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# **VISIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SPORT TOURISM**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sport tourism is a segment of the tourism industry which is growing rapidly. In South Africa it is slowly being recognized as an important niche market within the tourism sector. In order to capitalize on the country's recent sporting successes, South Africa Sports Tourism (SAST) was launched by the government in 1997. This article will review the development of sport tourism in post-apartheid South Africa by giving a brief description of the SAST initiative. It will further describe various issues, such as community involvement, private sector involvement, integration of sport and tourism bodies, and education and research, which must be addressed for sport tourism to truly play its role in the development of South African society. In order to ensure that the current SAST campaign is not merely rhetoric, it should be reviewed and further steps should be taken to implement an integrated sport tourism plan for South Africa.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry (1). Since the first democratic elections in 1994, South

Africa has experienced a dramatic increase in tourism, attributed in part to hosting a number of higher profile sport events. South Africa Sports Tourism (SAST) was launched by the government as it has contended that sport tourism has a strategic role to play in achieving the aims of the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) which aims to uplift South African society economically and socially. This article will review the development of sport tourism in post-apartheid South Africa. It will further describe a number of key issues which have to be addressed for sport tourism to truly play its role in the economic and social development of South African society. These issues include community involvement in the SAST campaign, genuine integration of the sport and tourism bodies, and increased emphasis on sport tourism education and research.

## **STATUS OF TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The tourism industry in South Africa has not reached its potential in terms of generating economic development, largely due to the regime's apartheid policies. Consequently, South Africa has experienced gyrations of tourist flows due to varying levels of domes-

tic instability during certain periods. The tourism sector has been in an expansion phase for the past 10 years and has experienced dramatic growth since the 1994 general elections. International tourism grew by 22% in 1994 and the overseas component of the international market, which is the most lucrative, grew by 44% from 1994 to 1995 (2). Despite this remarkable growth experienced during the period after the elections, South Africa has been unable to enhance its tourism potential (2).

### **Status of Sport Tourism in South Africa**

South Africa, boosted by its successful hosting of the 1995 Rugby World Cup, has increasingly embarked upon hosting a number of major world events (3). The marketing of sport events has become particularly important in an effort to achieve growth in the tourism industry (3-5). In an effort to maximize South Africa's tourism potential, the government initiated a sport tourism campaign. The "White Paper: the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa" (1996) and the subsequent strategy document "Tourism in GEAR, 1997-2000" have guided the development of sport tourism in South Africa (4). GEAR refers to the South African Government's macro-economic strategy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) which sets a target of 6% economic growth per annum by 2000 and employment creation of 400,000 new jobs per annum by that date (2).

The Tourism White Paper identified the absence of a clear product branding and an innovative marketing strategy as a key weakness of the current tourism sector (5). It further recommended that the traditional geographically driven promotional campaigns be abandoned in favor of a segmented

theme-based approach. Consequently a number of themes, including sport tourism, have been identified as potential promotional campaign foundations.

The Tourism in the GEAR strategy document was devised to direct the implementation of policies included in the White Paper. The document describes a strategy to grow the tourism sector as a significant force in the national economy and to increase its contribution to the GDP from the current 4.5% to 8% by the year 2000 (2). The document recommends the adoption of a new, strategic and professional approach to promotion and marketing in order to attain these targets.

### **Reasons for Choosing Sport Tourism as a Theme**

The government contends that recent South African sporting activities such as the Cape Town 2004 Olympic Bid and Bafana Bafana (national soccer team) World Cup qualification have engendered a tremendous amount of global awareness of national sporting excellence which has to be capitalized upon immediately (4). The following factors have contributed to the selection of the sport tourism theme:

- The South Africa Football Association (SAFA) is presently preparing a bid to host the 2006 World Cup Soccer event.
- Sport events and recreational activities attract tourism to regions which have not traditionally attracted geographical tourism.
- Sport events generate global media exposure and can assist South Africa's position against its tourism competitors.
- Sport is distinctly understood by international companies as a means of achieving brand exposure through global media and therefore it is in a powerful position to at-

tract and influence additional private sector investment to tourism promotion.

Moreover, the government highlights the economic benefits that recent sporting activities have contributed. The SAST initiative which is an international multi-media campaign was therefore launched to ensure these benefits and exposures are exploited to their maximum potential. SAST has been conceived to act as an umbrella enterprise under which existing events may receive unified promotional support, additional sporting events and recreational activities can be developed to the greatest benefit of the tourism sector, and the country's extensive recreational resources can be publicized to potential international and domestic tourists (4).

### **SAST Campaign History**

The Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in association with the Ministry of Sport and Recreation launched the SAST campaign in October 1997 (6). The initiative is designed to be a prototype of how government-led, private sector driven and community based partnerships in tourism development can be effectual cost-saving enterprises through the combining of the resources of all pertinent stakeholders to promote travel to South Africa (6). The sponsorship agreement for the initial promotional campaign was signed by the DEAT Deputy Minister Mokaba, Minister of Sport and Recreation Tshwete and representatives of MasterCard and Parallel Media Group (2).

The following activities have been initiated since the launch of the campaign:

- The campaign television program, SA SportsAction, has been distributed to and transmitted in 49 countries.

- A website, [www.sportstourism.com](http://www.sportstourism.com), has been on-line since April, 1998.
- Incentive travel packages to South Africa are being developed and will be promoted throughout the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 1998.
- In February, 1998, the first in a series of SAST workshops was held to formulate systems of inclusion for national sport and tourism bodies. This workshop established the criteria by which specific events/activities would be chosen for promotion through SAST.

### **SAST Campaign Obstacles**

Despite the developments made in implementing SAST themes and objectives through particular programs, the campaign faces a number of barriers to its growth and success (2). These include:

- lack of government financial support
- lack of communication between sport and tourism bodies
- lack of forward planning and communication by tourism bodies (4).

### **THE FUTURE OF SPORT TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

It is apparent that the sport tourism campaign is unlikely to succeed unless a number of issues are addressed. These include community involvement, private sector involvement, integration of sport and tourism bodies, and education and research.

### **Community Involvement in the SAST Campaign**

The SAST campaign recognizes that it should remain community-based by having provincial and regional tourism organizations involved in the content provision of SAST;

synthesizing campaign imagery and themes into their own promotional material and preserving a point-of-content for the campaign and for national/regional sporting bodies (2). However, it is evident that sport tourism is not being integrated into the overall destination plan for a particular community. Moreover, there has been little public involvement in defining a 'community tourism product' - the amalgam of resources that a community wishes to present to the tourism market (7).

The focus of the sport tourism campaign appears to be on the economic benefits associated with sport-related activities, however there has been few, if any, empirical research concerning who benefits. As indicated previously, the SAST campaign was chosen as it presents South Africa with an opportunity to secure greater prominence in the international tourism marketplace and to boost tourism in subsequent years by increasing international awareness of the destination. In conjunction with these opportunities, a number of economic benefits are cited, however no mention is made as to how these benefits are filtered down to the community. Moreover, little attention is being paid to the social benefits and costs related to sport tourism events. It is contended that although major sport tourism events are ubiquitously popular as entertainment, to the degree that real differences among urban populations are surpassed in the celebrations; it is necessary to further recognize that the construction of world-class facilities have different effects for people in different social situations (8). Therefore, it is recommended that the SAST campaign address the potential negative effects of world-class sport tourism events which may widen the gap between the more and less affluent communities. Presently, no attempt is being made to address this issue. It is further contended that local elites regularly assume that sport developments are

self-evidently desirable or attempt to circumvent public discussion (8,9). Similarly, it is noted that generally there is little democratic community input, and decisions are largely determined by the power of urban political leaderships and/or other relevant and powerful urban elite groups such as business (10). For the SAST campaign to maximize its potential, public discussions are required and the potential polarizing effects of world-class events such as the 2006 World Cup should be examined and reflected upon.

Therefore the goals for tourism should be integrated with overall community objectives. Although the aim of the sport tourism campaign is to assist in uplifting South African society economically, there appears to be a lack of sport tourism planning; as a process, based upon research and evaluation, which seeks to enhance the potential contribution of sport tourism to social development and environmental quality (11). In addition, the present sport tourism initiative is largely a marketing campaign directed at international consumers. Therefore, host communities as consumers of the wider processes of sport tourism development have been neglected. We should be asking what prerogatives should be given to the host community needs instead of regarding the host community as a resource input into tourism (7). Moreover, the SAST campaign identifies community-based sport tourism as involving the sport and tourism bodies, however no mention is made of local residents input. Therefore a range of 'publics' should be consulted in sport tourism planning (7).

Appropriately scaled and planned events can revitalize, redevelop and re-image communities and destinations (12). However, the goals of the sport tourism campaign are only possible if a long term tourism (and sport tourism) strategy is defined and agreed upon.

In so doing, sport tourism events will in all probability have the desired social and economic impacts. Precise measures are required to ensure that the benefits do in fact reach the majority. Research suggests that explaining the social benefits of tourism to the host community may reduce opposition (13). A sport tourism development strategy will assist in the prevention of 'fast track' planning practices which ignore community opposition to the hosting of events (14).

### **Private Sector Involvement in the SAST Campaign**

Although the SAST initiative is designed to be a prototype of how government, the private sector, and the community can combine resources to promote tourism to South Africa, it is evident that private sector involvement is limited. As mentioned previously, the sponsorship agreement for the initial promotional campaign primarily involved Parallel Media Group (PMG). PMG is an international sports media and marketing company with offices in London, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Kuala Lumpur and New York (4). Events managed by PMG in South Africa include the World Cup of Golf (1996), the BT Global Challenge Yacht Race (1997), the Whitbread Round-the-World Yacht Race (1997) and the SA Open Golf Championships (4). Therefore it is not surprising that as specific content of the campaign is being chosen by the program producers, PMG, the 1998 SA Open Golf Championships received promotion through all major SAST distribution channels, and the 1999 championships will in all probability form part of the six major sporting events that SAST will target to increase their global profile.

The SAST initiative recognizes that the generation of content should in future be steered by the National Sports Council (NSC) and the National Olympic Committee of South

Africa (NOCSA), however no effort is being made to ensure that this aim is achieved. There has been no further workshops, with the relevant sport and tourism stakeholders, since the workshop in February, 1998. Moreover, it is the author's contention that unless other private sector businesses are brought on board, the campaign is doomed to failure. There are many other events which can be promoted, however these event promoters have been largely isolated as PMG is the government's private sector partner in this campaign. The All Africa Games presents the SAST campaign with an opportunity to involve other businesses within the sport tourism industry. The All Africa Games is managed by Grinaker Sport Marketing and will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1999. Let's hope that this event, and others, will not only be marketed as part of the SAST initiative, but that it leads to the involvement by other private sector businesses. In Canada, the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) is responsible for the Canadian Sport Tourism initiative, and CTC is a partnership between tourism industry businesses and associates, provincial and territorial governments and the Government of Canada (15). It is evident that not only should the sport and tourism bodies be involved in selecting the content of the campaign, but the campaign should be extended to other private sector businesses which form an integral part of South Africa's sport tourism industry.

### **Integration of Sport and Tourism Bodies**

Although the SAST campaign is being undertaken by both the tourism and sport ministries jointly, these links have to be strengthened. As mentioned previously, there have been no additional workshops since February, and there appears to be little integration

of the tourism and sport bodies on a regional and local level. As it is unlikely that the tourism and sport ministries will merge in South Africa, the SAST campaign should aim to prevent the duplication of effort which separate departments can create. Moreover, it is suggested that as these links for collaborative work tend to occur on an ad hoc basis for particular projects; methods for ensuring that a more continual view of problems and opportunities is taken should be explored (16). Similarly, it is asserted that this lack of liaison among tourism and sport policy makers lies against a framework of increasing research in the field commending the importance of greater linkages between the two spheres (17). In order to enhance the strength of the SAST campaign on a regional and local level, policy reviews or strategic planning meetings of all stakeholders may assist in generating joint projects and promote cooperation at a political level between sport and tourism activity. It is further recommended that all tiers of government develop definite policies for sport and tourism, translated into strategic plans with targets for attainment and ways of meeting them (16).

### **Use of Strategies Other Than Mega-Events**

At this stage it is apparent that the SAST campaign is focusing almost exclusively on a mega-events such as the Whitbread Round-the-World Yacht Race, the All Africa Games, the Cricket World Cup and the Soccer World Cup. Mega-events can be defined as an event of unusually large size or impacts (18). It is the author's contention that other strategies should be incorporated into, or augmented in, the SAST campaign which will be just as beneficial to attract sport tourists to South Africa. This can be achieved in a number of ways. For example, using sport where relevant to a non-sport

tourist theme or using sport to create a tourism theme should receive greater attention (16). Providing activity holiday centers, e.g. water sport centers, outdoor pursuits centers, etc. in the form of accommodation and a supervised schedule of activity based at or near the facility (16). These centers are provided by the commercial sector in the United Kingdom, though the National Sports Centers owned and managed by the Sports Council have offered holiday programs and taster courses for all levels of ability in a wide range of pursuits (16). Training for sports on a more competitive level can also be included in these programs.

Encouraging sport tours for sport teams and clubs is another strategy that can be used. For example, in the Netherlands, off-season holidays are offered for sport teams from abroad. Visiting teams are provided with training facilities, the opportunity to take part in friendly matches with local teams, and to use the National Sports Center at Papendal and the Royal Netherlands Football Association Center at Zeist (16). It is further contended that in addition to competing, youth sport tours provide opportunities for team members and their families/or friends to tour countries, cities and areas where the competitions are held (19). Similarly, it is asserted that youth sports (participants under 18 years of age) are attractive for host communities since they attract large visitor groups, typically comprised of family and friends of the young athletes (20).

Smaller and more regular events can further be considered as part of the SAST campaign. These events may provide a more secure basis for the long-term development of South Africa's sport tourism industry. It is contended that destination marketers should cautiously consider developing an appropriate and attractive portfolio of sport events in

which the occasional mega-event is offset by embarking on lesser, infrequent events and frequent local or regional-scale events (18). He adds that many communities can never aspire to host the world's largest events but they can nevertheless create a suitable niche in smaller scaled events. Presently, the SAST campaign makes no explicit reference to smaller scaled-events and the promotion of sport tourism on a regional level (18).

It is therefore evident that there is a myriad of ways the SAST campaign can be enhanced. Instead of concentrating almost solely on mega-events, the SAST campaign can enhance the sport tourism industry in South Africa by assisting regional and local tourism and sport bodies in focusing their sport tourism strategies more appropriately. Moreover, it is essential that sport and tourism stakeholders forge genuine partnerships to institute compatible policies, programs and provisions.

### **Importance of Education and Research**

It is noted that little research is forthcoming from government departments and agencies which address the links between sport and tourism (16). For example, few sport participation surveys inquire about sport undertaken on holiday; few surveys of facility use in tourist areas attempt to establish whether tourists in fact make considerable use of sport facilities and few attempts have been made to observe trends in the market for activity holidays (16). It is suggested that governments and national sport and tourist agencies have the pivotal role to play in generating such data, so that future marketing and planning can be informed. Ideally, research should sustain education and education and research should feed through to management (21).

In South Africa, there has been a dearth of research in the area of sport tourism. In order for the SAST campaign to succeed education, awareness and research are integral elements that cannot be neglected. Although trade education and training and research are identified as campaign products there has been little emphasis on these aspects. Few higher education institutions involved in sport and tourism recognize the importance of introducing sport tourism as a discipline at this level. Recently an introductory sport tourism course was taught to tourism students in Cape Town, and they strongly contended that they were being denied an opportunity to be exposed to a niche market as sport tourism is not currently offered as part of their tourism studies. Moreover, there is a feeling that current sport management departments do not have the expertise in this field. It is therefore recommended, that in order for the SAST campaign to have a significant and sustainable impact on South African society, greater emphasis on education and research is required.

### **CONCLUSION**

There are many opportunities for government and other key stakeholders to link sport and tourism in a way which will contribute to sustainable development. However, it requires greater community and private sector involvement in the SAST campaign, purposeful integration between the sport and tourism bodies and greater emphasis on education and research that is presently available. An attempt should be made to include more sport tourism businesses in the SAST campaign. We must ensure that the SAST campaign is not merely rhetoric and that it is supported by proposals for mechanisms through which genuine collaboration and integration can take place. The current SAST



campaign should be reviewed and further steps should be taken to develop and implement an integrated sport tourism plan for South Africa. The NSC/NOCSA, the Tourism Business Council of South Africa

(TBCSA), and the South African Tourism Board have a critical role to play in reviewing the SAST campaign in order to ensure the sustainable development of sport tourism in South Africa.

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