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Potential benefits of sport events tourism for physical education bachelors' professional competence building process

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Background. It is quite typical for the modern world that millions of people from different countries and continents are growingly devoted to a new type of travels offered by the sport events tourism that gives them a chance to join major sport events and see the host countries. The top-ranking global sport events like Olympic Games heavily contribute to the tourist attraction of the host regions: London, for instance, welcomed some 900 thousand tourists for 2012 Olympics; and the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi were attended by visitors from 126 countries who were reported to purchase about 2 million tickets to the Olympic park only. Periods prior to and during large-scale events of that kind give a high boost to operations of the local sport facilities, tourist attractions and service providers, regional and national economies and transports services – and generally contribute a lot to the economic, social and cultural growth of the host region.

Objective of the study was to make a sociological analysis of the innovation projects to support the sport events tourism in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) to assess their potential for the future physical education bachelors' professional competence building process.

Methods and structure of the study. Methodologically, the study was based on a set of research methods including a historical analysis, systemic comparative analysis and content analysis. The study was based on the study reports and developments by the leading foreign (S. Van Hill, D. Gilbert, K. Cooper) and national researchers (Y.I. Blokhin, Y.I. Bogdanov, G.A. Karpova, Y. V. Kuznetsov, G.S. Usykin, V.F. Yanchenko et al.) and materials of the relevant All-Russian and regional meetings on the provisions for the top-ranking sport events. Special emphasis in the study was made on the analysis of the sport events media coverage by the local mass media organizations.

Study results and discussion. Analysis of the sport events coverage by the local mass media organizations and the questioning survey of the service volunteers and the sport education specialists who participated in the international and republican sport events in the period of 2014-15 showed a high promise for the sport events tourism in Yakutia. It should be noted, first of all, that around 40% of the new tourist service clientele are the young people under 30 years of age, and this fact may be interpreted as a guarantee for the tourist flows being stable enough. Second, sport supporters and fans are known to be stubborn in their preferences and, therefore, when they move to more senior and wealthier groups, they are still prepared to pay for more comfortable tourist products of their interest. Third, the major sport events create new jobs in the host residential communities for sport education specialists and service personnel and, hence, help mobilize and consolidate the local communities and encourage the sport, holiday and recreation infrastructure development projects in the area.

It should be mentioned that, despite the fact that Russia has won some global recognition lately as a host country for popular large-scale sport events (“Russia has become a champion in hosting international sport competitions” [2]) and was particularly successful as a host country for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, the national share in the sport events tourism segment of the global tourist service market is still estimated at mere 2% [1, p. 17].

There are quite a few reasons for the country still lagging behind in this service sector, and they are generally typical for the local sport events tourism, as follows: poorly developed tourist infrastructure, particularly with concern to the transport service to and from the tourist attractions; low service quality with the poor services being usually overpriced; shortage of qualified service personnel; need for a consistent local marketing strategy to efficiently promote the regional sites of high attraction for the events tourism; low business/ investment activity; and the shortage of public-private partnership (PPP) mechanisms to secure support for this business and services from the local governments, etc.

However, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) still stands out among the other provinces of the Far East Federal Territory in terms of the project operations in the physical education and sports sector and holds an informal title of the “most sport area” of the Territory as it takes persistent efforts to promote and develop the Olympic and local traditional national sports. However, these projects and initiatives are also not free of some local problems and obstacles that may complicate the sport events tourism development process in the area, including: underestimation of the need in the contracted personnel being duly equipped with professional competences in the mass sport event organization and management area; inconsistent scheduling of the high-ranking events in the area; poor informational support for the major sport events that should be popularized as outstanding and entertaining events to lure the national and foreign tourists and spectators; underestimation of the sport events coverage and popularization initiatives as drivers for the local attractions being effectively promoted with their unique climatic, natural, geographic, social and cultural assets.

The International “Children of Asia” Games may be described as a large-scale project for the sport events tourism sector that have been successfully supported and promoted by the local government on the national and international tourist service markets for the last two decades. The data given in Table 1 hereunder show virtually every key Project progress indicator being on the rise, and this is indicative of the Project being highly successful and popular in Russia and abroad.

It should be noted, however, that any innovation project in the sport events tourism service in Yakutia is still complicated by the shortage of qualified personnel. The social, cultural and financial success of the projects under design and implementation in the area within the frame of the relevant large-scale sport events directly depends on how these projects are staffed, for it is only the highly qualified personnel that can ensure the sport education and tourist service quality being high enough, including such service domains as the alternative clientele luring initiatives, due management and technical service quality assurance in every service package, and the clients’ service provision.

Table 1. *The International “Children of Asia” Games: sport disciplines and participating athletes, yearly statistics*

Year	Participating athletes	Participating countries	Participating regions of Russia	Sport disciplines
1996	250	7	4	8
2000	1178	13	23	16
2004	1500	14	27	17
2008	1829	16	27	18
2012	2131	26	3 FD and 3 regions	20
2016	about 3700	45	3 FD and 3 regions	22

Our analysis of the interviews of 100 university student respondents from the regions providing the sport educational support; participants of the XIX National Sports Festival “Games of Manchaary”; the 2014-15 International Freestyle Wrestling Tournaments; and the 2015 “Tygyn” Games – revealed the need for the additional professional education module being mastered by the project service personnel to ensure the highest quality standards and expanded range of the services provided by the volunteer service operations.

Therefore, there are good grounds to state that presently Yakutia is quite successful as a pilot region for the “Target Tourism Development Program of Russia for the period up to 2025” in promoting a variety of its tourist products to the markets of sport events tourism, the products ranging from the national “Tygyn” Games (a competitive triathlon during the national summer “Yysakh” Festival) to the popular International “Children of Asia” Games. The ongoing initiatives to extend the lifecycle of the ethnic-culture sports projects and promote their concepts and attraction with the relevant economic and social benefits – will be supported, as a matter of top priority in opinions of at least 75% of the people polled, by highly competent qualified personnel having due knowledge and skills both in the regular tourist services and the sport event tourist service domain.

Some 2/3 of the people polled believe that the popular International “Children of Asia” Games Project that has progressed since 1996 may be further successful conditional on a prudential project forecast and staging and due professionalism of the relevant sport event service and PR specialists, managers and marketing experts, supported by the relevant new professional competences being formed in the personnel planned to be contracted for the new projects.

Conclusion

The study data and analysis show that the present demand for the physical education bachelors trained by the Republican universities will grow conditional on the education process being adjusted to give the bachelors new competences in the sport events tourism sector. With this objective, the relevant academic discipline curriculum will be complemented by a new Sport Events Tourism Service module with special mandatory and optional courses on the service structure and provision; volunteer activity management; intercultural communication; advanced studies of foreign languages with a special emphasis on the sport and tourism terminology; sport industry operations; sport business planning and entrepreneurial activity basics; and the sport journalism and sport PR basics.

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Abstract

The article substantiates the need for new professional knowledge and competences being acquired by university graduates in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), so the graduates could be contracted to serve, on a highly professional basis, the large-scale projects designed to promote mass sport events and sport events tourism. The authors consider the anniversary Sixth International "Children of Asia" Games in Yakutsk as a challenging and excellent opportunity for the Project designers to make top-quality business forecasts and put together education modules to build up professional competences in the sport education personnel contracted for the Project.

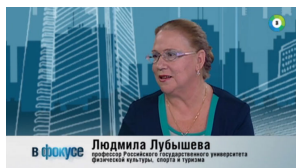
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