other visitors to Gdansk. The research demonstrated the significance of information to these visitors. The sources to searching for information, including the Internet, were indicated. Satisfaction with the information obtained was also assessed high: it was higher than among other tourists. It is particularly important because for the majority of those football fans who arrived to participate in the event, this was their first visit to Gdansk (and to Poland in general). The data obtained may serve as guidelines to respective destination management organizations. They should indicate potential directions of activities in the scope of marketing and, in particular, in the creation and improvement process of the system of tourist information. This is possible owing to the data concerning the scope of information sought or the level of satisfaction in this information. This may indicate potential activities that facilitate tourist information.

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INTRODUCTION

Numerous authors (Ritchie, 2000; Hall, 1992b; Getz, 2005) highlight the role of events as a catalyst for the development of tourist destination. It is also sports event that play a significant role in this scope. It is even stated that sport events represent the most fast developing sector of tourism market (Yfantidou, Costa and Michalopoulou, 2011). This is the problem that is noted among others by Funk and Brunn (2007), who underline the importance of social-psychological motives concerning a sports event and cultural-educational motives concerning international travel. For this reason, there are so many destinations that are “struggling” to have rights awarded to them for an organization of a great sports event, particularly on a continental or world level. They perceive numerous social and economic benefits in them. An increased quantity of tourist movement is undoubtedly one of important benefits and, in consequence, this means higher expenses on the part of tourists, which directly or indirectly fund the destination’s economy.

In the year 2012, Poland was the co-organizer of the first great sports event, that is the UEFA EURO 2012 Football Championship. It is estimated that the European Football Championship, apart from the Olympic Games and the World Football Cup, is one of the largest sports events in the world (Active and Adventure..., 2008). On the territory of the country, matches were played in 4 cities, i.e. in Gdansk, Poznań, Wrocław and Warsaw. The initial information from the event is satisfactory. It is estimated that ca. 0.5 million of additional tourists arrived to Poland because of the event, and an overall assessment of the country may point to an “image success”: 81% of the respondents have declared that will arrive to Poland within the coming three years, and over 90% are going to recommend Poland to their friends (Borzyszkowski, 2012a). Gdansk, one of the city-organizers, is one of the more important beneficiary of this event. According to initial assumptions, the number of tourists who annually arrive to Gdansk, which is currently ca. 4 million, is to increase over the coming years up to 7 million (EURO 2012 gwarantem..., 2012).

The discussion below constitutes a part of the research that was carried out owing to a cooperation with the Higher Banking School in Gdansk and the Tourist Organization of Gdansk (a local destination management organization, an entity which is responsible for the management and/or marketing of the individual tourist destinations) (Survey..., 2004; Majewski 2007). The research included a wide analysis of the assessment of tourist information in this city in the context of the UEFA EURO 2012 European Football Championship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Search for information by tourists

Information (above all tourist information) plays an essential role in the whole travel process. The search for information itself is a particularly important stage. As stated by Gursoy and Umbreit (2004), information search is one of the first steps of the vacation decision-making process. Information search is defined as “the motivated activation of knowledge stored in memory or acquisition of information from the environment” (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard,

2001). As stated by the authors, information search can be either internal or external. Internal search is the retrieval of knowledge from memory. On the other hand, external search consists in collecting information from the marketplace. According to Moutinho (1987), information search is an expressed need to consult various sources prior to making a purchase decision.

It can be assumed that in the process of information search, tourists enjoy a huge choice in the scope of its sources (Fodness and Murray, 1997). Generally speaking, travellers are likely to utilize the following four broad external information sources when planning their trips: family and friends; destination specific literature; media; and travel consultants (Snepenger and Snepenger, 1993). At the same time, Fodness and Murray (1997) indicate 11 sources of information, and divide them into the following: a) impersonal/commercial (brochures, guide books, local tourist offices, state travel guides); b) impersonal/non-commercial (magazines, newspapers), c) personal/commercial (auto clubs, travel agents), d) personal/non-commercial (friends or relatives, highway welcome centres, personal experience).

Customer satisfaction

One of the most profoundly investigated topics in the hospitality and tourism studies and research is customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has a prominent role in the survival and future growth of any tourism products, achievements and its related services (Gursoy, McCleary and Lepsito, 2003). Moreover, tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000). Obviously enough, in the case of individual tourists, an overall evaluation of satisfaction in their stay in a destination is of an importance. However, it is worth to remember that it is composed of various elements. One of these is the degree of satisfaction from the information obtained (and at the same time searched for). For example, research in this scope was carried out by Luque-Martínez, Castañeda-García, Frías-Jamilena, Muñoz-Leiva and Rodríguez-Molina (2007), who examined satisfaction in the Internet as a source of tourist information.

Sports events and tourism. Participants of huge sports events

A significant number of scholars take up a number of issues connected with the relations of tourism with sports, and huge sports events in particular. The scope of such research and analyses is very diversified. Individual authors quite frequently focus on a specific event, which may also be a football event. This concerns games on a continental level (the European Football Championship) (Perna and Custódio, 2008; Niedziółka 2012) and on the world level (the World Cup) (Nicolau, 2012; Fourie and Spronk, 2011; Briedenhann, 2011).

A different approach to the problem analyzed concerns analyses in relation to the tourist supply or demand. Many studies deal with problems connected with the supply side, including an analysis of the influence of events on the destination-organizer, among others in the scope of general issues (Preuss 2007; Fourie and Spronk, 2011), and also concerning promotion (Rose and Spiegel, 2011; Ribeiro and

Viseu, Delalande and Rodrigues, 2004) or an economic significance of an event (Daniels, Norman and Henry, 2004).

A lot of attention in scholarly literature is also paid to issues connected with the tourist movement, that is in relation to the participants of huge sports events. Most scholars agree that there is a distinction between individuals who travel to actively participate in a sport (active sports tourism) and those who travel to watch a sports event (event sport tourism) (Standeven and De Knop 1999; Hall 1992a; Gibson 1998). In the case of the second issue, the analyses that are undertaken concern numerous aspects including the influence of huge sports events on the tourist movement in destinations (Fourie and Santana-Gallego, 2011), the perception of the events and the destination-organizer (Kim and Morrison, 2005; Hallmann and Breuer, 2010; Chen and Funk, 2010), a segmentation of the participants of tourist events (Scott and Turco, 2007), expenses borne by the participants of huge sports events (Greig and McQuaid, 2004; Brown, Busser and Baloglu, 2010) or even a diversification in the tourist movement in terms of their sex (Chen 2010). The problem analyzed can also include issues connected with the perception of the significance of a given sports event to the tourist market of the destination-organizer in the opinion of the residents of the town or the region (Toman and Borzyszkowski, 2012; Kim and Petrick, 2005).

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The research covered a total of 786 people representing 19 countries including 13 European countries and 6 non-European countries (China, the United States, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Armenia, Canada). In terms of the value of this study, those people for whom their participation in the European Football Championship UEFA EURO 2012 was the primary purpose, were of a particular significance. It became evident that among the group covered by the research (N=786), a decided majority (N=565, 71.9%) came to Gdansk for this very purpose (Table 1). The remaining people (N=221) arrived for some other purposes, i.e. typical tourism (N=113), visits to relatives and friends (N=35), business trips (N=31) and other purposes (N=42). Thereby, those people (N= 565), for whom participation in the UEFA EURO 2012 was the primary objective of their arrival constituted the most essential research sample for the needs of this study.

7 states (i.e. Poland, Spain, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Great Britain and Croatia), whose citizens constituted in total 97.5% of the respondents played the most important role in the group of countries analyzed. It is worth to pay attention to a significant percentage of the citizens of those states whose representations played their group matches of EURO 2012 in Gdansk, i.e. Spain (3 matches), Ireland (1 match), Italy (1 match) and Croatia (1 match); in total, they constituted 63.9% of all the respondents. The respondents from Germany (N=80, 14.2%), whose representation played its group matches in the Ukraine, yet its stay centre was located in Gdansk, also accounted for a large part.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic variables		Participants of UEFA EURO 2012 (N=565)		Total respondents (N=786)	
		N	P (%)	N	P (%)
Gender	Male	445	78.8	553	70.4
	Female	120	21.2	233	29.6
	Total	565	100.0	786	100.0
Age	15-18	21	3.7	34	4.3
	19-24	178	31.5	204	26.0
	25-34	202	35.8	279	35.5
	35-44	115	20.4	149	19.0
	45-54	44	7.8	92	11.7
	55-64	4	0.7	18	2.3
	65+	1	0.2	10	1.3
	Total	565	100.0	786	100.0
Country of origin	Poland	86	15.2	190	24.2
	Abroad	479	84.8	596	75.8
	Total	565	100.0	786	100.0

An analysis of the structure of the respondents (this concerns the participants of UEFA EURO 2012) in terms of their age demonstrates a significant share of young people. Those aged 25-34 years constituted the largest group: a total of 202 people, i.e. 35.8% of the respondents. It needs to be stressed that 3 dominating age groups (i.e. 19-24, 25-34 and 35-44) constituted jointly 87.6% of the respondents (N=495).

Measurements Tools

The research was carried out with the method of a diagnostic survey with the use of a questionnaire technique. The selection of the sample was conducted with a random method. Those people who arrive to Gdansk for tourist purposes were covered by the research while excluding the residents of the Triple City area. The questionnaire included questions in 6 languages (Polish, English, German, Spanish, Italian and Croatian). These language versions were taken into consideration not without a cause. In 4 cases, they included questions in the native languages of those football fans whose representations played their group matches in the UEFA EURO 2012 European Football Championship (i.e. English, Spanish, Italian and Croatian).

Procedure

The research was carried out in the days of 10-20 June 2012 in Gdansk (mainly surroundings of an intense tourist movement, i.e. the Polish State Railway Gdansk-Główny and the Gdansk-Wrzeszcz railway station as well as the local airport, the fans' zone and the Old Town). Thereby, attention focused on the period which was directly connected with the group games in the UEFA EURO 2012 European Championship in Football in Gdansk (10.06: the Spain-Italy match, 14.06: the Spain-Ireland match, 18.06: the Spain-Croatia match). A total of 786 questionnaires were collected; out of these, 565 were analyzed in detail (the quantity of the

sample that arrived in connection with the UEFA EURO 2012).

RESULTS

Those tourists who arrived to Gdansk, independently of the purpose of their arrival, indicated the fact of them searching for appropriate information. This was confirmed by 616 people (78.4%) from among the total number of those examined (N=786). In the case of the participants of the UEFA EURO 2012 European Football Championship (N=565), this percentage was even higher (478, 84.6%) and at the same time the largest from among all the purposes of the arrival (typical tourism: 81.4%; visits to relatives and friends: 45.7%, business purposes: 35.5%, other tourist purposes: 45.2%). Therefore, it can be clearly found that the demand for specific information is particularly essential to those people who arrive in connection with the organization of a large sports event. To a significant extent, this can be the result of the fact that this was the first stay in Poland for many participants of the event analyzed, hence it was these people who particularly demonstrated an increased demand for information.

The characteristics of those sources where the tourists arriving in connection with the UEFA EURO 2012 sought information of an interest to them looks interesting. The Internet (80.5%) is the place that was most frequently indicated where information was sought. Next on the list were tourist information points (24.1%), volunteers (16.5%), local residents (10.3%), accommodation facilities (9.8%), the trip organizer (9.2%), petrol stations (4.0%) and others (3.3%) (the results obtained do not sum up to 100% as the respondents were free to indicate several answers). It is worth emphasizing that the Internet also turned out to be the most important source to search information for those tourists who arrived for other purposes, i.e. typical tourism (59.8% indications), a business purpose (63.6%), visits to relatives and friends (56.3%) and to a small degree, other tourist purposes (31.6%). It is interesting to note that volunteers (who were working *nota bene* in connection with the event) did not constitute the most important source of information to those tourists who were arriving in connection with the UEFA EURO 2012. A higher percentage of information search among the volunteers was obtained in the case of typical tourism (28.3%) and business purposes (27.3%). It is also worth to note that the share of the residents of Gdansk as a source of information was the lowest among the UEFA EURO 2012 participants (10.3%). In the remaining cases, this quantity was as follows: typical tourism (26.1%), a business purpose (36.4%), visits to relatives and friends (12.5%) and other purposes (31.6%).

An attempt to assess what information the tourists searched for, particularly those arriving to participate in the abovementioned event, was the next issue (cf. Table 2).

Table 2: Information Sought By The Tourists Arriving To The UEFA EURO 2012 As Compared With Other Purposes Of Trips (In Per Cent)

Information sought	Purpose of arrival				
	UEFA EURO 2012	Typical tourism	Business purpose	Visits to relatives and friends	Other purposes
UEFA EURO 2012	82.6	48.9	18.2	12.5	15.8
Entertainment	26.6	58.7	45.5	25.0	47.4
Attractions	26.2	58.7	45.5	43.8	52.6
Accommodation	18.6	29.3	9.1	12.5	10.5
Prices	17.2	37.0	54.5	37.5	31.6
Dietary base	15.7	38.0	27.3	12.5	21.1
Transport	13.2	21.7	18.2	31.3	21.1
Other	1.9	1.1	18.2	12.5	42.1

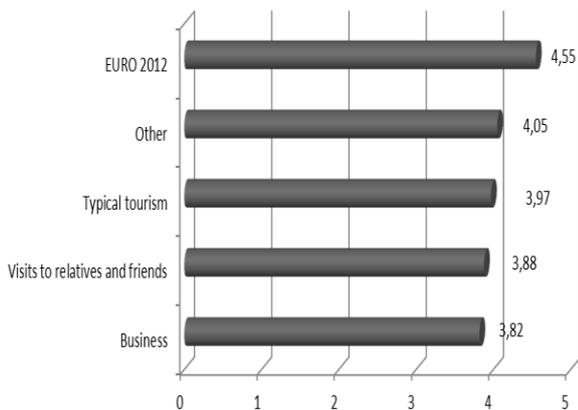
Explanations: The values do not sum up to 100% (the respondents were free to indicate several answers).

The information in connection with the event was unquestionably the most important information sought by the tourists arriving to the UEFA EURO 2012. It should not be surprising that this percentage was also the highest among all the purposes of arrivals to Gdansk, while it is observed that in the case of people travelling for other purposes this information was also of a fairly essential significance. This means that the so-called typical tourists benefited to a certain extent from this sports event at the occasion of their stay in the city. In the case of the trip purpose, i.e. participation in the UEFA EURO 2012, it was observed that other information was not dominating as compared with other trip purposes. On the other hand, it is worth to note that in this group, both prices (17.2%) and transport had the lowest percentage as compared with other trip purposes.

It is worth emphasizing which information was the most important for the purposes of those trips that were not connected with the UEFA EURO 2012. In the case of typical tourism, this was entertainment and attractions (58.7% each), business purposes: entertainment and attractions (45.5%), visits to relatives and friends: attractions (43.8%), and in the remaining tourist purposes: attractions (52.6%).

An assessment of the degree of satisfaction in the information obtained appeared to be essential for the research carried out. In this case, the method of point quality classification was used (in the scale of 1-5) where a defined value, i.e. 1: "very dissatisfied" and 5: "very satisfied" was attributed to each factor. The average value for the whole sample examined (N=616, i.e. the total number of people searching information and assessing it) was 4.42. Considering the results with regard to the purpose of the trip, it became evident that the participants of attributed the highest assessment to the UEFA EURO 2012 European Football Championship (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Degree Of Satisfaction (Average Value) With Information Obtained On The City Of Gdansk According To The Purpose Of The Trip



The information obtained demonstrates that those tourists who arrived to Gdansk in connection with UEFA EURO 2012 were among the most satisfied visitors (from the perspective of the information obtained). What is interesting, at the same time they constituted the only group for whom the average assessment (i.e. 4.55) was higher than the overall average (i.e. 4.42). It is also worth to note how for this group of the respondents (N=478, i.e. the number of the participants of the event who sought information and assessed it) the individual assessments were distributed: 323 people (67.6%) attributed the highest value ("5"), 107 people (22.4%) attributed mark "4", 38 people (7.9%) attributed mark "3", 7 people (1.5%) attributed mark "2", 3 persons (0.6%) attributed mark "1". The percentage of positive marks (arbitrarily accepted as "5" and "4") was in total 90.0%, and it was higher (86.7%) than that for the whole of the respondents (N=616, i.e. the whole number of those seeking information and assessing it). On the other hand, the percentage of the poorest marks (i.e. "1" and "2") was lower (2.1%) than in the case of all the purposes of the arrival (2.6%).

CONCLUSIONS

The discussions presented above serve to confirm the huge significance of information to those people who arrive to a given destination. The participants of huge sports events are no exception in this case. It can even be assumed that due to the fact that in many cases this is their first arrival to a given destination (in the case of UEFA EURO 2012 in Poland, this was declared by 60% of the tourists). All the more, this confirms the significance of information that is appropriately provided and obtained.

The discussions presented in this article clearly emphasize the aptness and at the same time the necessity to carry out this type of research. It should concern those issues that are strictly connected with information (search and level of satisfaction) as well as general issues, including the level of satisfaction with a stay in a given destination. This fact is confirmed by the research carried out by Jariyachamsit, Wongleedee and Ponsiri (2012) among 400 American tourists visiting Thailand and concerning the level of satisfaction with their stay. Three fundamental features were assessed, i.e. the level of satisfaction in goods and services,

the level of satisfaction in tourist destinations and the level of satisfaction in information. In the case of the last element, the respondents precisely defined the individual elements of the whole system of tourist information. The results reveal that the number one satisfaction for American tourists in information is the quality of tourist information from business organizations, followed by the quality of the channel to receive information from, the quality of signs and information boards, the quality of information from the Thai government, and the last one in the rank is the quality of communication in English.

To conclude, the opinions voiced by the tourists and examined in the research in Gdansk explicitly emphasize the significance of information. Satisfaction in the information obtained also received a high evaluation. This is particularly evident among those people for whom the basic purpose concerned the participation in the events connected with the UEFA EURO 2012 European Football Championship. For the majority of these people, this was their first visit to Gdansk (and to Poland in general). Their positive impressions and evaluations concerning this city should encourage intensive activities aimed at encouraging them to visit the place again in the future. This is essential in view of the fact that a decided majority of the respondents declared such an intention (Borzyszkowski, 2012b). However, it is worth to bear in mind one important issue in particular. Although the information and suggestions obtained cannot be omitted, one cannot be based merely on statistics and opinions concerning satisfaction in the stay. Practical examples demonstrate that these are not the only elements that are decisive of the success of a destination. The example of the UEFA EURO 2004 European Football Championship in Portugal showed that from among foreign visitors, as many as 97.3% would recommend Portugal as a country which is worth visiting and, moreover, 59% of the respondents stated that they were going to return to Portugal (Isler, Ritter and Eggmann, 2006). It is worth remembering that in the year of the event Portugal was visited by 0.8% fewer tourists than in the year 2003, and one year later, this quantity fell by another 0.3% (UNWTO..., 2006; UNWTO..., 2007).

BIOGRAPHY

Jacek Borzyszkowski, PhD, is a lecturer in Gdansk School of Banking (Poland). Main research areas include tourism, in particular: tourism policy, organization of tourism, tourism management, marketing in tourism. He is interested in Destination Management Organizations' activity, e.g. national tourism organizations (NTO), national tourism administrations (NTA), regional tourism organizations (RTO), local tourism organizations (LTO) and convention bureaus (CB). He is also interested in specific types of tourism (e.g. sextourism, dark tourism) and relations between sport and tourism.

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