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# SPORT TOURISM AS A NEW DIMENSION IN INNOVATION IN RUSSIA



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## **Sport tourism as a new dimension in innovation in Russia**

### **Abstract**

Historically, tourism is dependent on historical, cultural, and natural heritage. For countries like Italy, the main attractions are its symbolic historical heritage, political, architectural, and cultural features, while countries in East Africa like Kenya depend purely on cultural and natural attractions. As all nations, bar the degree of variance, seeks to market themselves as tourist destinations, the ripe industry definitely calls for creativity and ambition to enjoy any sizeable share. Russia seeks to combine history and modern ways of marketing its country. Sochi in Russia provides the tip of this paradigm that does not kill other attractions, but rather helps to inject much-needed extra dimension for success. Sochi is the flagship of an ongoing scheme to use sport tourism as the key ingredient to the overall marketability of Russian federation as a tourist destination. This paper develops this paradigm on four main fronts. Firstly, after the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games in February, Sochi is already on the world map. The publicity gained on its architectural endowment, climatic heritage, beaches, and other attractions is worldwide. Secondly, it is a start of a long line of ambitious sporting events, later this year; Sochi is destined to host formula one F1 grand prix, the FIFA world cup is lined up in 2018 among other major and historically rich sporting events notably the Olympic, the world cup and the world athletic championships. Russia hopes to inform the world of its vast attraction sites and products, and to create some notable sport products like the recently constructed Sochi infrastructure, for example, Kaliningrad stadium. Lastly, the paper gives a look at the revenues, publicity to the world as reasons to visit Russia and to identify with it. The paper seeks to gel sporting events with history, passion, and emotions, capable of creating a euphoria lasting a lifetime and possibly passing over to future generations.

By looking at the Sochi events and the changes brought to Russia, the study provides a forum for analyzing other countries and events that

took place in them notably, major heritage sporting events targeted by the Russian federation including the FIFA world cup, the Winter Olympics, the athletic championships and one off events like the marathon, FI and others. The comparative studies will help determine if it is plausible to view Sports as a new and better form of tourism and revenue source. It will also help determine if the renovation costs in host countries are worth the income obtained after the events and in the long run. The study will also look into the changes that were made in Sochi to allow the events to take place and their significance.

The paper draws from various theoretical and epistemological backgrounds and perspectives to develop insights into how sport tourism emerges as a potential innovative dimension for future tourism and development policy agenda and frameworks. In this respect, the discussion will focus on two main themes of sports tourism: social-cultural significance and business significance.

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# **Chapter I. Sport tourism in Sochi as the new innovational direction**

## ***1.1 Introduction***

Sport tourism is a term that refers to visitors going to a place in their country or outside their country to watch sports events. Gammon and Ramshaw (2013) define sports tourism and categorizes the definition into hard and soft definitions. The soft definition captures the sports tourist who travels for leisure or recreational sports such as hiking and kayaking. The harder definition captures the number of participants of the competitive events. Some of the major sport attractants include FIFA World Cup, F1 Grand Prix, Olympic Games, rugby sevens among others.

According to Gammon and Ramshaw (2013), sports museums, sporting fields, sports hall of fame and award ceremonies, and themed events past or present for active and past sporting individuals make up the bulk of what is sports tourism. For example, the world cup football matches attract fans both from the hosting nation and from outside the nation. Olympic Games attract tourists from other nations either as participants and/or as leisure seekers (Weed, 2008). Thus, sports tourism depicts the notion of visiting somewhere due to sporting activities. Each city that hosts Olympic events receives an immense number of tourists and visitors before, during, and after the event. This is what makes sports tourism a future for tourism.

Huggins (2013) visualizes a shifting ground for natural tourist attractions, notably, culture, geography, climate, animals, and others. Factors like globalization, global warming, terrorism and scientific, architectural, technological, and social cultural changes make every aspect of humanity dynamic, tourism included.

## ***1.2 Background of the study***

The need for this study stems from the recently concluded Sochi Olympics. The social media generated before, during and after the event was enormous (Philopov 2014). It ranged from positive to negative and addressed different aspects of the event including its preparation,

amenities and other concerns, some justifiable while other were not (Arnold 2014). Some of these questions were answered in the preliminary research. Russia is pursuing a shift towards making sports as an antenna to future developments in the tourism sector. Russia seeks to gauge the world understanding of its geopolitical, social cultural and economic heritage. In the wake of the passions (Mansfield 2007), the emotional nostalgia (Gordon 2013), and Weed's (2005) futuristic methodologies, the stage of the Olympics and other sporting events is a ripe arena to capture world attention.

Although studies suggest that hosting world sporting events brings more pain than joy (the hosting nation paradox) (Mehrotra 2011; Rose & Spiegel 2011), sporting events can still be termed as competitively bid. Dull events like the winter Olympics and other winter events have recently received a mild lull interest. The frenzy of hosting such events lies in the sporting history of the events and the ecstasy that goes with them (Gordon 2013). To tap into the history of the sporting events to create a nostalgic feel of the host nation or city, is the new symbol of Russian federation as a method of making the country feel beyond post-soviet Russia, but also a proud Russian heritage. This informs this study and hence the need for an in-depth understanding of the intricate change of heart from the Russian policy development on tourism.

### **1.3 Research questions**

This research seeks to answer the following questions regarding Sochi sport tourism and the future of sport tourism In Russia. Many questions have and will be answered on the topic notably:

- Can Sports be considered a competitive form of tourism?
- Are the benefits realized worth the trouble involved in hosting such events?
- What are the overall effects to justify Sports as a good undertaking?
- What are the benefits, challenges, disadvantages of hosting such events?
- What does the future of tourism hold for countries seeking to market their country as a tourist destination?

- Ultimately, the main questions to be answered in this debate are:
- What is the significance of Sochi Olympics to Russia and Sochi as a host?
- Is sports tourism the new paradigm to tourism marketability and policy direction?
- Is 'Sochi sports tourism' the latest novel innovation to tourism?

### **1.4 Case study**

The build up towards the 2014 winter Olympics saw various candidates bidding to host the event. According to Hudson (2003), hosting the Olympic is a prestigious fete that entices many countries to seek the host status. Hudson (2003) further indicates that events such as the Olympic, the Super Bowl, and the World Cup are hallmark or mega events (p. 8), implying that hosting any of them brings to a country considerable benefits. Barabanova (2013) justifies the eventual decision to allow Russia to host the 2014 winter Olympics based on the country attributes that position it as the most suitable host. In this respect, it is important to understand various characteristics of Russia and Sochi in particular that makes the move towards sports a feasible strategy. Golubchikov and Slepukhina (2014) argue that Russia aimed to take advantage of the many benefits that accrue to the host countries of the sporting mega events.

Sochi, a Russian city in Krasnodar Krai has over 400,000 inhabitants from various national and cultural backgrounds (USSA Foundation, n. d). It is Russia's most famous resort region stretching 147 km along the Black Sea coast and boasting of modern amenities coupled with a unique environment and a transportation system developed that is convenient and suitable for any Winter Olympic event (Ibid). As a result, the city receives over two million visitors annually. In Russia, the infrastructure of Sochi is among the most advanced a factor attributable to the efforts put forth in the preparation for 2014 Sochi games (Arnold, 2014). Tourists visit for leisure and health boosting the economy of the city. The 2014 games lead to reviewing and improving the highways, railways, and airports to modern standards to ease movement across Sochi (Barabanova 2013).

Sochi holds Nordic and Alpine events at RozaKhutor, a ski resort, since

it experiences a subtropical climate unlike most parts of Russia (Philipov 2014). In 2014, Sochi hosted XI Paralympic Winter Games and XXII Olympic Winter Games. Sochi also expects to host the Russian Formula 1 Grand Prix from the year 2014 at least to the year 2020 (Barabanova 2013). However, this will only happen when the circuit is ready. Sochi will also house the 2018 FIFA World Cup as it forms one of the host cities (Ibid). Transport was developed to allow easier transit of participants, 30-minute intervals, between the events held separately in Sochi (ice events) the coastal town and Krasnaya Polyana Mountains (Mountain sports) (BOA 2014).

The Games were planned in two clusters: a coastal one for ice sports in Sochi, and a mountain venue located in the Krasnaya Polyana Mountains (State News Service, SNS, 2014). This resulted in it being one of the tightest Games ever, with about 30 minutes travel time from the coastal to mountain venues (Ibid). The Sochi Olympic Park sits along the expanse Black Sea coast of the Imeretinskaya Valley and houses all ice venues. The ice events took place in the different venues including the Maly Ice Palace, Sochi Olympic Skating Centre, the Olympic Oval, the Olympic Curling Centre, the Bolshoi Ice Palace, the Central Stadium among others, all rebuilt for the games in 2014 (Ibid). The compact structure of the park offers an average 6km distance between the coastal venues and the Olympic village (BOA 2014). Sports on skiing and sliding were housed in the Krasnaya Polyana mountain cluster, which also has a compact structure (Ibid). This is because there is a distance of only 4km between the venues and the mountain sub community (Ibid).

The Sochi XXII Olympic Winter Games saw six new participants in the games, which include Paraguay, Zimbabwe, Tonga, Malta, Timor Leste and Togo. Forty percent were female members of over 2800 athletes. To show the intensity of visitors, tickets over 1.1 million were sold while media coverage reached almost 4.1 billion viewers through broadcasts on digital and television platforms (PWC.ru 2014). This can also be seen by the 7.7million fans on Facebook that also captures followers numbering of over 2.2 million on all platforms (Ibid). Sochi brought in many records such as the event carried out the largest dope detection campaign in the Olympic Winter Games history. Sochi also

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saw the introduction of twelve new events which are; the ski half-pipe, ski slopestyle and snowboard, biathlon mixed relay, luge relay, team figure skating, snowboard parallel slalom and the women's ski jumping (SNS 2014). These events saw the award to 15 disciplines of over ninety-eight titles and winning of medals by athletes from National Olympic Committees amounting to 26. They leave a legacy and an avenue for future developments in the new sporting activities.

Members of the IOC (International Olympic Committee) voted for Sochi in July as well as PyeongChang (Republic of Korea) and Salzburg (Austria) out of the seven countries that had applied (Barabanova 2013). The event wound up with memorable moments such as the crowning of Einar Bjordalene and Marit Bjorgen, both Norwegian athletes, who were the athletes with the most medals in the Sochi Olympic Winter Games for male and female categories respectively.

## **Chapter II. Literature review**

Sports, tourism, and sports tourism are common human activities throughout history. Even in the mythical setting under which today's heritage, whose pillar tourism is anchored on, the theater for sports cannot be understated (Furrer, 2002). Furrer (2002) further epitomizes the need for sustainable hosting of a sporting event, which was further developed to mean that although the event may only last a month, the events preceding and proceeding it have a long-run effect spanning to 10 years or more (Mehrotra, 2011). As PWC notes (as the official professional partner for Sochi 2014 winter Olympics), hosting sporting events of such magnitude require sustainability, affordability, pleasure and leisure and efficiency in balance of such important aspects of sporting events.

Sports are tourism by definition. Rarely are sporting events one sided. The prospect of a new ground as potential host to a major sporting event is a common phenomena prompting the need for a constant change of venue for neutrality and fair play. Sporting events bring together the finest in every corner of the region or earth, to compete for the ultimate championship. This means that the need to travel to the event is inevitable. Sporting events also require that any competition should be based on the standard (Knott & Fyall 2011). Sometimes, similar conditions set the standards implying that the competitors have to satisfy the standards regardless of their origin. It brings the need to recognize that some records are seasonal and widely acknowledged. For example, the clay court for tennis is perhaps one of the toughest places to play in or the summer of the Wimbledon. These are subjective definitions of challenges to the standard mark. The need to ensure that all contenders compete in the same venue under similar conditions prompts for the need to travel. Spectators who do enjoy the home advantage have no option but to travel and cheer their home fans.

The rich sporting history is a fully-fledged multibillion-dollar industry (Fyall & Shipway 2012). For example, the history of football, athletics, and Olympics generates employment for hundreds of thousands annually both employing people directly or indirectly in business, service industry and such events (Ibid). Companies like Nike and Adidas are multinationals specializing in sporting goods (Koba 2013). In the wake

of such a deep understanding of global impact of sport, it is evident that there is a need to generate a policy directive towards this lucrative business.

## **Chapter III. Methodology**

This literature reviews borrows from the theoretical underpinnings and perspectives towards sports, tourism and sports tourism. A case study analysis based on the theoretical framework developed as an analysis based on the interpretative qualitative research as a potential future theory (Brett & Weed, 2007; Weed, 2005; Gibson, 2006). The case study analysis is in line with supportive literature on other sporting events based on the research questions. The interpretation, as used in Gordon (2013) to set up the success of the interpretive model of analyzing sports tourism. This develops from the need to understand tourism in diverse cultural, political and economic lens hence the need to use diverse samples for the research.

The methodology applied in the analysis of the case study (Sochi Sports) involves a comparison of the chosen events. Using the data projected from the individual events, a comparative study is the apt choice to analyze the impacts of sports on host nations. This is because it provides the rough estimates of statistics about the event in terms of publicity, spectators, number of visitors before and after the event, changes in such statistics after the event, and revenues obtained that will enable in coming up with the right conclusive evidence of Sports as a new tourism venture.

### ***3.1 Sample analyzed***

Comparative study of the sample follows recent sports events and their impact on the host cities. The concept of follow is informed by the fact that such events leave a long lasting impression on all aspects of humanity.

In the study, national sporting events in different countries notably, the London 2012 Olympics, Daegu 2011 championships, Berlin championships in 2009, world cup 2010 in south Africa and 2013 IAAF championship in Moscow, their impacts analyzed under the results heading. They will give an opportunity of viewing sporting activities and their overall effect of hosting them to the country or region hosting them. The choice for the cities is based on their magnitude in comparison to the Sochi Olympics and how they compare. This sample

is informed by the current trend of hosting top sporting events in the Sochi calendar, notably the Formula 1 and the FIFA world cup in 2018. This means the target of top sporting events and the impact they leave to the host is invaluable to this study.

### **3.1.1 Berlin Germany 2009**

The 2009 athletics held between 15th –23rd of August 2009, stemmed the sporting prowess of the Germans in sports preparations and management. The most events took place in the Olympic stadium; built in 1972 summer Olympics, while the race walks and marathon events began and ended at the Brandenburg Gate: another landmark built for sporting purposes. Its organizers budgeted €49.8 million to hold the event, but actually used higher than that figure. The events were positive for Berlin as over 400, 000 tickets were sold, with visitors estimated to spend €120 million. Spectators exceeded 5m with natural crowd pullers 100m finals men pulling almost 10 million viewers. Notable points of reference to the Sochi 2014 event include the fact that most of the infrastructures used during the event were inherited from past sporting activities. This is what Rose and Spiegel (2011) called the Olympic effect.

According to stadia management board in Germany, past events infrastructure already have a historical significance, for example, the Signal Iduna Park (Home to football team Borussia Dortmund) that goes with the hosting of past events. The Olympic stadium and the Hertha Berlin football stadium present in 1936 Olympics still hold significance and economic relevance to the Germans. According to Levy and Burger (2013), host countries and cities dwell on the surge of business that comes with the euphoric climate of the event, though they notice that a sharp plummet of the business affects existent business. To individual people and businesses, Berlin did not capture much, but to the city as tourist destination and the sporting euphoria left by the event, reverberates for long as an economic or historical reference.

### **3.1.2 South Africa 2010 World cup**

The World cup in South Africa is important as it led to the renovation of ten stadia hosting the games with the final game played at Soccer City

Stadium in Johannesburg. Over 3,175,000 translating to over 48, 000 attendants per match attended the event (Bloomfield, 2010). This led to the renovation of five existing venues and building of five new stadia. The infrastructure and public transport networks were developed. It also gave South Africa to market itself as a tourist destination. The match period saw South African hotels fully booked and construction of new housing units though some slum dwellers complained of evictions for construction (SRSA, 2010). This translates positively to the South African Economy. However, majority of the visitors were locals with only 309,000 being foreign fans compared to millions expected in other such major sporting events.

### ***3.1.3 Daegu Korea 2011***

Representation stood at 204 nationalities and 1848 participating athletes. Kim Hyo-sun argues that Korea efforts focus on ensuring that effective service delivery from security to accommodation during the course of the event remained the government's priority. The rich culture of the Korean prompted a high turnout of visitors set at 2 million (Arirang.co.ke, 2010). Korea has a soft spot to the western tourists including Europe and the Americas because of its perceived liberal ideologies. As mentioned in the hegemony of political ideologies, hosting large event is a statement of intent towards a globalizing policy, since sports eligibility is not based on such external barriers (Fleming et al. 1995).

### ***3.1.4 London Olympics 2012***

Took place between 25 July and 12 August 2012 with athletes from 204 National Olympic Committees numbering to over 10,000 athletes. These athletics led to the development of a 490-acre Olympic Park at Stratford, East London though they also made use of existing stadia in London. These renovations included infrastructure and venues. The event venues were divided into the Central Zone, the Olympic Zone, and the River Zone. It also saw the completion of other venues such as the Portland athletes' village on 2011 September. Transport was also improved for example introduction of a new high-speed rail service. A £25 million cable car across River Thames to link venues was built (Factsheet, 2012). Ten separate rail lines with a capacity per hour of

240,000 passengers served the Olympic park. According to Huto (2014), the Olympic history builds the sporting culture within the globalized world. Apart from the notable additions to the existing infrastructure, most of the existing infrastructures have a long time usage. Save for the events in South Africa where the hosts outnumbered the visitors by a big margin, most of the events notably, this event had balanced foreign visitors to locals' ratio.

### ***3.1.5 IAAF sports in Moscow 2013***

These athletics competition were held from 10-18 August 2013 that had 1974 athletes emanating from 206 countries with over 250000 evening spectators. The events took place in Luzhniki Stadium that has a capacity of 78,360 spectators. This was a precursor to the Sochi event and features nationals from 38 different countries awarded medals. Unlike Sochi, the event is just one of the over 100 international sporting events hosted in Russia and notably Moscow.

## **Chapter IV. Results**

Sport tourism brings about outcomes subdivided into cultural, publicity and revenues.

### **4.1 Cultural products**

Host countries for sporting activities have an excellent time in selling their cultural heritage. Sport tourist makes time to visit the attraction of the host countries during the periods competitions are not taking place (Robinson & Ramshaw 2013). However, the result is not always positive, as there have been claims of increased prostitution during such events. Some imply that the tourists bring with them destructive cultures and practices. This, however, does not lower the merits from the tourists as they outdo the demerits.

### **4.2 Publicity**

According to Jake Coyle of the Associated Press, emerging platforms of digital media, sporting events get more online coverage than any major sporting event yet. For example, FIFA, estimates for the watching of the 2010 World cup were about 700 million. FIFA seeks its publicity through introduction of computer games as a way of marketing themselves. Other companies also boost publicity by sponsoring events for example canon in Moscow 2013 (Gurgaon, 2013).

### **4.3 Collected revenues**

The 2010 South Africa world cup made £2.24 billion for FIFA. Sepp Blatter the FIFA president declared the world cup "a huge financial success for all, Africa and FIFA." On the other hand, Sochi was expected to use \$50 billion a figure experts feared would not be recovered (Koba, 2013). When these figures are analyzed, it is clear that even if the events do not meet the projected estimates in revenue, future events bring in revenue as minimal renovation are needed. In the end, the merits are higher for host countries. For example, some countries have hosted games more than once thus do not make many changes to their facilities, unlike a new host. Such host gets more revenue than first timers do and much leveraging on such mega events (Golubchikov & Slepukhina, 2014).

## **Chapter V. Summary**

Tourism is a good opportunity to market one's country. Sport tourism can be considered the new way of gaining from visitors. It is true in consideration to the dwindling forest cover and deteriorating natural sceneries. Excessive exploitation gives sports a chance to boost revenue for host countries. It is also providing opportunities for countries to improve their amenities in preparation for visitors. In turn, an alternative revenue source should be embraced as much of the natural animals are on the verge of extinction from human activities. Russia is on the right path towards inspiring future sporting and tourism avenues. Through its efforts in Sochi, events and grounds will be receiving a good share of both international and local tourists in the future.

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