

Examining the Sports Tourism Infrastructure in Two Major Cities of Northern Cyprus

Asst. Prof. Dr. Mathew Wallace* and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rukiye Kilili

*Corresponding author email id: mathewpaul@gau.edu.tr

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Abstract – This paper provides the results of a study into the sport facilities, amenities and environmental conditions that exist in Kyrenia and Famagusta in Northern Cyprus. Questionnaires were completed by respondents to obtain their views on the potential that their city has for the development of sports tourism. It was discovered in both Kyrenia and Famagusta that improving sports facilities and amenities can generate business activities, reinvigorate sport in the community, create new jobs, increase a sense of belonging and enhance their image. The findings show that both cities are better equipped to facilitate outdoor adventure sports and festivals. Respondents explained that efforts to increase sports tourism needs to be an ongoing process. It is argued throughout the paper that each city forms a sport tourism project team that is committed to improving the overall sports tourism experience. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will augment the formation of a knowledge base that can contribute towards strengthening the tourism infrastructure of Kyrenia and Famagusta.

Keywords – Kyrenia, Famagusta, Sports Tourism, Reinvigorate, Community, Facilities.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is proposed that Kyrenia and Famagusta each set up a sport tourism project team comprising of six or seven people from key areas within the sport and tourism industry of Northern Cyprus (Weed and Bull, 1997). A set of roles and responsibilities will be designated to each member of the team. Each team will allocate themselves a name, generate ideas and produce information for an action plan that will guide them towards achieving their goals. The action plan will detail the key aspects of the project and identify appropriate strategies to enhance sports tourism within their region of Northern Cyprus (Bull and Weed, 1999). It will state the required resources and the process that the teams will follow. The plan will include timescales of how long it will take to assemble necessary partners and stakeholders and include details on the overall direction and future ambitions of the project (Ismet, 2016). The process will need to be monitored (e.g., feedback) and if necessary it can be revised and improved. A coordinated Northern Cyprus sport tourism website will function to enable the project teams and partners to see the various sports activities and events that are taking place via a calendar throughout the county at any given time (Erdogan et. al., 2010). The website will provide a platform for the sharing of ideas, resources, staffing, facilities, marketing, public relations and both short and long term strategic planning. Sport tourism can significantly benefit the cities and communities of Northern Cyprus, strengthen relationships and help it achieve its tourism goals.

Antalya in Turkey has often been selected to host important sporting events (e.g., The FIFA Under 20 Soccer

World Cup, World Archery Championship and the Turkish Airlines World Final). These events were marketed on a global scale by the media which has created important sport tourism, business and infrastructural opportunities for the region and country (Gezici and Kerimoglu, 2010). The communities in Northern Cyprus will need to effectively promote sport tourism to potential interested parties if its growth is to be successful (Redmond, 1990). The teams will need to determine who the potential stakeholders and partners might be and when they have been established effective communication must ensure that they operate in harmony with one another (Weed and Bull, 2004). Sport tourism stakeholders can help each team assess which sport activities or events would most appropriately suit their city. It is anticipated that this will help them cultivate an increase in regional support across Northern Cyprus. Each team will need to know their cities current strengths and weaknesses to be able to effectively augment sport tourism. The project teams will need to consider the strengths of the sports they are intending to work with (Ruskin, 1987). It is recommended that they choose sports that have roots within the community. They will need to discover whether the sport:

- Has the necessary facilities to provide activities and programs.
- Has an existing infrastructure within the region with officials, staff, clubs and leagues.
- Has the necessary natural environmental features to enable activities to take place (e.g., mountains, rivers, plains or the sea).
- Has links with sport governing bodies.

The project teams can conduct research into the kind of sports activities that have taken place in the region to help guide them on the tasks they are about to undertake (Weed and Bull, 2004). They can consult the partners that they are working with to help contextualise their current plans and objectives (e.g., to discuss the most appropriate time of year to host an event or to discover which event generated the highest number of tourists and why). The teams will need to gather information on the kind of facilities that are available in their city. (e.g., indoor and outdoor sport facilities, stadiums to host sports events and spectator capacity). This can be achieved by contacting sport facility managers, consulting online website information and checking available up-to-date databases. Having gathered the information, each team will be able to compile a list of strengths and weaknesses attributed to their cities facilities in relation to increasing sports tourism (Urry, 2002). The Kyrenia and Famagusta teams will need to assess the potential for sports tourism in the region as part of their strategy (Ersoy and Gulmez, 2014). For example, whether they have the necessary resources and facilities to host a

local annual sports event (e.g., a stadium with adequate spectator capacity or the ability to provide sufficient hotel rooms during an event) and whether it would be better to host it during the winter, spring, summer or autumn months (Statistical Yearbook of Tourism, 2009). The kind of expenses that can be incurred include the payment of staff, hospitality, security activities and the costs associated with operating a venue.

Participant and spectator expenditures that will benefit the local economy can include travel to the event, accommodation, entrance fees, meals and shopping (Hinch et. al., 2001). Many of those that travel to an event will also visit the attractions of the city (e.g., Kyrenia harbour) and return for many years (Kiss, 2012). Strengthening the system of sports tourism in Northern Cyprus on a regional basis through the use of project teams and appropriate partnerships can also improve the local sports programs that are provided. Large-scale sports events provide opportunities for local businesses and employment (e.g., operational activities and structural redevelopment). It can result in the building of new venues, the renovation of old sport buildings and improvements to local roads which can be costly but will benefit the cities in the long-term future (Ottevanger, 2007). They also generate important social benefits through cultural activities that boost the identity of a city and country on a global scale and can incorporate environmental themes to further encourage the promotion of tourism (Jones and Munday, 2007). Successfully hosted sports events in Northern Cyprus provide examples for use in promotional activities that highlight it as a sport tourism destination of choice that has a climate and infrastructure that provides for healthy lifestyle choices (Cansel et. al., 2008). The teams will need to know which sports will generate tourism and be of economic benefit to their city (Erdogru and Yazici, 2013). For example, professional sport teams provide spectator entertainment and visiting teams bring spectators with them which supports the local economy. The Kyrenia and Famagusta sport tourism project teams will need to assess the economic costs (e.g., operating expenses), economic value to the region (e.g., creation of jobs), social impacts (e.g., youth and sport development) and community impact (e.g., sport facility improvements). The teams can involve the tourism industry at every opportunity as part of building a robust sport tourism infrastructure in their city for the future.

As part of marketing a sports event the teams can send out invites to potential sport participants and spectators from other communities and abroad to encourage overnight stays and travel (Erdogan et. al., 2010). The teams can work with local restaurants and hotels to offer special deals during an event to promote it as part of public relations. These special benefits can be sold as packages (e.g., family adventure sports package) through local travel agents who can arrange flights and hire rental cars (Kilili et. al., 2016). The objective of each team must be to maximise the experience that the visitors have to increase the likelihood that they will return the following year (tourists can be contacted in the future as part of marketing and public relations). Each team can construct a mission statement that details how they will increase sports tourism within their

city over the next five years in Northern Cyprus. They will need to establish structures and strategies within their teams to ensure that a systematic approach is followed as part of their plan. Both the Kyrenia and Famagusta teams will need to identify which sports activities and events could be effectively utilised in their cities to ensure that the sports facilities are being used to their full potential (Cansel et. al., 2008). The teams can organise sports activities (e.g., youth summer schools, festivals and camping) and events that cater for specific markets with volunteers being used to help manage them (Szromek et. al., 2012). It might be the case that an international event would be most beneficial or that local sports activities are a more feasible undertaking that includes opportunities for participation for those with disabilities. Each sport tourism project team will need to know the demographic makeup that exists in their city when deciding whether to focus on senior or youth events and activities. If the teams are operating in a predominantly multicultural market segment, they can incorporate multicultural activities and events into their plans and strategies (Szromek et. al., 2012). This can provide opportunities to link sport with cultural and arts organisations to host local festivals to increase tourism potential. The activities and events can each have a theme based on the community to increase the sense of belonging that people experience (Szromek et. al., 2012). For example, an annual dance, arts and crafts festival for a full weekend in Kyrenia or a sports and culture event in Famagusta (Yekta et. al., 2014). The results of each sport tourism team's activities can be shared with each other and the necessary partners and stakeholders via the website. Effective marketing campaigns can result in the involvement of communities from across Northern Cyprus and overseas with hotel stays and meals being necessary.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ioannides and Apostolopoulos (1999) discuss the effects that war and political instability has had on tourism in Northern Cyprus and the extent that the industry can recover from it. Altinay and Bowen (2006) detail the consequences of political interference to the tourism industry of Northern Cyprus and explain that progress is hampered by the conflicting goals and objectives of those involved. Yasarata et. al., (2010) explain that the sustainability of tourism in Northern Cyprus is weakened by the politicisation of the public sector. Katircioglu et. al., (2007) assess the progress that has been made in the tourism industry of Northern Cyprus since 1974. Ismet (2016) examines the tourism policies in place after 1974 and discovered that these policies were obscured because of the political non-recognition status of Northern Cyprus. Safakli (2005) suggests that an alliance with Turkey or the European Union will improve the economy of Northern Cyprus. Altinay et. al., (2002) advocate for a federal arrangement to repair the tourism industry in Northern Cyprus. Alipour et. al., (2011) argue that institutionalised restructuring along with a conservative ethical approach will aid planning for sustainable tourism in Northern Cyprus. Alipour et. al., (2005) assess the planning and

structure of the tourism sector in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). They compare it to the South and explain that the TRNC and the institutions that govern it lack adequate planning and are without a set of comprehensive tourism policies. Cansel et. al., (2008) detail the potential of Northern Cyprus and note that it could focus on the high end tourist attractions. Erdogan et. al., (2010) identify potential marketing strategies to help overcome political barriers to the growth of tourism. Altinay and Hussain (2005) investigate the possible problematic consequences of tourism on the environment in Northern Cyprus. They advocate for the construction of policies that address issues of health and safety, environmental destruction, quality of road and vehicle maintenance, littering, pollution waste disposal and water supply. Kilili et. al., (2016) explored adventure sports tourism in Northern Cyprus in their study and discovered that the potential that adventure sports provide was not being capitalised upon and suggest that Northern Cyprus is an ideal location for those seeking to participate in adventure sports (e.g., scuba diving).

III. HYPOTHESIS

H1 Kyrenia and Famagusta have facilities and natural resources that can provide for a range of sports activities, events, competitions and programs.

H2 Outdoor adventure sports and festivals have the greatest potential for increasing sports tourism in Kyrenia and Famagusta.

H3 The creation of new jobs is the most important reason for improving and increasing sport facilities and activities.

IV. METHODOLOGY

It was agreed that a quantitative approach was the practical option given the number of respondent responses needed and the type of information being sought with standardised answers to questions supporting the compilation of data. A quantitative approach enables researchers to obtain high quantities of data relatively quickly and cost effectively (Creswell, 1994). A pilot study with ten questionnaires being administered in each city was completed as a preliminary assessment of the methodology being implemented. Forty sport enthusiasts and participants residing in Kyrenia and forty from Famagusta completed the questionnaires for the full-scale study. The questionnaire findings were quantified on a scientific and objective basis using the statistical software package SPSS to maximise accuracy and as an efficient use of time. The researchers wanted to obtain the views of respondents on the potential that their city has for the development of sports tourism.

The questionnaire had twenty-four questions with five of the questions being demographic in nature (Gratton and Jones, 2004). It was designed according to the aims and objectives of the study and the questions used were clear, succinct with open and closed questions being examined for inclusion to maximise the effectiveness of the questionnaire (Creswell, 1994). The questionnaires were ethically

conducted on an interviewer basis for both the pilot and main study. The aim was to administer the questionnaire conversationally to ensure that the respondents were at ease whilst completing it (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Presenting them orally to each respondent helped to ensure that desired response rates were achieved. To participate in the study respondents had to be able to comprehend the questions and select appropriate answers. The researchers were aware that the choice of words and structure of sentences would influence responses (Gratton and Jones, 2004). The questions were organised logically with the general ones positioned at the start of the questionnaire and the in depth and sensitive enquiries coming later (Creswell, 1994). Spelling and grammar was repeatedly checked and only words that aided understanding were selected with overly technical language not being included to prevent confusion (Creswell, 1994). Designing it in this way increased the likelihood that it would be understood by respondents of different cultures and backgrounds. This is an example of two of the questions that were used:

Que. Have you ever been to a large-scale sports event? (e.g., Olympic Games, Football World Cup, Wimbledon)

- Yes, many times
- Yes, but only once
- No, but I am planning to visit a large-scale event
- No, I am not intending to attend one

Que. What are your cities weaknesses for the infrastructure of sport tourism? (please select as many as you would like)

- Political/ business assistance
- Hotel prices/ facilities
- Outdoor/ indoor sport facilities and prices
- Transportation
- Local media assistance
- University/ college sport facilities

V. FINDINGS

Sixty-three percent of those questioned in Famagusta and Kyrenia were male with the majority aged between thirty and forty nine. Sixty-nine percent of those questioned were postgraduates with fifty-three percent being single. Eighty-three percent liked their cities and thought that the climate was favourable for sports activities and events. A greater number of those questioned had attended a large-scale sports event and fifty-six percent believed that atmosphere was a motivating reason for attending them. A majority of respondents indicated that hosting large-scale sports events is important for raising the host countries image. Football was found to be the most frequently attended large-scale sports event. A majority of those questioned believed that outdoor adventure sports (e.g., mountain biking) and festivals had the greatest potential for sports tourism, which supports what was hypothesised for this study. Sixty-eight percent held the view that community relations with the local media were poor. Sixty-two percent felt that community relations with local businesses were poor and fifty-four percent expressed the view that community relations with politicians were poor.

A majority of respondents believed that racket sports could be developed for sports tourism and seventy-one percent of them believed that this was because of the facilities that exist in their cities. It was discovered that Kyrenia and Famagusta have facilities and natural resources that can provide for a range of sports activities, events and programs, which supports what was hypothesised for this study. They included: gymnasiums, indoor/outdoor stadium facilities, swimming pools, fields, mountains and beaches. The beach and gymnasiums were considered as being natural resources and sports facilities offering the greatest potential. A majority of respondents indicated that people perceived the sports facilities in their cities positively. Enhancing the image of the cities and generating a sense of belonging were found to be the most important reasons for improving and increasing sports activities and events, which refutes what was hypothesised for this study. Seventy-five percent held the opinion that not enough was being done to promote sports tourism. Fifty-five percent of those questioned thought that political and business assistance were infrastructural weaknesses for sports tourism in their cities. A majority believed that increasing political intervention would aid the process of improving the quality of sports activities and events being provided.

VI. CONCLUSION

Both Kyrenia and Famagusta possess natural environmental features that are conducive for a range of sports activities, programs and events to take place. It was discovered that both cities have facilities that can provide sport activities, events and programs, have links with sports governing bodies and an infrastructure that includes officials, staff, clubs and leagues (Alipour et. al., 2005). The findings of this study add to the literature on sports tourism in Northern Cyprus and are the beginnings of a database of knowledge for use by the Kyrenia and Famagusta sport tourism project teams (Weed and Bull, 1997). This information can be used by them to clarify the sport tourist capabilities that exist within the different communities of Northern Cyprus (Standeven and De Knop, 1999). To achieve their project goals each team will need to ascertain how sport tourism can be bolstered in their city as part of improving its competitiveness within the international marketplace (Creswell, 1994). Each team's strategies can focus on the community strengths that they identify and how to sell them to a wider audience (Ottevanger, 2007). A future ambition of the teams might be to improve the transport system and build venues that are capable of hosting sports events that meet the requirements of international standards (Jones and Munday, 2007). It is recommended that future research includes both quantitative and qualitative methodologies on how sport tourism project teams can benefit its sports tourism industry. Future studies might also focus on the countries that the tourists are travelling from, which sports they are participating in, why they chose Northern Cyprus, why they chose a particular city and what they are hoping to gain from their visit.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILES



Asst. Prof. Dr. Mathew Wallace Lecturer in Sport Management at Girne American University, Northern Cyprus. He has graduated from the University of Teesside in the UK on three occasions. He has a HND in Business & Finance, a (Hons) Degree in Business Administration, a Masters in Sport & Exercise Science and successfully completed a PhD in the Psychology and

Sociology of alternative and lifestyle sports at Salford University in the UK.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rukiye Kili Head of Tourism and Hospitality Management at the American University of Cyprus. She has graduated from the Eastern Mediterranean University of North Cyprus. She has a Masters and PhD degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management.