



SPORT AND LEISURE

Traditionally, there has been a clear separation between sport and tourism, two sectors of activity that seemed unrelated until recent times.

Tourism is the number one industry in the world. It comprised nearly 700 million international travellers worldwide in the year 2000, and represented a total expenditure of more than US\$ 476 billion. Domestic travel represents a movement of people several times greater.

On the other hand, sport is without a doubt the number one industry within the leisure sector. The impact of the professional practice of sports has become a global phenomenon. Sportsmen and -women from various sports become global heroes and role models for dress, behaviour, attitudes, etc. Moreover, amateur sport and leisure sport are becoming increasingly important in a stressed society where individuals need alternative ways to relax and develop their character.

The importance of the Conference relied on the fact that it was the first time that the relationships between sport and tourism were dealt with in a global way at the same table, with experts from both fields sharing a common objective: to understand and foster the relationships between these two industries.

The Olympic Games are certainly the biggest sports event in the world as well as a major tourist attraction, that

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will, or not, consolidate the organizers' city as a future tourism destination depending mostly on post-Games management of both brand image and tourism potential.

Many other significant sports events, such as the Athletics World Championships or Tour de France, also involve a substantial effort for the image of the organizing city or country, that will see its return in the number of tourists that those destinations are able to attract in the years following the event. There are also thousands of smaller sports events that foster the knowledge of the organizing city or region.

Sport is also becoming an important actor in the product offer of tourism destinations. Popular tourist destinations, such as Orlando or various locations in Spain, are developing interesting product concepts based around leisure sports that will allow them to differentiate their offer in order to become more competitive at the international level, attracting customers that are interested in discovering nature, meeting other people and hav-

ing a healthier and more interactive vacation. Professional sports are also popular when considering tourist destinations. Well-equipped facilities are being constructed, some partly-funded by a professional team or association, to allow for training sessions in appropriate facilities. This is becoming a profitable business for tour operators and travel agents.

Sport and tourism have common ground, they both strive to understand other cultures and ways of life, to be instrumental in the promotion and consolidation of peace, and to generate a closer relationship between peoples. This is done in several ways. Sport, through a competitive environment, where performance is the key but where friendship among competitors is the common rule; and tourism, through the selling of experiences and sensations, where meeting people and sharing experiences is the key.

Some of the key aspects of the Conference should be mentioned: Both sport and tourism can become the drivers for the development of a destination, but this has to be done in a balanced way. Sport-related trips accounted for 55% of the total outbound trips by Germans, 52% by the Dutch and lower in the case of the French at 23%. The size of the event or the tourism activity has to be in accordance with the possibilities and capacity of the destination.

To consolidate the effort made by a destination, a well-planned strategy in this regard has to be thought about before the event takes place, and



Discovering nature by running.

continue afterwards, in an organized manner.

Infrastructure is a vital element of any sports event or tourism development. New forms of management should be developed to allow tourists access to sports infrastructure which already exists. Public authorities play a key role in both cases, with a clear model of development in mind. As both activities deal with people and mobility, sustainability and environment care has to become a must in such models.

Both tourism and sport are complex activities, with a long value-added chain and many actors playing a role, moving billions of dollars each year. Integration and consolidation of many

of the activities in each sector is taking place, and the mutual knowledge and deepening of interests and relations between the two sectors could bring further developments and partnerships in the future.

Sport and tourism are the basis of the well-being of individuals, and culture is no doubt linked to them. Additional collaboration between the two sectors would bring new tourist products, new possibilities to practise sports, and even new sports. Informal and leisure sports practice is expected to grow in the future, as is tourism travel, both nationally or internationally. In this scenario, new and imaginative ways of dealing with this demand will emerge in

the coming years. Local communities must be involved and participate in those developments and, in all cases, well-prepared professionals in both fields will be needed in the future.

The Conference was a great success, mainly because two separated worlds confirmed their common interest. The challenge now is to develop permanent bridges between them, and to work towards the next World Conference on Sport and Tourism.

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