

The role of the transport system tourism essay



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The transport system forms a key part of the tourism and the tourist experience at the destination. In many tourism studies, the important relationship between transport and the tourism sector was highlighted and defined in term of “accessibility” which means, transport was considered as an empirical link between tourist generating regions and tourism destination regions (Prideaux, 2000, 2002; Gronau & Kagermeier, 2007; Ferri, 2004; Jacobsen & Kristian, 1997; Nilsson, 2001). Tourists need to be able to get to tourism destinations, otherwise, the destination attractions will fail to meet their financial objectives. The ability of tourists to travel around destination regions is therefore vital for the tourism sector. Thus the role of transport has been a key subject of discussion in the tourism literature as an essential component of the entire tourism system.

In the recent decade, the event tourism has emerged as an important sector of tourism strategies and leisure behaviour globally. In Australia, the tourism destination development and tourism marketing have been occupied a large proportion in tourism investment, and now, the integration of key events into the national tourism organization’s domestic and international tourism marketing strategy is outlined in the Tourism Australia Act 2004 (Stokes, 2008). The Tourism Australia has launched a division to give specific attention to the business and major events sectors. Thus, the perception of the dynamics of event tourism strategy making across the country is now becoming a national interest (Stokes, 2008). Accordingly, the transport system performs a key part in building the fundamentals of the development of both domestic and international leisure activities and event tourism (Prideaux, 2000; Hall, 1999). Although the significance of the transport

system has been recognised in many tourism studies since the 1970s, little work has been done to link transport specifically with the event tourism sector.

Research aims and the significance of the topic

The main aims of this research are to identify the importance of the role of transport system in the development of event tourism destination and of the tourists' decision-making process in event destination selection, and ultimately to bridge a theoretical gap between the event tourism and transport systems.

The term of the “ event tourism” has been described as “ the planning, development and marketing of events as tourist attractions to maximize the number of tourists participating in events as either primary or secondary attractions” (Getz, 1997). Events are typically an essential motivator of tourism industry, and build outstandingly in the development and marketing plans of most tourism destinations (Getz, 2008). The strategically planned events within tourism are of growing significances for destinations' competitiveness, and their function and impacts are important to be well recognised by the tourism destinations. Nowadays, Australia tourism sector is working in an increasingly competitive macro environment in which the tourism industry and governments around the world are insistently aspiring to grow their share of the global event tourism market. Hence, it is a fact that the event tourism has become well-known in the last few decades in the tourism industry and also in the research area, so that it is unsurprisingly the consequent growth of this realm can be described as impressive (Getz, 2008).

The event tourism represents a sector of activities that creates distinct challenges to the transport sector through: the high volumes of travel demand due to the increasing in event tourism demand; direct and indirect implications for transport operations such as extension of urban road system within the area of a mega event and the impact of possible road restrictions during the event may cause intensity of the public transportation; wider implications for the urban transport framework; and the emotional impacts on participants and visitors brought by the transport and traffic conditions on the journeys of going to and backing from a particular event (Schiefelbusch, Jain, Schäfer, & Müller, 2007). However, among the existing event tourism literature, transport has rarely been considered as an important factor in event tourism destination development (Dickinson, Calver, Watters, & Wilkes, 2004; Schlich, Schonfelder, Hanson, & Axhausen, 2004; Schiefelbusch et al., 2007), either a factor which would impact on the tourists' decision-making process in attending an upcoming event (Page, 1998). Nevertheless, the journeys to and from events should be seen as key elements of a strategy for reducing any un-satisfactions (or negative side-effects) of event participants and customers who involved in any event tourism, and at the same time, the integration of transport with the event tourism also opens up possibilities for new tourism experiences.

Literature Review

2. 1. The role of the transport system in the tourism destination development

In the history, every breakthrough movement in the transport technology, from the engineering of road systems by the Romans to the construction of

aircraft for travelling purpose in recent centenary, people have been enabled to travel further with the greater speed, at a lower cost (Prideaux, 2000).

Kaul (1985) addressed that the transport system has a long history records which showed abundant evidence that the transport made an intense and deep effect on the development of tourists' travelling from the ancient times.

It was formally acknowledged in his research that the importance of transport development and communications as an essential component of successful development in the creation of new attractions for the growth of tourism destinations. The author also suggested that the “ transport plays an important role in the successful creation and development of new attractions as well as the healthy growth of existing ones. Provision of suitable transport has transformed dead centres of tourist interest into active and prosperous places attracting multitudes of people”. In Australia, government regulations and the tourism policies exerted great effects in responsible for providing transport to the nation's tourism market. The Commonwealth Department of Tourism (1992) stated that the development of tourism industry in Australia relied on the nation's transport infrastructure which should be qualified and efficient. The Tourism and Transport Forum (2010) of Australia also asserted that transport system formed a core component in the tourism destination development project. An empirical evidence of the role of transport system in destination development and destination selection was made by Prideaux's (2000) research, which intensely proved Crouch and Ritchie's (1999) research which analysed the product in the context of tourism comparative and competitive advantage, stated that tourism planning and development would not be possible without roads, airports, harbours, electricity, sewage and potable water.

Hence, the transport and the tourism are two complimentary fields in both academic study and real world practice. Transport system forms a vital link between tourist and destination in the tourism system. It is defined as “ the operation of, and interaction between, transport modes, ways and terminals that support tourism resorts in terms of passenger and freight flows into and out of destinations, and the provision of connecting transport modes in the tourism generating region” (Prideaux, 2000). Although many tourism studies mentioned the role of transport in event tourism perspective, and admitted that the requirement for efficient transport as an element leading to the successful programme of tourism development, only a few research have been undertaken on the issue that identifying the importance of transport as a factor in the development of event tourism (Robbins, Dickinson, & Calver, 2007).

In the context of event tourism, the transport system is considered as a key part in the planning and organising processes of events ranging from small scaled local festivals to large international mega events, enabling event goers and customers travelling to and from an event eventually aiming in success (Robbins, Dickinson, & Calver, 2007). Similarly, the National Business Event Strategy Group of Australia suggested that a strong and competitiveness transport system, especially the aviation industry, was vital for the development of the business event sector and for international inbound, national and regional business development (The Business Event Strategy Group, 2008). Although it is a fact that transport system often seems peripheral to the event tourism in the destination development and destination selection literature (Dickinson et al., 2004; Schlich et al., 2004;

Schiefelbusch et al., 2007), the impacts brought by the planning and enhancing of transport system for the development of event tourism destinations should not be neglected. In order to better understand the distinctive contribution of transport system to the development of event tourism destination, making further efforts in affecting event tourists' decision making process of event destination selection, a number of subjects and issues relating to tourism transport system should be identified and thoroughly analysed since they have made direct contribution to the tourism destination development. These are: the concept of “ event geography”; economic issues of transport system at tourism destinations; transport system as a marketing component at the tourism destination; the role of government policy in relation to event tourism transport provision.

The concept of “ event geography”

One of the major concepts relating transport and event tourism regards to the term of “ event geography”, which refers to the interactions between people in spatial and temporal patterns of event activities, together with the impacts to the surrounding environment (Getz, 2004). The term explains that the location of an event is important contributor to the event success and further impact to the host community as well. The discipline of “ event geography” was systematically outlined and presented by Getz (2004) who concentrated on the meaning and scope of event geography including tourism-related themes (Figure 1). It was illustrated that the event geography consisted of several major themes, amongst the temporal dimension and spatial distribution patterns and resources that the events

brought to the tourism were most obviously observed and examined in the event geography literature.

Figure 1. Conceptual inter-relationship between event geography, event studies, and event tourism (Getz, 2004)

The concept of “ event geography” was initially developed in the 1990s. Janiskee’s (1994) pioneering contributions to the “ event geography” had to be acknowledged although his papers predominantly examined the spatial and temporal distribution of festivals in US, and he also examined the perceived constrains of which caused people not travel to the events. Another excellent event geographic study conducted by Janiskee (1996) was specifically related to the temporal dimension theme. The study predominately proved the feature of seasonality (or timing) of the event tourism created opportunities and stimulated the development of special events in the low seasons. Evidence showed that the nature of uniqueness of the event was able to present the once-only combination of the physical setting (venue and perceived environment), event management (planning and programming), and the human resource (event staff and participants), bringing up the significance to the economic, social and environmental levels. Ultimately, the event-related travel functioned as a medium that integrated all pieces as a whole.

Wicks and Fesenmaier (1995) examined event tourism market potential in a geographical perspective. They randomly surveyed 2100 households in US about the attendance of any special event in the previous year, and concluded that event patrons were more likely to regardless of the distance

travelled to attend a special event than non event patrons, having a tendency to have more travels in forms of daytrips, overnight trips and long trips. It also was evidence that the supply-demand interactions in event geography could be used as a tool of event marketing and event demand mapping (Verhoven, Wall, & Cottrell, 1998). Bohlin (2000) used a classic technique, the distance decay function, to determine how far people travelled to various festivals in Sweden, and what factors made the most difference, and the author concluded that travel declined with distance although the well-organised and frequently held events had greater appeal.

Thus, the location (spatial pattern) of the event is important to the event itself in achieving success and is a significant contribution to bring impacts to the local region and the host community. For instance, events choose urban locations, particularly the large cities where have great population size and high population density, are able to use developed public transport network, including higher frequency bus services, subway system/city trains, ferry services, and/or light rail systems.

The economic issues of transport system at event destination

2. 3. 1. The “ Transport Cost Model”

In more recent years, the role of transport in event tourism started to draw more attention in the tourism research. The transport cost model has become popular in examining the impacts of transport system in the context of tourism management.

The concept of “ travel chains” of transport as a motivation

In very recent years, a remarkable research project which has been done by German researchers called “Transport Systems for Event-Tourism” sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research aimed to develop and test new transport concepts for events as part of the leisure experience (Schiefelbusch, Jain, Schafer, & Muller, 2007). The project brought up the concept of “travel chains” which means travellers should experience their journey as a “chain of services” within the transport sector associated with linking different means of travel with one another. The project also suggested that the development and implementation of more sustainable “travel chains” need to put on the agenda.

The impact of transport system in event tourism

When the purpose of travel is to attend an event, then the demand for travel is heavily constrained both in time and space. Visitors share a common location and very similar optimal times of travel. The impacts of the peak period of transport demand created by an event are profound. Transport impacts can be also apparent in other more unusual ways. For instance, during the Sydney Olympics, a large number of navigational restrictions were placed on Sydney Harbour (Widmer and Underwood, 2004). Studies of recreational boat traffic during this period showed that, contrary to expectations, there was not a widespread increase in boat traffic during the event, although Widmer and Underwood (2004) suggest this may be due to local people avoiding the area, which highlights an important recreational displacement issue.

The previous theoretical works that have been done so far, in a general and large scope, illustrate significance of transport systems in the event tourism perspective.

2. 2. Demand side

With the growth in the interest of researchers in the field of event management, this notion of motivations has also been revisited in the last decade with respect to visitors to events and festivals (McMorland & Mactaggart, 2008). Insight into the area of event motivation is crucial for ongoing event success as it is the key to designing improved products and services, it is closely linked to satisfaction, and it is a crucial ingredient in understanding the visitor's decision- making process (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Dewar, Meyer, & Wen, 2001; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001).

The economic significance of transport as a factor in tourism demand has been acknowledged by a number of researchers (Martin & Witt, 1988; Taplin, 1980; witt, 1980). In a study of the demand elasticities of short- and long-haul tourist Crouch (1994) found that there was evidence to suggest that the sensitivity of demand for long-haul travel was significantly different from that of short-haul tourists due to the sensitivity of long-haul tourist to transport costs. Martin and Witt (1988) noted that the cost of travel to substitute destinations could be expected to be a factor in destination selection.

Prideaux (2000) argued that if the ability of tourists to travel to preferred destinations was inhibited by inefficiencies in the transport system, there was some likelihood that they might seek alternative destinations.

2. 3. Supply side

On the supply side, destinations develop, facilitate and promote events of all kinds to meet multiple goals: to attract tourists (especially in the off-peak seasons), serve as a catalyst (for urban renewal, and for increasing the infrastructure and tourism capacity of the destination), to foster a positive destination image and contribute to general place marketing (including contributions to fostering a better place in which to live, work and invest), and to animate specific attractions or areas (Getz, 2008).

2. 3. 1. Public Transport

The transport system within a city area is important to the accessibility of a particular event, such as public transport (train stations or bus services running near the venue, available car parking, and so on). Public transport upgrade is a major process of transport upgrading now in Australia, and examples are Sydney's public transport system upgrading; duplication of Adelaide's Southern Expressway; launching Brisbane's first 24 hour bus service (Tourism & Transport Forum, 2010).

2. 3. 2. Aviation Sector

Another highlighted element in previous researches in Australia is the air transport, particularly the introduction and development of low cost carriers (LCCs). LCCs are needed to be emphasised as they are factors that impact on tourist's decision in selection of travel mode and travel pattern and further affect tourist's destination selection (Forsyth, 2003; Signorini, Pechlaner, & Rienzner, 2002).

The role of the government policy in relation to event tourism transport provision

Conclusion

Event associations, organisers, tourism sector and government are the primary target audience of this research. Australia is facing a serious challenge for event industry that an increasingly competitive global environment in which the countries in the world are seeking to grow their share of global event tourism market. It has become essential to build up reliable, fast, and enjoyable “journeys” for event participants, in order to add extra value to service provided by event host destinations.