SPORTS TOURISM: KEY DRIVERS OF TOURISM!

Medha Sampat, Director, Knack Marketing
(India Representative for Argentina Tourism)

Argentina a sporting nation offers football as the most popular sport. Sport tourism is a fast growing sector of the global travel industry and equates to approximately $600 billion a year. Sporting events are major drivers for tourism as people want to feel the live buzz during the event.

Sports tourism not only offers corporate, fast growing upper middle class and the youth but also senior citizens. Over the years there has been a considerable increase in the number of Indian tourists travelling to watch international sports related events. Sports tourism is divided in to two forms as Spectator Sports Events where people visit to enjoy the event and Participatory Sports Events encourage the visitors to participate in an activity.

According to the World Tourism Organisation, Sport Tourism represents the fastest growing sector in global tourism as several National Tourist Offices (NTOs) are working towards promoting their destinations for Sport Tourism in India to tap the corporate, as well as fast growing upper middle class and the youth. Sports Tourism is a great opportunity for any traveller as it is all about seeing and living and enjoying every minute of the event for lifetime memories. Sport Tourism generates €450 billion to the global tourism industry annually and predicted to grow in the region of 14%, compared to the overall tourism market growth indicator of 2-3% (WTO, 2013).

Sports tourism a niche market
Romit Theophilus, Director, German National Tourist Office, India states that Sports tourism in Germany has become increasingly popular not only for foreigners but also among the native Germans. Germany is the place for elite sports like football, basketball, tennis, rowing and horse riding championships that attract large numbers of international visitors.

David Craig, GM Asia, Tourism New Zealand says, “Sports tourism is a rapidly growing market in New Zealand. Sport has always played an important role in defining New Zealand as a nation and most Kiwis highly value an active sporting lifestyle whether competitive or recreational. The events like the Rugby World Cup, FIFA U-20 World Cup and ICC Cricket World Cup give New Zealand a unique opportunity to showcase the facilities that appeal to sports enthusiasts across the globe.”

Mark O’Connell, World Travel Market Sport Tourism Consultant said, “Sport Tourism is not a new sector of...
tourism as fans have been travelling to sporting events since the ancient Olympic Games were hosted in the sanctuary of Olympia in Greece, however it is recognized as a key emerging sector in the global tourism industry predicted to grow in the region of 14% (WTO, 2013) compared to the overall tourism market growth indicator of 2-3%.

“The market is growing because destinations are creating a lot more local sport tourism events and not relying on mega events to dominate the sector. It is a global opportunity for destination branding through sport and activity,” He says.

“Sport tourism relates to people travelling to a destination, to participate in or watch sport, to visit a sport attraction or attend a sport business event. It includes World Games, International test series, stadium tours, mass participation events, player testimonials, group tours, sporting events and exhibitions across a broad spectrum. The tourism sport is considered a discipline in its own right and differentiated from Sport Tourism as an ancillary activity to travel rather than a predominant reason in choosing a destination,” He added.

Medha Sampat, Director, Knack Marketing (India Representative for Argentina Tourism) says that sports tourism not only refers to people participating in the event, but also acts as a huge motivator for sports fans to visit the place during the grand event such as the Olympics, F1 Grand Prix, FIFA World Cup, Tennis Grand Slams, PGA championships, Cricket World Cup etc command a fantastic brand value among travellers and can be used as an innovative platform to showcase the destination. The sporting events can be major drivers for tourism.

“The marketing strategy combined with the execution of the event has to be precise, the target audience must be defined perfectly and a follow up with a concrete call to action is required, in order to create a big success story. A successful event is all about creating an impression one sets on the guests while visiting the country. The hospitality, energy, vibe and atmosphere of the host country also play an important role in promoting tourism for the future,” She added.

Gauri Jayaram, Founder, Active Holiday Company said, “We have seen that it is only now in the past couple of years that Indians are getting a real idea of formula racing or tennis or anything beyond cricket as sports is not a number one priority for people, you can imagine with the size of the segment of people willing to really go out and spend money on a holiday for a sporting event.”

Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager India & Gulf, Tourism Australia explains: The special interest driven travel including sports tourism is noticeably gaining popularity as Indian
travelers seek to add unique, adventurous experiences and activities that give an adrenalin rush to their itinerary. Sports tourism is also influenced by a gratifying emotion for ardent fans to be able to witness in-person the thrill of being spectators at internationally acclaimed sporting events. “We are exploring opportunities to promote the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 amongst corporate entities who can reward their top performers with the experience of watching ‘live’ matches of this renowned tournament at some of the iconic stadiums in Australia,” He added.

Growth rate in sports tourism
Romit says, the focus on sport and spreading knowledge on this has lead to the increase in sport tourism. Events such as rugby, Olympics, Commonwealth games, Asian Games and football World Cups have enabled specialist travel companies to gain official ticket allocation and then sell them in packages that include flights, hotels and excursions.

David said, “Tourism New Zealand has seen strong growth of 13% for the year ended June 2014 from the India market, with 33,914 tourist arrivals from India of which 16,224 were holiday arrivals. The four weeks ended August 10, 2014 witnessed an even more impressive jump of 44% on the same period last year.”

Mark says, the high profile events in 2014 are FIFA World Cup, Sochi Winter Olympics, Commonwealth Games and Tour de France.

Medha states that Argentina is a sporting nation. We have witnessed some encouraging signs with regards to Sports Tourism. The FIFA world cup was held in South America, a major boost for sports tourism in the recent months. Football is the most popular sport in Argentina. It is also a big Polo playing nation and other sports played include auto racing, boxing, cycling, horse riding, field hockey, fishing, golf, mountaineering, sailing, skiing, tennis etc.

“Argentina hosts world class sporting events that attract thousands of visitors where Soccer and Polo is considered to be the finest in the world. The famous Dakar Rally along with the prestigious MotoGP which is held in Argentina attract thousands of travelers and fans from all over the world who come together to witness this spectacle. This segment has been growing remarkably well as all travellers want to feel the rush and play in gods natural playground,” She added.

Vishal Suri, Chief Executive Officer-Tour Operating, Kuoni India explains: The increase in sports tourism is approximately 30% as compared to 5-6 years ago. The Indians nowadays travel abroad to watch a broad range of sporting events, including cricket, soccer, tennis and Formula 1. Over the years we have seen a considerable increase in number of Indian tourists traveling exclusively to watch sports related events or alternatively planning their holiday around a major sporting event.

“The tour operators also ensure that various sports tour packages are reasonable enough to come within the reach of Indian travelers and the promotional strategies used by various authorities to promote these events are increasing the awareness level amongst sport enthusiasts thereby opening their mind to new travel avenues in this segment,” He added.

Hanneli Slabber, Country Manager, Cover Story

Travel becomes a way of life in Germany whether on the job or on vacation. Sports tourism is popular in Germany and the place for elite sports like football, basketball, tennis, rowing and horse riding championships attract large numbers of international visitors.
South African Tourism says that Sports tourism is a very significant element in world tourism and has become a highly competitive niche tourism segment for South Africa. The concept of sports tourism has been popular in the Western world for over a decade, while in India it is a recent phenomenon which is gaining momentum as the modern Indian traveler has become more open and is willing to explore untapped segments.

“Sports have always been a big passion among Indians like South Africa. Sports tourism has nowadays diversified from its conventional form restricted to viewing the sport live, to being clubbed with leisure or MICE trips. Several Indians make it a family trip with the sporting event as an incentive to visit and explore a new destination wherein they indulge in shopping and other leisure activities. Sports tourism has gained popularity not only amongst sport enthusiasts but also youth, families, senior citizens and the growing upper middle class,” She added.

Gauri says that Marathon tours are not like sports tours where people go watch cricket or football as the participants have to run a 42.2km race so it is a rather niche type of sports tourism.

Expected growth for 2014-2015

“India is one of Tourism New Zealand’s priority markets and plays an important role in defining New Zealand as a nation. The Kiwis are very big on team sports like rugby, netball, rugby league, cricket and sailing. Sports Tourism is one of Tourism New Zealand’s focus segments for the future. Sports Tourism generates €450 billion to the global tourism industry annually and predicted to grow in the region of 14%, compared to the overall tourism market growth indicator of 2-3% (WTO, 2013),” Mark added.

Medha states that Argentina is a country that offers travellers many sporting options. Sport tourism is a fast growing sector of the global travel industry and equates to approximately $600 billion a year. The sport events have always encouraged growth in numbers and inspired many travelers. Sports tourism can be broken up in two forms. Spectator Sports Events where people visit to enjoy the event and can be associated with an entertainment angle and Participatory Sports Events encourages the visitors to participate in an activity. Both of these forms can offer a great growth in sports tourism. We expect to see a robust growth for Sports Tourism in Argentina.

Vishal explains: “India is slowly catching up with the growing trend of sports tourism and carving a niche for itself in the tourism industry. Sports tourism in India is poised to gain immense prominence and popularity. According to the World Tourism Organisation, Sport Tourism represents that fastest growing sector in global tourism. Several National Tourist Offices (NTOs) are working towards promoting their destinations for Sport Tourism in India to tap the corporate, as well as the fast growing upper middle class and the youth.”

“New Zealand & Australia seem to be on the itinerary of sports enthusiasts owing to the upcoming ICC Cricket World Cup in 2015. The F1 Grand Prix...
Mark O’Connell, World Travel Market Sport Tourism Consultant

Sport tourism is all about people travelling to a destination, to participate in or watch sport events. Sport Tourism generates 450 billion Euros to the global tourism industry annually and predicted to grow in the region of 14%, compared to the overall tourism market growth indicator of 2-3% (WTO, 2013).

and Australian Open in Melbourne as also the F1 tournaments in Malaysia & Singapore, Wimbledon in UK and the French & US Open championship ships are extremely popular annual sporting events that travelers seek to explore and experience. Kuoni-SOTC offers customized deals and designs sports packages which offer a perfect blend of the sport and sightseeing at the destination for the travelers to enjoy,” He added.

Hanneli says South Africa is a nation of sports lovers and top-class sports facilities it is favorable for the local industry to focus on the lucrative sports tourism market as there are numerous world-class sporting events on South Africa’s calendar every year. We have proved our caliber to host events such as the 2003 Cricket World Cup, the 2010 FIFA World Cup among others in the past which was a major boost for the country’s international reputation with tremendous arrival figures.

“South Africa will soon host the Sports & Events Tourism Exchange at ICC, Durban this year to further facilitate the positioning of South Africa as a sports and events tourism destination. This year, the SETE platform aims to bring together businesses from the sports, events and tourism industries and encourages collaboration between these sectors,” She added.

Gauri said: The base of sports tourism is really small now so the growth can be 100 or 200% with marathons, the running community is growing although only a small segment can afford international races at this point as the pyramid grows we expect the demand to increase. But this is not going to be a year to year phenomenon it is something that will take time.

Nishant says, “Australia is an ardent sporting nation and we have been observing a rising demand from Indian tourists for sports based travel experiences. For Australia, we have noticed a keen interest for events including the Australian Open and cricket tournaments involving national teams of India and Australia. We expect a minimum of 5,000 to 6,000 people travel to enjoy the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 in Australia.”

“With the evolution of the Indian traveller, sports based experiential travel has gained popularity in recent times. The global sporting events typically attract large numbers of visiting fans who not only attend most of the games, but also indulge in tourism experiences between matches,” He added.

Trends in sports tourism
Romit states that there is a growing evidence of the power of participation in sports and recreational activities in terms of connecting people to place. We now see expanding evidence of sport events that accommodate all levels of competitive and recreational participation cater specifically to wide ranging spectator and supporter groups and immerse all corners in the historical/heritage and sport places.

“Sports Tourism is one of Tourism New Zealand’s focus segments for the future. The Rugby World Cup, which New Zealand hosted in 2011, had a hugely positive impact on both building awareness and boosting visitor arrivals. A recent jump in visitor numbers from France and the UK, both of which are rugby-mad nations, can be attributed to the success of promotion around the Rugby World Cup. We expect to see a similar trend across the Indian market for the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 and FIFA U20 World Cup 2015,” David added.

Mark says: Sport tourism focus for
Cover Story

Hanneli Slabber, Country Manager, South African Tourism

South Africa is a nation of sports-lovers. Sports tourism is all about seeing it and living it, enjoying every moment of the event, the destination, the culture and taking away a lifetime of memories.

team building, development and incentive as part of corporate social responsibility with continued growth of Sport Tourism Mass Participation Events like Cycle Sportives, Marathons, and obstacle adventure races. Medha explains: The sporting events encourage travel agents to package the destination in interesting ways which could be clubbed with pre and post tours. This encourages repeat travel and creates a new marketing angle for the host country. Post the events a visit to the sport venues are considered to be popular sightseeing options. Sports tourism has evolved from viewing the sport live, to being clubbed with MICE and leisure trips. In some cases the corporate weave their conventions and incentive programmes around the sporting events. Sometimes this scenario is extended even further when their families are included on the visit. The incentive visit along with experiencing the place in the apt environment with family or friends has been gaining popularity. Hanneli said “With changing customer preferences and demands, travel is no longer the same as a decade earlier. Travellers are now exploring diverse avenues and experimenting with options such as Sporting events and activities. Sports tourism is no longer just about sport as customers are seeking an experience. Sports tourism is more than just hosting great events. Although, fan motives are the main reason why people are keen to visit a big sport event but also the factor of entertainment and the festivities around an event are at times more important than the competition itself. To meet the needs of the tourists and reap the considerable benefits of sports tourism, a destination needs to integrate sporting event into its strategic vision and have a long-term business plan.”

“The FIFA World Cup in 2010 did wonders for South Africa’s travel and tourism sector. The World Cup games were played in 10 different stadiums in nine cities where tourists got to explore certain areas in the country. The hospitality industry saw a tremendous growth figure with tourists flocking in from countries across the globe. The year 2010 witnessed 8,073,552 global arrivals to South Africa which was an increase of 15.1% vis-à-vis the previous year. The Indian arrivals, 71,587 Indian tourists visited the Rainbow Nation in 2010. South Africa was singled out as the World’s leading sports tourism destination at the World Tourism Awards in 2012,” She added.

Promotional Activities
Romit said: We are working closely with the trade with joint promotions to showcase the rich variety of experiences which Germany offers to Indian visitors. Some of the major promotions are ongoing with Kuoni, VIA, Thomas Cook Cox and Kings and more to follow. We are also reaching to Tier II cities in form of Germany India Pool road shows inviting people from the field of Travel Trade and are facilitating interactions on latest updates and attractions.

David states that with the fourth-largest sporting event in the world coming to New Zealand in 2015 is the best time for sports fans to plan a trip to one of the most passionate sporting countries watched by an estimated quarter of the world’s population an audience of more than two billion the 2015 ICC Cricket World Cup will be the perfect opportunity to experience the buzz of a high stakes global sports event with ample time to explore.

Medha said: We have commenced with training the trade and will continue with mono Argentina trade shows. We have been participating in trade fairs that were held in Mumbai and
Delhi. We have started targeting other regional markets and cities. The response has been spectacular. The idea is to develop the market with a long term perspective. The Argentinean suppliers have been visiting India regularly for the past two years and have interacted with the Indian travel trade.

Hanneli says: The Sports and Events Tourism Exchange (SETE) was formed in 2011 to strengthen collaboration between the sports, events and tourism industry and to ensure the legacy of the FIFA World Cup is endured and South Africa becomes the world's premier sports event destination. The thought process behind SETE was to engage with the leaders of world sport and build on South Africa's position as a major international sports, tourism and events destination by hosting events across the sporting spectrum in South Africa. The result has been that South Africa has successfully staged big events and set itself apart as a world leader in sports tourism. "South African Tourism has encouraged initiatives like the ‘Gary Kirsten Travel & Tours’ which packages sports in conjunction with travel thereby offering sport enthusiasts a complete travel experience. This initiative has already received an extremely positive response from the Indian market with 24 budding professionals already having visited the academy in October 2013. Many more groups from India are expected to arrive in the next few months,” she says.

"Sports tourism is a multi-billion dollar industry, South Africa plans to leverage this opportunity towards achieving our tourism goals. The focus on sports events is in line with South African Tourism’s strategy to position South Africa not only as a leader in wildlife, adventure and leisure tourism, but also as a leading global sports and events destination," she added.

Gauri says, “Our cycling tours are available to both the B2B and the B2C market. We have also recently tied up with Intrepid and Exodus to offer amazing adventure trips to travellers with this we hope to bring about some great products and adventure experiences to Indians.”

Nishant states that there is significant interest building up for the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015, co-hosted by Australia. The travel agent partners have already started seeing enquiries pouring in, cricket lovers are keen to book early and ensure confirmed seats for key matches. Indians being the defending champions and with the big games scheduled to be played in world renowned stadiums including the Adelaide Oval, Sydney Cricket Ground and the Melbourne Cricket Ground, there is significant interest amongst cricket fans to travel Down Under and watch the games live.

"Australia is famous for active holidays and ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 is a good opportunity for travelers combine their love for sports with an immersive holiday experience by undertaking adventure activities, indulging themselves in the varied food and wine offerings and touring the numerous attractions including the Sydney Opera House, Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Great Ocean Road, the Great Barrier Reef, Kangaroo Island and Ayers Rock amongst others." He added.

Challenges in sports tourism

Gauri concludes that as a nation we are just about waking up to sports so the segment itself, barring cricket is small. The next issue is that the consumers are far flung and the market is very fragmented and finding the right audience is a huge challenge. The awareness of sports tourism is extremely poor.