

## SPORT IN SLOVENIA TOURISM PRODUCT

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**Abstract:** *Sports and tourism are very connecting industry. Tourist includes sport in tourism demand especially on winter and summer holidays. Today, tourists are aware of so many tourist amenities also include sports. The paper is focused on the sports tourism offer giving the example of Slovenia. Emphasis is placed on the quality of the sports tourism offer — that considered being the key of success on the tourism market. The aim of the paper is to stress the need for developing sports tourism offer required by the tourists of today. Sport is a part of the health tourism offer. Health, recreation, sport, fitness, beauty and leisure time are the elements of the quality of life. Sport is not adequately represented in the Slovenian tourism offer. Tourism plays a very important role in the economic development of Slovenia, and it deserves high priority in the development strategy. The paper will show the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of integration of sport in tourism. The purpose of this paper is to show the case of Slovenian sports and tourist places importance and impact of sport as entertainment venues.*

**Keywords:** *health, sport, SWOT analysis, tourism,*

### Introduction

Sport tourism refers to travel away from home to play sport, watch sport, or to visit a sports attraction, and includes both competitive and noncompetitive activities. It consists of two broad categories of products: sports participation travel (travel for the purpose of participating in sports, recreation, leisure, or fitness activities) and sports spectatorial travel (travel for the purpose of spectating sports, recreation, and leisure or fitness activities or events).

UNWTO forecasts a growth in international tourist arrivals of between 4% and 4.5% in 2014. World tourism arrivals are projected to reach 1.6 billion by 2020. Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Modern tourism is closely linked to development and encompasses a growing number of new destinations. These dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socio-economic progress.

Today, the business volume of tourism equals or even surpasses that of oil exports, food products or automobiles. Tourism has become

one of the major players in international commerce, and represents at the same time one of the main income sources for many developing countries. This growth goes hand in hand with an increasing diversification and competition among destinations.

This global spread of tourism in industrialised and developed states has produced economic and employment benefits in many related sectors - from construction to agriculture or telecommunications.

The contribution of tourism to economic well-being depends on the quality and the revenues of the tourism offer. One of the fastest-growing areas contributing to these staggering statistics is sport tourism. Although sport tourism is a relatively new concept in terms of contemporary vernacular, its scope of activity is far from a recent phenomenon. The notion of people traveling to participate and watch sport dates back to the ancient Olympic Games, and the practice of stimulating tourism through sport has existed for over a century. Within the past five years, however, sport and tourism professionals have begun to realize the significant potential of sport tourism and are aggressively pursuing this market niche.

This sparks the question of whether sport tourism is a new, recreated, or agglomerated field. For many tourism entities, a travel market focused entirely on participating or watching sport is a unique and exciting concept. For recreational managers, the opportunities and impacts related to noncompetitive sport participation have been recognized for years. Thus sport tourism is considered a redesigned marketing tool. In the sport industry, sport tourism is seen as a way to capitalize on the growth and interest in both noncompetitive and competitive sport by aligning forces with sport, recreation and tourism professionals, and organizations. For instance, the more people that participate at a recreational level, the more sport equipment they tend to purchase, the more likely they are to continue to participate at a competitive level, and their propensity to watch sport may also increase. Ultimately, all of these increases related to participating, competing, and watching sport impact the tourism industry in one way or another.

Both sport and tourism have diversified rapidly into a range of distinct forms. During this course of parallel evolution, mutual interests in sport management and tourism management have expanded considerably (Hinch and Higham, 2004; Weed and Bull, 2004). The constant evolution of new or hybrid sports with specific natural or built resource requirements represents emerging opportunities for tourism destinations where these requirements are, or could be, best satisfied. The convergence of interests in sport and tourism combine, in the study of sport tourism, into a powerful avenue of development and consequently

an important field of study. Sport tourism represents an avenue of development at tourism destinations that is, through its continuing growth and increasing diversity, rich in opportunity.

### **Slovenia as sport tourism destination**

Different destinations offer specific sport tourism experiences because they are characterized by distinct sport and tourism resources. These resources may, within the tourism sphere, relate to tourism infrastructure, levels of service development, tourist attractions and information services. The sports resource may include sports venues such as stadia and arenas, training facilities, sport science resources, and sports medicine facilities (Maier and Weber, 1993). At local or regional destinations, the scale of tourism development is quite different. The resource base for sport tourism at a regional community level commonly includes local club-based sports facilities, and such things as community-funded walkways, riverside cycle tracks, and municipal recreation facilities such as swimming pools and public racquet sports venues (Weed and Bull, 2004). However, the potential benefits of sport tourism at the community level are no different when they take place in smaller geographical areas (Getz, 1991). The specific challenges that such destinations face often relate to accessibility, distance from tourist generating regions, and lack of tourism infrastructure and service development.

In 2013, Slovenia was hosted the European basketball championships. The increase in tourist arrivals was highest from those countries which will participate in the tournament. In addition, a rise in tourist expenditure is predicted for the same period, particularly on accommodation, food, shopping and entertainment.

The European Basketball Championships hosted by Slovenia in September 2013 generated an additional EUR 37m in consumption in the country, making for EUR 5.3m in additional revenues from value added tax, a study commissioned by the organisers has found. The study of the economic impact of EuroBasket 2013 found that around 31,500 foreign tourists visited Slovenia for EuroBasket, which is in line with the estimates of organisers.

Based on a survey of 2,751 visitors to EuroBasket games, the study of the direct and indirect economic effects by the Economics Faculty in Ljubljana found that foreigners visiting for EuroBasket had performed better than average tourists to Slovenia.

The average stay by foreigners visiting for EuroBasket was 5.7 days on average, which is more than double that of an average tourist to Slovenia, researcher Igor Ivašković told the press in Ljubljana on

Thursday. At EUR 179.61 per day, spending by the foreigners visiting EuroBasket outpaced that of average tourists to Slovenia by as much as EUR 40 per day.

With as many as 68% of foreigners surveyed indicating that they had come to Slovenia only for the basketball, the researchers concluded that the total additional revenues created by the tournament amounted to EUR 37m after spending by foreign officials and media representatives was included.

The state collected EUR 5.3m in VAT from these revenues, while the overall direct tax effect stood at nearly EUR 6.4m given the income tax paid by the organiser and other VAT revenues. The figure surpasses the EUR 6m the state spent on the fee for hosting the tournament. The overall direct financial impact of the tournament once the costs are factored in meanwhile was as high as EUR 23.7m, the study concluded. Moreover, the company organising the event generated around EUR 500,000 in net profit on revenues of EUR 13.9m.

Ticket sales outpaced plans by 26%, with a total of 182,126 tickets sold for the 87 matches played. Combined with invited guests and other visitors, a total of 330,000 people turned out to the matches.

EuroBasket 2013 officials highlighted that while they were satisfied with the financial results of the tournament, this was not the primary motivation for hosting Slovenia's biggest sporting event to date.

Indeed, data from the Slovenian Basketball Association (KZS) indicates that enrolment in youth basketball programmes was up by as much as 60% in the past two years. The organisers are also confident that the tournament brought significant promotional effects, with matches being watched by as many as 200m people in over 160 territories around the world.

Satisfaction with the tournament was high among foreign guests, with 78% assessing the organisation as better than they had expected and as many as 90% labelling the experience in Slovenia as above expectations.

## Slovenian tourism development strategy 2012 – 2016

Table 1: Tourism data

	2011		Estimates for 2022	
	Slovenia	Worldwide	Slovenia	Worldwide
GDP (direct contribution)	3,5 %	2,8 %	3,3 %	3,0 %
GDP (total contribution)	12,9 %	9,1 %	12,4 %	9,8 %
Number of jobs(direct)	33.000 (3,9 % of total employment)	98.031.500 (3,3 % of total employment)	34.000 (3,9 % of total employment)	120.427.000 (3,6 % of total employment)
Number of jobs(total)	111.000 (13,2 % of total employment)	260.093.000 (8,7 % of total employment)	115.000 (13,0 % of total employment)	327.922.000 (9,8 % of total employment)
Visitor exports (% of total)	8,8 %	5,3 %	7,0 %	4,3 %
Capital investment (% of total)	9,9 %	4,9 %	10,7 %	5,1 %

Source: World Travel & Tourism Council, 2012

On the basis of Slovenia's competitive advantages and individual tourism products, global trends, its level of development, competitiveness, scope and organisation of tourism products, core areas of tourism offer have been identified. This strategy, to a large extent, pursues the development and marketing of core areas of tourism offer which have already been defined in the previous strategy. Core areas of the offer are focused on the sets of leisure time, within which a number of specialised, niche tourism products are being developed, marketed, and adapted to:

- individual target groups in view of demographic characteristics (e.g. youth tourism, senior tourism, families),
- narrow market segments for 'nature lovers' (e.g. lovers of adrenaline adventures),
- market segments in view of the forms that are given priority (e.g. lovers of camps, vineyard cottages, farms) and other market segments.

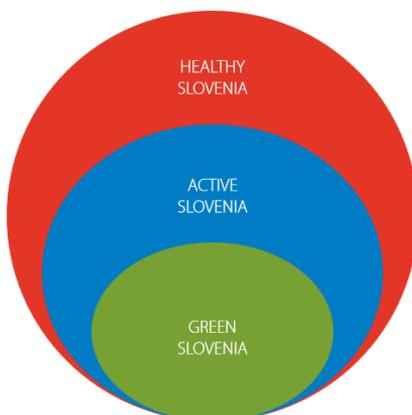


Figure 1: Cover story of Slovenia as a tourist destination – Slovenia. Green. Active. Healthy (www.slovenija.info)

### **Green**

Slovenia is a green country. Vast forests, the luxury of pure and therapeutic water, the preservation of extraordinary biodiversity, well-preserved landscape diversity, numerous natural values, and the commitment to sustainable tourism, rank Slovenia among the green gems of Europe. Nature lovers are the main target group to visit Slovenia as a tourist destination.

### **Active**

The green nature itself offers wonderful opportunities for sport and recreation. Slovenia has been a desirable destination for hikers, cyclists and lovers of various water sports for decades, providing a range of active leisure pursuits in close contact with nature.

### **Skiing tourism**

The Slovenian ski centres and tourist accommodation providers, was established to strengthen the activities of mountain centres and to expand the possibilities of active holidays in the natural environment, based on sustainable aspects of the offer during all four seasons. The project entitled 'Active Slovenia' is a tourism project to promote the sales of tourism products both at the level of state and the level of destination, as well as in the international market. The 2010/11 ski season recorded 1.19 million visitors. Objectives to be achieved by the end of 2016 is to promote leisure time activity by attending tourism, sports and cultural events.

### **Golfing tourism**

Golfing constitutes an essential element of a country's tourism offer; 13 registered golf courses represent a major potential for Slovenian tourism. In 2011, there were 8 495 golfers registered in Slovenia; their number is growing year by year also owing to the activities undertaken by the Golf Association of Slovenia and its campaign 'Slovenia Plays Golf' which furthers the interest of domestic guests in playing golf. Golf courses provide a wide variety of services and offers, have a significant impact on the economic activity at the local and regional levels, contribute to an increase in employment, enhance the visibility of individual regions, etc. Slovenian golf courses offer to golfers the pleasure of moving in nature, while some of them also have unique ethnological features (Prekmurje Clubhouse, castles, etc.). Golf in combination with other elements of tourism offer, e.g. wellness, meetings industry, may significantly help to improve the

structure of tourists visiting Slovenia. As a rule, golfers are regarded as wealthy guests. Furthermore, if we add high quality cuisine and wine, we can develop high-quality integrated tourism products for more demanding guests. In order to create integrated tourism products and improve the quality of tourism offer, which includes golf activities, the Golf Association of Slovenia and the Economic Interest Grouping of Slovenian Golf Courses need to further cooperate with enterprises and organisations that are engaged in the promotion of tourism, and tour operators, while at the local level, it is necessary that golf course owners and golf clubs link with tourism organisations and tourism service providers (e.g. hotels).

### **Fishing tourism**

The incredible natural wealth of rivers and lakes that (in comparison to the rest of Europe) are still preserved and uncontaminated ranks Slovenia among the most desirable destinations for freshwater sports fishing, in particular fly fishing. The promotion falls under the responsibility of the Fishing Association of Slovenia, which in 2011 celebrated the 130th anniversary of the organised freshwater fishing in Slovenia, and also under the Fisheries Research Institute of Slovenia. The Fishing Association of Slovenia, in cooperation with 64 fishing families, has also been engaged in the preservation of nature and environmental protection. Freshwater angling plays a very important role in Slovenia's entire tourism offer. Anglers, fly fishers in particular, are extremely good consumers and users of various tourism services. They are one of the best groups of foreign visitors who come to Slovenia. They particularly appreciate nature, have a respectful attitude toward natural and cultural values of Slovenia, and are willing to spend a lot of money. The annual number of fishing days from the tourist fishing is estimated at 15 000. The 2016 vision sees Slovenia as the best fishing destination in Europe in terms of clean waters, and its wealth of indigenous species of fish, cuisine, wine and friendly people.

### **Healthy Tourism**

Lovers of nature and active life have set themselves a clear goal – the preservation of health and well-being. Natural gifts, upgraded with activities and events into attractive tourism products of high value added, provide an excellent basis to satisfy basic needs and desires of the target tourist group.

In 2012, a record number of tourists visited Slovenia. This increase can be attributed to the hard work and good marketing strategy

of the national tourism office, which has focused on increasing recognition of Slovenia as a tourist destination. During the last six years, the Slovenian government, via the Tourism Board and EU funding, invested a lot in promoting Slovenia as a unique travel destination. Moreover, Slovenia was represented at the majority of international tourism exhibitions and fairs, with a strong focus on BRIC markets (Brazil, Russia, India and China). The current tourism development strategy maintains a strong focus on increasing the recognition of Slovenia as a tourist destination and the number of tourists visiting the country is thus expected to grow even more over the following years.

Although the online sales channel still accounts for a minor share of overall transactions, it is becoming more important. The online sales channel registered slow but constant and steady growth due to the impact of the economic crisis on consumers' behaviour. Tourists are price sensitive and are looking for better deals while tourism operators are trying to avoid intermediaries because of higher prices. Most Slovenian tourism operators sell their services through well-designed and updated websites. As a result, tourists with lower budgets can easily find special offers and last-minute deals.

### **Conclusions**

Sport tourism is big business, and has become an important economic and marketing strategy for destinations, hoteliers, resorts, events and corporations. The opportunities associated with event and active sport travel packages are still in their infancy as more and more people look for life-enhancing experiences and to increase their physical fitness. It is important for professionals in various industries, sports, tourism and events to work together to meet the needs of consumers and maximize the potential that sport offers tourism destinations. This requires that research be conducted into profiling and understanding existing and emerging sport tourism markets. Tourism plays a very important role in the economic development of Slovenia, and it deserves high priority in the development strategy.

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