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## **SPORTS TOURISM AS A KEY FACTOR TO MAKE IN INDIA**

**M. P. Gaur**

Assistant Professor, D.A.V.P.G. College, Lucknow.

**Abstract:-** Sports tourism means to travel for the sake of either viewing or participating in sports event staying a part from their usual environment. Sports tourism in India has scored a high place for its self in Indian tourism industry. Sports tourism is broadly define by the adventure sports and game in India. There are indeed several destinations in India offering sports tourism. There is various sports activity that one can indulge during vacation. Distinguished adventure sports: mountaineering, rock-climbing, scuba diving, water rafting, kayaking, canoeing, sailing, surfing, water scooting. Aero sports like: ballooning, paragliding, hand gliding. These sports offer scope for sports lover and enthusiasts from the entire world.

Business tour combined with active sports are becoming highly popular where business meets leisure and such kind of sports tourism on business tour is global cooperate strategy for employee entertainment and well being. Moreover sports tourism is nurture by professional sports person they have to travel extensively for their carrier to participate in national and international championship like Cricket World Cup, Soccer World Cup, Wimbledon and so on. Scope and future of sports tourism is endless in India because of its diverse topography and climatic condition. You can enjoy on land and water, under water and in air whatsoever form of adventure sports in India. Future of sports tourism and adventure sports in India is very bright.

**Keywords:** Sports tourism, Sports culture, Challenges.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sports tourism is a pretty popular phenomenon in areas such as North America, Australia and Europe. The term 'sport tourism' basically means tourism that is based on the theme of sports. Today sport emerges as an important component of socio-economic development of a country. The active participation in sports improves community health and productivity, reduces medical expenses, imbibes discipline in character and enhances social cohesion. The execution of a mega sporting event helps in developing infrastructure, generating employment, securing inflow of foreign capital and thus contributes significantly to the economic development of a country. Therefore, it can be said that the impact of sports on the society is multi-dimensional.

India is one of the regions in the world that is slowly but slowly catching up with the fad of sports tourism. With adequate support from relevant authorities, sports tourism in India is indeed gaining immense prominence and popularity. People from different parts of the globe have started looking towards India as a world class holiday destination with top of the line sporting infrastructure. Travellers book tickets on flights to India not only to enjoy some of the world's finest attractions but also to experience a vacation that is sports-oriented! Not surprisingly, cheap flights to India are increasingly becoming more popular among sports freaks!

It's not only niche specialists, but also big mainstream tour operators who set up a separate division to tap the potential of Sports Tourism. An alien concept in India about a decade ago, Sports Tourism, though a niche segment has evolved rapidly over the past five years. A large number of agents and tour operators are introducing interesting packages surrounding major sporting events. Sports Tourism is a well organised sector and major revenue churner in several nations around the world like UK, Germany, Singapore, South Africa, Malaysia etc. Several

National Tourist Offices (NTOs) are aggressively 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.

It was the ICC Cricket World Cup 2003, which kick started the trend in India and offered the kind of exposure which Indian spectators never witnessed. Another major event, the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20, which commenced in 2008, proved to be a milestone in the Indian sports scenario. In the following year, IPL despite being shifted to South Africa played the pied piper, successfully attracting Indian and international spectators generating great volume of outbound traffic for Sports Tourism.

While Sports Tourism in India is primarily outbound, there are small inroads also being made on the inbound and domestic front. Overall, according to industry experts, the segment is expected to have a growth rate of 10-20 per cent in the coming years.

## **SPORTS TOURISM AND ITS OFFERINGS**

Several Indian tour operators are also being approached by their international counterparts in order to promote Sports Tourism in their countries. In August 2009, Beyond Boundaries, an Indian Sports consultancy service organised one-of-its-kind three-day cricket match that was played on the snow-capped Bernese Alps of Jungfraujoch, Switzerland. Various international veteran cricketers came together to swing the bat once again. The company also arranged sufficient value-added programmes for the sponsors, participants and their spouses, making the event a blend of leisure and MICE.

The Cricket World Cup generated great interest in India about the destination and the word of mouth publicity from those who visited the country for the World Cup aided by packages by the travel trade resulted in tourist traffic to South Africa. The subsequent Indian Premier League (IPL) T20 tournament escalated the traffic and catapulted South Africa among the popular destinations in Indian market.

## **COMMONWEALTH GAMES 2010—A BOOM TO INDIAN TOURISM**

With innumerable infrastructure disasters and last minute hiccups, the Commonwealth Games 2010 in New Delhi turned out to be a politically tumultuous event. Many major travel agencies and tour companies in the country also decided to play it safe and backed out from promoting the Games.

However, the Games played a vital role in creating a major chunk of long over due infrastructure in the capital and also showcasing 'Incredible India' to the world. The opening ceremony was a spectacular melange of our diversity and culture. The Games went off without a hitch and gave great exposure to the country. As per information from the Immigration authorities at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) from October 1-14, 2010 (Commonwealth Games period) stood at 75,606.

While the 2010 Commonwealth Games fever has barely left India, the country is all set to co-host another important sporting event of relatively greater popularity: the ICC Cricket World Cup (CWC) 2011, to be held from February 17 to April 2, 2011. As the cricket mania gathers momentum in the country with a massive cricket craze, most travel agents and tour operators in India seem to be making the best of the opportunity by designing packages around the tournament to change the outlook of Sports Tourism, which is still a niche trend in the country.

## **INDIA AS A SPORTS TOURISM DESTINATION**

When an international sport enthusiast comes to India, he should also experience the rich cultural heritage of the country. Watching a round of the snake boat race in the Backwaters of Kerala or a bullock cart race in Tamil Nadu, will provide the spectator with diverse experience while touring the country. The Rural Olympics 2010 held in Kila Raipur, Punjab, attracted hundreds of international tourists. It was organised by the local Grewal Sports Club. Some tourists from England, who had come to watch the event, felt that the Punjab government should promote it intentionally.

Another traditional sport in India which can be capitalised upon for Sports Tourism is Polo whose origin dates back to AD 15th Century Mughal era. After the British rule in the country, during which the sport suffered a dip, it is not only played by the royal families and the Indian Army, but in recent years, corporate sponsorship too has been able to make a contribution to the sport. Today, Polo is played primarily in the state of Rajasthan and a few remote mountainous enclaves of the subcontinent, notably Gilgit, Chitral, Ladakh and Manipur. State tourism boards and the travel trade should focus on developing such sporting events and marketing the same as they deliver unique experiences.

## **CHALLENGES**

Lack of infrastructure tops the list of challenges faced by most tour operators in the country while promoting Sports Tourism. Most travel operators feel that the government should cooperate more resourcefully for them to

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showcase India's true potential as a sports destination. The media coverage during 2010 Commonwealth Games exposed India's 'eleventh hour' planning policies, a number of event management companies face difficulties in scheduling their sporting events due to this problem. Mayank Khandwala, President, Cutting Edge Events Pvt. Ltd said, "India has always been a 'last minute' market because of which there is lot of pressure on every aspect which in turn affects our functioning. Getting visas for travellers becomes difficult then."

Another major problem faced by industry players is of touting and ambush marketing. According to Premdeep Gangadharan, Co-Founder-Director, Fans on Stands, We bring with us the passion for the game and we also have a compatible clientele but a major problem is that the sponsors hike ticket rates for petty profits which often results in underselling of tickets. Also, a lot of ambush marketing has been taking place these days. Even though it hardly affects our business, we are trying our best to curb the issue.

## CONCLUSION

The global sports sector is estimated to be worth USD 480–620 billion<sup>1</sup>, however, in India, sport is yet to be recognised as a sector and there is no comprehensive study on the industry's estimated size in the country. The sports sector may comprise several segments such as sports tourism comprise several segments such as sports tourism, sporting goods (manufacturing and retail), sports apparel, amateur and professional sports, recreational sports, high school and college athletics, outdoor sports, sports businesses such as sports marketing firms, the sport sponsorship industry and sport governing bodies. A thriving sports sector usually has significant socio-economic impact, as it is instrumental in improving the physical health and mental agility of a nation's human resources, and in promoting unity and national pride. In fact, sport as an industry contributes to about one to five per cent to the GDPs of various countries. However, a lack of sports culture in India has deferred the formation of a similar industry in the country despite growing awareness, interest and successes in various non-cricket sports such as archery, badminton, boxing, chess, hockey, tennis, snooker, billiards, shooting and wrestling at prominent international competitions. Due to a lack of industry status and lack of sports culture, corporate investment in sports in India has traditionally been limited to CSR initiatives.

For-profit investment in sport in India mainly includes sponsorships and owning leagues and franchises. The commercial success of Indian Premier League (IPL) in cricket has led to a surge of similar commercial formats in other sports such as badminton, football and hockey. Reasonable success of the Indian Badminton League (IBL) and the Hockey India League (HIL) — sports that don't enjoy the same popularity as cricket, has Executive Summary 1. "The Sports Market", AT Kearney, 2011 shown that leagues are a good medium for generating interest and driving sports culture besides the potential ROI. These leagues may therefore not only benefit their respective sport monetarily, but also boost their uptake in the country. Thus, with the burgeoning middle class of India and an increasing disposable income, media coverage of international and domestic sports and television and internet penetration, the time is opportune to form an organised sports sector with requisite policy support that further facilitates sports commerce and leagues of this nature. However, long term sustainability of commercial efforts such as leagues will likely thrive on profitability metrics driven by India's performance at global events, their popularity in the country and the consequent rise in audience interest. Thus, the leagues that could be an agent to rise in sporting culture require support from a well developed sports ecosystem that can sustain people's increased interest by breeding more quality sportspersons who can win laurels at international sporting events and elicit further enthusiasm. The success of leagues and development of sports ecosystem therefore drive each other. This further underlines the long-term nature of commercial returns in leagues due to its dependence on the development of the sports ecosystem in the country in the long run.

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**M. P. Gaur**

Assistant Professor, D.A.V.P.G. College, Lucknow.

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