

# DEVELOPING SPORTS TOURISM IN THE CITY OF SOCHI

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## Introduction

Tourism and sport are integral cultural apparatus that play a vital role in shaping the modern-day society. It is important to note that Tourism and sport aid in accelerating the rate at which different nations are developing close relationships and the diverse social groups are able to understand and appreciate each other's cultural differences (Getz & McConnell, 2011, p.327). Sports tourism offers an opportunity for sport tourist to discover the world, meeting new people and cultures, self discovery, playing sports and attaining physical fitness.

Sport tourism is experiencing a momentous boom in pace with the markets trending towards intensification of physical fitness, recreation and relaxation and development of new destinations. Furthermore sport tourism is being appreciated across the globe for its role in enhancing tourism development as well an opportunity for economic growth for the local and national development (Hritz & Ross, 2010, p.120).

Supporting sport tourism and its economic prospective assists tourism players restructure supply and categorize demand. From the World conference on sports and Tourism, it was noted that sport tourism is emerging as an integral component in the discovery and growth of new destinations and revival of diminishing destinations (Kaplanidou & et al, 2012, p.247).

## Sport Tourism Development

Heritage and culture have a say in making tourism destinations offer unique attraction with sports becoming a contributing factor. Different sporting activities and sports venues are a symbol of distinctive expression of the traditions of the destination and City of Sochi is no exception. For example Sports stadiums

such as Wimbledon and Wembley are known for tennis and football respectively and regarded as the divine homes of respective sports (Kaplanidou & et al, 2012, p.244). The city of Sochi best bet for sport tourism attraction and contentment lies in the mountain region, Krasnaya Polyana, where Olympic skiing and snowboarding proceedings were held.

Tourism development authorities should come up with policies, regulations and institute proper sport management team to ensure that the arenas in the Olympic Park in Sochi remain valuable in hosting most prestigious and high status tournaments in the future thus promoting and developing sports tourism. Alberts (2011, p.28) states that with time, each venue, for instance Olympic Park, will build its own aura of heritage. Each connotes a noteworthy expression of the heritage and traditions of Russia. Cases in point, unique cultural fundamentals of a destination include baseball which represents U.S.A while tae kwon represents Korea just a few to mention (Hritz & Ross, 2010, p.131). This form of sports tourism constitutes an integral and distinctive part of tourist experience at the destination.

There have been investments in infrastructure which has enabled the area city of Sochi have adequate tourism infrastructure to cater for the demands of the sport visitors. There area has been more accessible with the Aeroflot making frequent flights into Sochi airport. Efforts have also been made in the road systems with newly major roads and feeder roads connecting key areas. Furthermore to accelerate the rate of sports tourism development, fast and efficient trains have been developed making the area more accessible than before (Chalip & McGuirty, 2007, p.275).

The arenas in the Olympic Park in Sochi were the most costly Olympics to have ever been hosted pumping in more than \$50 billion dollars worth of investment. This propelled the construction of a sports Disneyland in remote area of Sochi. The sports arena has the capability of staging soccer, Formula One, skiing and snowboarding. In planning the Sochi Winter Olympics games, all construction projects had to conform to blueprint and guideline objectives so as to harmonize with the existing landscape and architecture (Gronskaya & Makarychev, 2014, p.45). A variety of energy-saving equipments and techniques, for example heat pumps provided additional energy in the event of ice making, were initiated for this event

(Getz & McConnell, 2011, p.333). These innovations had plenty of benefits where common interest in sport and environmentalism were encouraged. In addition, the safeguarding of environmental features that catch the attention of both dynamic and sport tourists enhance visitor satisfaction; promote the status of the sports event destination as sparkling and attractive (Kotze,2014,p.290).

Tour operators and travel agents have observed that the Olympic park in Sochi, offers adequate facilities for sports visitors and other tourists in terms of shopping malls, hotels and resorts, an amusement park and conference space. With snow situations that encompassed the whole lot from athletes racing down slopes affected by the dense fog during the Games, uncertainty surrounds how ski and snowboard bums experienced will offer baring in mind that stiff competition is expected from more reputable nations across Europe( Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2010, p. 545).

During the winter games,Krassnaya Polyana 's shopping malls, restaurants and hotels and vicinity bars provided a more attractive and appealing experience to visitors than the concrete Olympic park (Kotze,2014,p.287). Enveloped by picturesque mountains decorated with gondolas, Sochi provides eye catching scenery for visitors diversifying sport tourism experience.

### Challenges Faced By Sochi

Sports tourism development in Sochi has also faced various challenges. There has been significant drop in accommodation prices after the end of the Sochi Olympic Games. For example, four to six nights did cost about \$7,000 to \$11,000; the price tag has taken nose dive a day after the closing ceremony with a night costing about \$100 (Gronskaya & Makarychev, 2014, p.48).Intensive marketing and promotions have to be undertaken to salvage sports tourism. This should also extend to neighboring countries since the economic, social and technological benefits can be fully attained.

Furthermore stiff competition from other nations with winter getaway options, for example the Swiss Alps .City of Sochi which was in the past considered as a war zone, it's uncertain if Sochi would be alluring compared to other well known destinations. The Olympics usually carry an aura of distinctiveness as well as the hosting destination. Therefore it is important to portray and protect the unique image of the ski villages through proper marketing and promotions activities (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2010, p.562). As much as the Olympics were staged in Sochi, it does not out rightly translate to a tourist hot spot.

### Conclusion

The process of democratization, which is the avenue through which formerly restricted opportunities are opened up for utilization, is a terminology that applies to the development of sport and tourism (Hillary and Hooper, 2004, p.180). Nevertheless the forces of globalization and democratization have had considerable implications in sport growth and development processes in sport tourism (Hallmann & et al., 2010, p.50). As much as City of Sochi offers adventurous images of beautiful mountains favorable for skiers in the winter and gorgeous beaches in the summer, accessibility is tedious long overhaul flights to Moscow then a two hour flight to Sochi. With its unique features it without a doubt that the city of Sochi has a long term potential for sport tourism.

Cognizant that information and figures on sport tourism is inadequate because it has only in recent times come into view as a separate discipline, the Russian government should conduct research that is aimed to assess the role of sport tourism in tourism development generally in the supply of city of Sochi as a destination by the major tour operators (Alpullu et al, 2013, p.38).

It is worthwhile to note that there has been an increase in fitness and health consciousness across societies. The growing awareness on the importance played by sporting activities in urban regeneration and urban imagery, and the capability to leverage tourism opportunities that is highly linked with sports events thus present developments in sport tourism are undergoing contemporary trends that need to be appreciated (Sirali,2004).

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