

Application of push & pull theory in Island sport tourism: a study of Sipadan Island, Sabah

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to further the understanding of island sport tourism in Sabah, Malaysia. Specifically, the authors utilised the push and pull theory to examine how motives and destination image attract sport tourists to spend their holidays in Sipadan Island, Sabah, Malaysia. Findings indicate that domestic sport tourists were more significantly motivated by intellectual, social, stimulus-avoidance and competence mastery motives than international sport tourists. With respect to the pull factors, result shows some difference in perceptions of destination image between domestic and international sport tourists. The findings of the study suggest that: (1) market segmentation based on demographic profiles can be identified, (2) four push motives should be emphasized on promotional efforts and (3) unique packages of sport tourism experiences should be developed in regards to sport tourism in Sipadan Island, Malaysia.

Key words: sport tourism, travel motivation, island tourism, push and pull factors.

Introduction

Sport tourism is a form of activity that involves people travelling away from primary residence for the purpose of participating in a sport activity for recreation or competition. It also includes travelling for the purpose of watching sport events or visiting sport attractions at a specific time (Gibson, 1998). Specifically, Hinch & Higham (2011) suggested there were two types of sport tourism; active sport tourism and passive sport tourism. Active sport tourism is related to the participation of tourists to the sporting experiences while passive sport tourism concerned with the activity of attending and observing the sporting events (Hall, 1992).

As participants are the main character in the active sport tourism activity, it is important to recognize who these people are. Participants are referred to in active sport tourism literature as individuals who travel for the purpose of pursuing physical involvement in the sporting experiences (Hinch & Higham, 2011; Bujdoso & David, 2013) and as people whose purpose of travelling is to engage in leisure-based activity while on vacation (Gibson, 1998). Gammon & Robinson (2003) make the distinction of participants by focusing on their primary motivation for travelling using the hard and soft definition of sport tourism. The hard definition is related to the two types of participants at competitive sporting events, namely active and passive sport tourists. Meanwhile, there is only the primarily active participant in the soft definition which is known as active sport tourist who engages in the recreational sport.

People travel for several different purposes. The sport tourists are without exception possess diverse reasons for travelling. Gibson (2004) mentioned that the reason why people choose to travel can be simply explained from the 'motivation' point of view. As hard as it is to identify the diversity of motivation in the general tourism, same scenario occurs in the context of sport tourism due to reason not all sport tourists perceive motives in the same way. Travel motivation has been discussed by many scholars using various approaches (Cohen, 1972; Pizam, 1999; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Dann, 1981; Dolinting, et. al, 2013; Barkhordari et. al 2014). Cohen (1972) viewed travel motivation to be a response that is taken due to one's desire while Pizam (1999), delineates travel destination as "a set of needs and attitudes predisposes a person to act in a specific touristic goal-directed way". Another particular explanation of travel motivation was done by Crompton & McKay (1997). They defined it using the concept of homeostasis. According to this concept, psychological strains (disequilibrium) within an individual exist due to one's desires or needs in life. In order to neutralize the disequilibrium, a decision to travel to fulfil the desire and need is made. For example, travel is a response to the desire for relaxation. In other words, the need for relaxations can be fed via travelling activity.

Dann (1977) came up with a definition of travel motivation as "a meaningful state of mind which adequately disposes an individual or group individual to travel". He simplified travel motivation by making distinction on two things, in which he came up with specific terms for his idea namely, push and pull factors (Dann, 1981). From Dann's perspective of travel motivation, push and pull factors can be used as a tool to explain what makes people travel and what makes them choose a particular destination over another (McCabe,

2000; Snepeger et al., 2006). Dann also rationalized that the descriptions of these two factors could lead to explanation on overall travel motivation. These factors may also provide insight to the decision making process of the traveller (Kim et al., 2012). The push factor which is also known as motives can be understood by taking the following scenario as an example; individual need to be motivated (having desire) by something in order for him to travel. For example, the desire “to be active” will be responded to by “taking a sport tourism vacation” at one particular sport tourism destination (pull factor). Specifically, the pull factors could explain the attractions or attributes of destination which suits the interest of the individual (climate, culture, safety, people and more).

Stimulus avoidance and competence mastery were examples of push factors identified by Beard & Ragheb (1983). Crompton (1979) discovered seven socio-psychological motives associated with tourism which includes escape, self-exploration, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relations and social interaction were related to individual behaviour. In response to this push motives, the decision to travel was carried out. Crompton (1979) however termed pull factor as cultural motives (e.g., novelty and education). In some other tourism research cases, pull factors can also be seen as destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Crompton, 1979; Esper & Rateike, 2010).

Destination image is important as it describes the distinction and appealing features of a destination. It provides information on one specific place based on the psychological and functional characteristics together with attributes and holistic impressions (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Teodorescu et al. (2012). As tourism industry has been evolved through centuries, more areas across the globe are developed for this purpose. Crompton (1979) stated that the building of destination image consume a lot of money from most sections in the tourist industry. He refers destination image as an individual collection of opinion on beliefs, ideas and impressions of one destination. Since a variety of destinations exist across the globe, alternatives for active sport tourism opportunities grow vigorously and created great challenges in the tourism marketing (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Hence, tourism marketers now need to deal not only with the complexity of push motives but also with competitions from other destinations. In addition, Weed & Bull (2004) remarked some opinion on the participation in the active sport tourism such as the awareness for healthy lifestyle. As many people are increasingly aware about the benefits of wellness, the market for active participation has increased which has led to the development of the activity-based vacations all over the world.

However, as far as motivational theories would assist in explaining sport tourism behaviour, motivation alone is complicated. The idea to anticipate demographic and travel characteristics for greater understanding on the influential factors of travel decision making process should as well be considered (Gibson, 2004). As revealed by literatures (Azadeh & Yusof, 2014; Mohammad & Som, 2010; Gibson, Willming & Holdnak, 2003; Jang & Cai, 2002) profiles and preferences of sport tourists need to be recognised, studied and documented so that destination marketers can establish a strong correspondence between the push motives (intellectual or social motives) and pull factors (price, destination attributes). Many studies have focused on tourists’ motivation yet little has stressed on the distinctions between national groupings. Demographic profiles and tourists’ opinion of a destination vary according to country of origin (Jönsson & Devonish, 2008; Armstrong et al., 1997; Danaher & Arweiler, 1996). In the sport tourism context, Musa, Kadir & Lee (2006), discovered that sport tourists from Eastern market (China, Korea and Japan), European market and domestic market requires different needs and services in the scuba diving activity. Therefore, the need to address on both domestic and international sport tourists’ motivations is crucial because it is improper to assume that all type of tourists have the same reasons to visit (Knop, 1999). Besides, in order to obtain more comprehensive data on push and pull factors, it would be worthwhile to include and compare both domestic and international tourists (Prayag, 2012). This comparison is beneficial as it contributes insights to the economic development. For example, the failure to maintain the positive growth of international arrival would consider disadvantage as international receipts can be increased especially through international passenger transport (WTO, 2012).

Purpose of study

Malaysia is known as one of the popular tourist destinations in the world, and sport tourism has been increasingly growing and becoming an important contributor to the country’s economy (Yusof, Shah & Geok, 2009). However, little interest has been given to study sport tourism in Sabah in terms of academic status. There is relatively scarce amount of adequate research done on sport tourism in Malaysia (Yusof et al., 2009; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2012). Of the prior research that has examined factors for visitation to Sabah (Som et al., 2012), there have been no research of motivations on sport tourism and only one or two attempts to study the satisfaction or revisit intention of general tourists (Musa, 2002). Consequently knowledge on sport tourism behaviour (motivations, tourists’ profiles and travel characteristics) in Sabah is lacking. With the growth of sport tourism in Sabah, it is crucial to know what the sport tourism industry is able to contribute to the destination. Information on push-pull factors, demographic profile as well as travel characteristics is important for marketing purposes in terms of identifying domestic and international sport tourists for the purpose of promotion and marketing activities. The findings of the study will provide insights and recommendations to the tourism authority in terms of destination development and sport marketing strategy so that the positive growth of tourist arrivals can be maintained and weaknesses on the pull factors can be improved.

This study seeks to examine the push motives of sport tourists visiting Sipadan Island, Sabah and identify the pull factors of sport tourists visiting the island. The following research questions were formulated for this study:

1. To what extent can sport tourists visiting Sipadan Island, Sabah be explained by demographic factors such as age, gender, place of residence, marital status, education and employment status?
2. Are there any significant differences between domestic and international sport tourists with respect to the push motives of visiting Sipadan Island, Sabah?
3. Are there any significant differences between domestic and international sport tourists with respect to the pull factors of visiting Sipadan Island, Sabah?

Method

The population for this study comprised all active sport tourists who visited Sabah at Sipadan Island for 5 days on the first week of February 2013. The site was chosen because it is one of the top diving sites in the world as it is among the main focal sport tourism destinations in the state. Domestic active sport tourist is defined as individual or group with residency in Malaysia taking a trip from regular routine environment (temporary displacement), staying at least 24 hours at one location and their main purpose is to engage in any recreational sport activities (non-event and small-scale) as participant in Sabah. International active sport tourist on the other hand refer to individual or group without residency in Malaysia while getting a temporary displacement (travelling) and spending time at least 24 hours, actively participate in the recreational sport activities in the state (non-event and small-scale).

In this study, the non-probability sampling of convenience sampling technique was utilized to collect data from required sample for this study. The use of this sampling method was adequate as it was in line with several other travel motivation studies especially in the general tourism research (Hsu & Huang, 2012; Li, Wen & Leung, 2011; Jonsson & Devonish, 2009; Snepeger et al, 2006) and sport tourism research (Yusof et al, 2012; Yusof & Shah, 2007; Yusof, Shah, Omar-Fauzee, & Hakim, 2008; Chang & Hsu, 2012; Chen & Funk, 2010; Funk, Toohey & Bruun, 2007). Based on this sampling method, data was gathered from a total of 106 subjects visiting Sipadan Island in Sabah, Malaysia.

Since the target respondents include both domestic and international sport tourists, the survey questionnaire was bilingual in both English and Malay. The survey questionnaire was divided into four parts: Part (1) Travel Characteristics, Part (2) Demographic Information, Part (3) Leisure Motivation Scale and Part (4) Attributes. The researcher developed items in the Part 1 and Part 2 based on a review of literature of previous study (Gibson, Attle & Yiannakis, 1998; Yusof et al, 2012). In Part 3, The Leisure Motivation Scale developed by Beard & Ragheb (1983) was utilized to examine the motivations of sport tourists visiting Sabah. The questionnaire has been used in several leisure and sport tourism studies by Ryan & Glendon (1998) examining tourist motivation in the UK, small-scale sport event as tourist attraction in Malaysia (Yusof et al, 2005, 2012) and investigating adolescent identity development (Campbell, 2007). The short version of the instrument (32 items) was utilized and used to measure the following four factors on sport tourists travel motivations on a five-point Likert-type scale (1= Strongly Disagree and 5= Strongly Agree): intellectual, social, competence-mastery and stimulus avoidance. Intellectual factor involves reason of individuals to travel because they want to learn, or to discover and explore new experience of sport and recreation elements. Social factors explain individuals go out for vacation because of the desire for social contact such as for friendship or relationship purposes, need of appreciation and also sense of belonging. The need to achieve or master sport skills (e.g., diving) or self challenge (climbing the highest mountain), falls into the competence-mastery factor. Individuals also engage in tourism especially sport and recreational activities because the need of escaping from too high level of stimulation especially from daily work routine. They were looking for the engagement with the natural environment (e.g., sea and mountain) to feel calm and relax.

In Part 4, pull factors of destination images were measured by using a 23 pair semantic differential scale developed by Attle (1996). The pull items in the Attle's instrument were mostly adapted from Crompton (1977, 1979). Additionally, the semantic differential type of instrument to measure respondents' image of tourist destinations also was adapted from many previous tourism research work such as Crompton (1977, 1979), and Yusof et al (2009, 2012).

Results

In this study, sport tourists can be explained by their age, gender, place of residence, marital status, education level and employment status by extracting information from the demographic items data. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the subjects in terms of their gender and marital status.

Table 1. Gender and marital information of the respondents

| Variables | N=106 | |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| | n | % |
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Standard Deviation (SD) | .50 | |
| Male | 56 | 52.8 |
| Female | 50 | 47.2 |
| <i>Marital Status</i> | | |
| Standard Deviation (SD) | .76 | |
| Single | 71 | 67.0 |
| Married | 28 | 26.4 |
| Divorced | 5 | 4.7 |
| Widowed | 2 | 1.9 |

Table 2 shows the classification of age into nine categories based on Levinson's Adult Life Course Theory (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson & McKee, 1976). In terms of age the respondents of age 28-32 dominate the sample size with 36.8%, followed by 22-27 years age group (27.4%) and 33-39 years age group (13.2%). This suggests that, scuba diving and water activities were more gaining interest by the age thirty transition group. The results are consistent with Levinson's Adult Life Course Theory which stated people at the age range of 22-27 are eager to try new phenomenon with the novelty and adventure as their preferable activities while on vacation.

Table 2. Age Classifications of the respondents

| Variables | N=106 | |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| | n | % |
| <i>Age (Year)</i> | | |
| Mean | | 31 |
| Standard Deviation (SD) | 1.56 | |
| 17-21 | 7 | 6.6 |
| 22-27 | 29 | 27.4 |
| 28-32 | 39 | 36.8 |
| 33-39 | 14 | 13.2 |
| 40-44 | 5 | 4.7 |
| 45-49 | 5 | 4.7 |
| 50-54 | 3 | 2.8 |
| 55-60 | 3 | 2.8 |
| 60 and above | 1 | - |
| Missing | | 0.9 |

Table 3 shows the demographic information of education background, employment status, origin and ethnicity. The results suggest respondents were well-educated with the majority having the education qualification at diploma, bachelor and postgraduate level. The majority sport tourists visiting Sabah were international tourists from Europe (n=40, 37.7%).

Table 3. Education & Employment Background of the respondents

| Variables | N=106 | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------|
| | n | % |
| <i>Highest Level of Education</i> | | |
| Elementary School | 0 | - |
| High School | 8 | 7.5 |
| Certificate | 2 | 1.9 |
| Diploma | 18 | 17 |
| Bachelor Degree | 41 | 38.7 |
| Master/ PhD | 37 | 34.9 |
| <i>Employment Status</i> | | |
| Government Servant | 18 | 17.0 |
| Company Employee | 58 | 54.7 |
| Self-Employed | 9 | 8.5 |
| Student | 9 | 8.5 |
| Retired | 3 | 2.8 |

| | | |
|-----------------------|----|------|
| Unemployed | 6 | 5.7 |
| Others | 3 | 2.8 |
| Classification | | |
| Domestic | 16 | 15.1 |
| International | 90 | 84.9 |
| Origin | | |
| Asia | 24 | 22.6 |
| Europe | 40 | 37.7 |
| America | 17 | 16.0 |
| Africa | - | - |
| Oceania | 9 | 8.5 |
| Malaysia | 16 | 15.1 |

Table 4 shows the results of the analysis to examine differences between the push motives of the domestic and international sport tourists visiting Sabah at Sipadan Island. For competence mastery motives, the results showed that the average scores for international sport tourists ($M = 3.54$, $SD = .78$) is significantly lower than the domestic sport tourists ($M = 4.27$, $SD = .59$; $t = 4.31$, $p < .01$). This means that domestic sport tourists were more likely to have the desire to participate in diving for the purpose of improving skills as well as self-challenge compared to the international sport tourists. Similarly international active sport tourists have lower scores in the stimulus-avoidance motives ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .80$) than domestic sport tourists ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .47$; $t = 4.19$, $p < .01$). This suggests that the need for relaxation or structuring time was found to be less important for the international sport tourists than the domestic sport tourists in relation to pursuing sport tourism vacations.

Table 4. Push Motives of Domestic & International Sport Tourists
using T-test

| Variables | N | Mean | SD | t | df | Sig (2-tailed) p |
|---------------------------|----|------|-----|------|-------|------------------------|
| Competence Mastery | | | | 4.31 | 25.21 | .01* |
| Domestic | 16 | 4.27 | .59 | | | |
| International | 90 | 3.54 | .78 | | | |
| Stimulus Avoidance | | | | 4.19 | 33.21 | .01* |
| Domestic | 16 | 4.29 | .47 | | | |
| International | 90 | 3.68 | .80 | | | |
| Social | | | | 4.35 | 22.46 | .01* |
| Domestic | 16 | 4.14 | .70 | | | |
| International | 90 | 3.30 | .79 | | | |
| Intellectual | | | | 2.85 | 27.19 | .01* |
| Domestic | 16 | 4.47 | .43 | | | |
| International | 90 | 4.11 | .61 | | | |

*The mean different is significant at $p < .05$

As for social motives, domestic sport tourists score higher than international sport tourists. This indicates that motivation for social contact which relates to friendship and relationship among domestic sport tourists through participation in sport tourism was greater than the international sport tourists group. Conversely, international sport tourists did not strike socializing experiences with friends or new acquaintances through diving and snorkelling activity of great significance to motive for sport tourism. Intellectual motive was the most prominent factor for domestic sport tourists for visiting Sabah at the island. Again, the domestic tourists are more likely to be driven by the motive of satisfying their curiosity as well as sense of self-discovery compared to international sport tourists. Based on the t-test analyses it was concluded that there were significance differences between all the four push motives between domestic and international sport tourists visiting Sabah at Sipadan Island.

Logistic regression was used to examine differences between domestic and international sport tourists with respect to their perception of destination image (pull factors) of Sipadan Island, Sabah. Logistic regression allows the probability of a particular set of circumstances be estimated by combining the independent variables. Only one of the categorical variables in each item would fit for one of the groups defined by the dichotomous dependent variable. During data preparation (coding of responses), responses were coded as 0 and 1 in which SPSS would predict the group with code 1 as the model is always constructed to predict the higher numeric code.

For this study, the comparison was made between domestic and international sport tourists using the coding of 0 for domestic sport tourists and 1 for international sport tourists. The instrument to measure destination image and attributes was a 23 pair semantic differential scale. The results showed no significant difference on any of the perceived attributes and destination images between the domestic and international sport tourists visiting Sipadan Island. It indicated that domestic and international sport tourists perceived the destination images of the island as the same. As a conclusion there are no significant differences between domestic and international sport tourists with respect to the pull factors of visiting Sabah at Sipadan Island.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings from the study revealed that active sport tourists visiting Sipadan Island, Sabah for sport experiences can be segment based on several key demographic variables, such as, gender, age and marital status. This study suggests both males and females are interested in sport tourism. Similar findings in terms of relatively equal numbers of males and females have been identified in other sport tourism studies namely hiking tourist's sample, marine sport tourism, active and passive sport tourist in Malaysia (Rodrigues, Kastenholz & Rodrigues, 2010; Chang & Hsu, 2012; Yusof et al, 2012). However it contradicts with some studies which suggest the majority of sport tourists were males (Allman et al, 2009; Dixon et al, 2012; Musa et al, 2010) or females (Kim, Noh & Jogaratnam, 2007, Aziz, Musa & Sulaiman, 2010; Rinaldi et al, 2013). With regards to age of the respondents, the result is consistent with Levinson's Adult Life Course Theory which stated people at the age range of 22-27 are eager to try new phenomenon with the novelty and adventure as their preferable things. According to Ritchie (2000), the physical advantages such as being fit, healthy and active permitted more participation by young people. It seems possible that people in the 22-27 age group wanted to take the opportunity to fulfil their interest, values and sense of self by travelling before entering the phase of settling down and taking sport vacation in Sabah managed to fill the gap they felt during this transitional period. A majority of the respondents were single and this is similar with findings of studies by Yusof et al., (2009), Kim & Beck (2009) and Hsu & Huang (2012) (91%, 52% and 76.9%). This finding suggests that singles have less family commitment which allows for vacation. To put it in another way, more singles were found in this study probably because they were financially stable or capable of spending more money and time for travelling for sport related vacations.

The majority of sport tourists in this study were foreigners. The results seem to suggest that the local population are not into domestic sport tourism. An examination on their motives for sport tourism indicated domestic sport tourists possess higher needs for intellectual motives. This suggests a possibility that Malaysians prefer to go on holiday abroad as they were already familiar with vacationing in Malaysia and they would rather visit another country to experience a different climate as suggested by Hamilton & Lau (2004). In this study domestic sport tourists were also discovered to have higher needs for competence-mastery and social needs than their foreign counterparts. This suggests local people prefer going overseas for sport tourism experiences which offer greater sense of challenge and to be able to meet new people in new and unfamiliar places.

Basically, people do something because either they want to or they need to. The need and want that aroused from one self is called internal psychological factor. It creates equilibrium in individual. On the other hand, an individual might feel uneasy when their have tension within one self and something has to be done in order to restore the homeostasis. When a person realized the existence of wants and needs in one self, actions need to be taken in order to capture them. This urge or stimulation to call for actions is known as motivation. Nicholls (1984) in his works on motivation on physical activity suggests that one has to be active by developing skills, challenging abilities and demonstrating mastery which all plays a part in how people can be competitive. Getting involved in challenging activities while on vacation such as visiting top diving site and keeping in shape at the same time are perfect combinations for individuals to have a sense of accomplishment. Therefore, it is rational to say that domestic sport tourists want to prepare, develop and improve their diving skills within the country before seeking for other diving and mountain climbing internationally. On the other hand, most of the international tourists encountered during the study were experienced divers. Vast majority of them possessed the advanced level of scuba diving license. Since they have already mastered the skills of scuba diving and encountered many challenging and adventurous vacations, the motives for competence-mastery appeared to be lesser compared to the inexperience domestic divers. Interestingly, the qualities demonstrated by the international tourists in this study suggested their characteristics were similar to some traits in described as serious leisure by Stebbins (1982, 1999). A serious international diver has to persevere travel constraints which include time, distant, cost, weather and cultural discomfort to participate in diving activities. Another example is concerned with the utilization of significant personal effort. The scuba diving activity is obligated for everyone as long as one has acquired a valid diving license. There are several levels in the licensing of scuba diving which offer different type of specialities (e.g. rescue scuba diver, advanced open water, dive master, digital underwater photographer, among others) and each course cost a lot of money. It is essential to take note that the successful completion of each course in scuba diving allow diver to dive at a certain depth. For example, open water divers are only allowed to dive the maximum of 18 meters while if one wants to go deeper, he or she needs to upgrade the license to the advanced open water and so on. It is also of importance to know that extra depth suggested extra risks and even potentially life-threatening hazards. Therefore, their efforts to prepare and acquire more

advanced skills for the purpose to taste challenging and more exciting state of scuba diving experience represent an extreme form of serious leisure (Hamilton-Smith, 1993).

The nature of scuba diving allows opportunity for relaxation especially when it comes to the engagement with natural environment under the water. In this study, domestic sport tourists were found to have greater motive for stimulus avoidance. According to Iso-Ahola (1982, 1989), people 'do something' in order to 'not to do the other thing'. In this case, the 'do something' is related to taking vacation as a result from escape stimulation while 'not to do the other thing' refers to home environment (work). In order to slow down and dodge work stress once in a while, people engage in vacation. And, one of the best things about domestic vacation is it does not acquire you to really plan the trip in advance as compared to travelling internationally. As has been previously stated, domestic tourism particularly in a small island is one of many ways to break from routine (Canavan, 2013) and Awang (1993) suggests Malaysians agree that restructuring time offer the best solution to relieve stress from work. In this study, domestic sport tourists stay on this island might be fleeting but a short weekend getaway trip is better because of no jet lag, long and expensive plane rides (Fennell, 2007) to reach and refresh tranquillity. Most domestic divers who participated in this study reported to spend their diving vacation just for the weekend which was a maximum of three days. It was expected that they would go back to their routine once vacation is over. International sport tourists, on the other hand, reported a more than 14 days stays which suggested that their motives of sport tourism in the island were more than just for escaping everyday environment purposes.

In sport tourism, the participation in the sport or recreational activities during vacation provides a medium for socialization (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2003). This social phenomenon concerning human interactions was obviously seen in active sport tourism. For example, group-oriented participation during sport tourism may act as a tool to enhance communication skills where people need to transmit information by active listening and giving feedback to one another. Non-English speaking people can practice their English language when talking to the tour guide as well as to the other sport tourists during conversations. Another benefit of socialization related to engagement in sport tourism concerned with the trust enhancement among participants (sport tourists). In this study, domestic tourists also have higher motivation in terms of social aspect than international sport tourists. Pearce (1993) stated that people tend to have few motives at one time in relation to their engagement in tourism which can weight same degree of importance and sometimes some motives could relate to each other. This statement supports the result of this finding in a way that domestics indicated to have more than one important motive to sport tourism. In a light, the need for social interaction could be linked with the second motive, the stimulus-avoidance. Busy and hectic work lifestyle can affect individuals in a way like isolation from peers and family members, demise of marriage, social conflicts and worse mental stress. McClelland (1985) in his work on the need for affiliation proposed that one of a greatest human being needs is to feel a sense of involvement and belonging within a social group. In relation to that, the engagement of sport tourism by the domestic sport tourists who were seeking for stimulus avoidance also treat the vacation as time for social contact with others. One good thing about dive vacations in Sipadan Island or other diving locations for that matter, involves divers to go underwater in a group of six or seven accompanied by two dive masters. The opportunity to involve in an environment with new people with similar interests and background (diving) could occur through verbal as well as non-verbal interactions. Oral conversations may took place when they were on the boat on their way getting to the diving sites or at the resort during dining time while they practiced hand signals, light signals or even sign language when underwater. From here, the sense of belonging among small group of social divers is created as they shares experiences, participations (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) and speak their 'own language' (Goffman, 1959) which only divers can understand for instance. Relationship and friendship also can be improve while travelling as you will spend your time and do activity together, make acquaintances by meeting new and different divers and climbers and most important be out of the usual system, the routine. This is supported by several studies which that people react differently to the people they recognized and to the people they do not but both interactions were a great deal to them (Goffman, 1959; Silverman, 1976; McClelland, 1985; Iso-Ahola, 1982).

In this study, domestic sport tourists have a strong desire for learning and discovering about self and the environment of scuba diving. This motive may be connected to the fact that Sipadan Island is among the top diving sites in the world, which contribute to the curiosity for the domestic. Some locals even admit to have never seen something so real and beautiful until the day they dived to Sipadan. Adding to that, the remote and exotic environment allowed new experience in which can provide the chance to learn about true self as well as to expand knowledge. There is a possibility that international tourists do not have the intellectual motives as much as the domestics do because of the idea that they have been travelling to a lot of places a lot. Therefore, the need to express on intellectual concern was lesser compare to the domestics who might travel once a year for example.

Tourism without any doubt is of great importance, and in some cases, vital for rural communities (Dong et al., 2013). Economically, the global impact of tourism enhanced all economic sectors especially the tertiary sectors which involve the supplying of services to consumers (Ahlert, 2008). As the device for economic growth and comprehensive development, tourism in the supply side must be able to meet the demand from the tourists. The mushrooming of tourism destinations, companies, tour agencies and transportation services offer a competitive alternative of products and to accommodate the evolving demand of tourism market (Lamont &

Dowell, 2008). Utmost importance, all these particular entities need the right tools, expertise and knowledge to provide the 'right' product which includes latest data of market trends, marketing strategies, statistics and proper management (WTO, 2012). The wealth of knowledge on market trends and segments make it possible to project for appropriate marketing and management actions. The success in compensating the tourism market would promote tourism as well as economic growth as a whole. While lack of knowledge may set back right marketing and management plan or worst fail to attract the tourism market. This study provides new information on the demographic profiling, motivations as well as attributes of Sabah as a sport tourist destination. Previously, marketing effort has been done without the presence of proper research but knowledge on tourist profiles and motivations can be beneficial for sport marketers and local authorities such as Sabah Parks, Sabah Tourism Board, private travel tours and tour operators. Product development should be made based on the push motives of the sport tourists according to their national groupings (domestic/ international). Once the sport product is developed, the targeting of appropriate market segment is of importance. In relation to market segmentation, sport tourism marketers can now reach the right target market based on the profile identified in this study. By targeting the right market, new sport tourism products can be offered via effective communication strategies or promotional campaign such as advertising. In return, this will lead to an increase in domestic tourism as well as international tourist arrivals to the state benefiting the state's economy as well as providing plenty of employment opportunities. To ensure the utmost in collecting and documenting particular data on sport tourism in Sabah, continuous research and study need to be carried out so latest tourism data can be made available. The availability of such data would be beneficial to every single entity in the tourism sector for their short term as well as long term plan and strategies

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