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## Effective Marketing of Sport Tourism destinations

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As I was waiting to board Korean Airlines flight KE 812 from Sydney to Seoul, I had a look around Sydney International Airport. It was a bustling hive of activity. Like any airport, people were coming and going from all parts of the world. I was comparing the scene last weekend with what it was like around 20 months ago when an additional 100,000 people came and went during the Olympic Games.

Sydney Airport was upgraded for the Olympics. Sure, it would have happened over time but now I exit and enter Australia through one of the best airports in the world. If I needed any reminder of the link between sport and tourism, it was highly apparent on my way here.

As I saw people of different nationalities coming and going in Sydney Airport, I wondered how many of them came here because of what they saw during those magical 16 days in September and October 2000. I would like to think the majority did. The reality is only a handful did – less than five per cent according to the official statistics. As well all know, it has been an extremely long 20 months since Sydney hosted the Olympic Games.

I then thought about the city that I live in – Sydney – the most beautiful city in the world, even if I do say so myself! What is there in Sydney that tells me the Olympic Games were held here 20 months ago. The answer is very little. Do the locals talk about the Olympics when they're having their morning coffee or when the family is sitting around the kitchen table at night? Not really. Where are the monuments and tourist signs pointing to Olympic facilities? They don't exist.

I then thought about the facilities that were built for the Olympic Games – the magnificent 80,000 seat Stadium Australia, the equally magnificent 20,000 seat Sydney SuperDome indoor stadium and the redevelopment of what is now Sydney Olympic Park. Then I recalled that I hadn't been there for over a year to watch a sporting event.

I thought I was being a bit hard on myself. Maybe I am too close to it. What about from a tourism perspective? I went to the Internet and read through a speech given by the Managing Director of the Australian Tourist Commission to a major conference on 2 May 2002. It didn't mention the Sydney Olympics once. I did a double take. I then went to a recently released 114 page discussion paper on developing a 10 year plan for the Australian tourism industry. It didn't mention the Olympics until page 43 and then it was mentioned only a dozen times after that.

By this stage I was beginning to ask myself, "What was it all about?" All of the talk, all of the millions, indeed billions, spent on organising the Games and building the facilities. I had devoted various parts of my life to Sydney Olympics starting in 1992 when I worked for the Bid Committee and over the following eight years I worked in a variety of roles. What had I done with my life? By this stage I was feeling quite down on things. What about my friends? Where are they? They're off working in Manchester on the 2002 Commonwealth Games

or in Athens on the 2004 Olympic Games. So by this point I was beginning to question my existence.

But then it dawned on me. Wasn't this fantastic. We have taken the Olympics in our stride. Isn't this the best outcome we could have hoped for? We weren't resting on our Olympic laurels, we weren't trying to relive the magic, we weren't pinning our future hopes on the past. The tourists at the airport came to Australia because they heard about Australia in one form or another; the people having their morning coffee or family dinner have a new focus; the facilities are now everyday infrastructure; the people giving the tourism speeches and doing the 10 year plans are looking forward and not back, and the people involved in organising the Games were using the skills they gained for their own and others gain. What a perfect result!

This is the main point I wish to make to you today. Australia has moved on. We have learned. We took advantage of the opportunity presented to us. We as a country drew a line in the sand. We had the Olympics, we did them very well but that counts for nothing in the future. But resting on our laurels is not going to bring one extra visitor. What will bring extra visitors is by working out how we can do it better next time. How can we utilise our skills in the future? How can we utilise our facilities in the future? Let's not talk about the past, let's use what we have learned for the future. The fact that we have moved on, I think, is a tremendous achievement for the people involved, for the people of Sydney and for the people of Australia.

It would have been so easy for us to say the job had been done. We did stage the best Olympic Games ever according to the IOC. But as many said, the actual staging of the Games was the beginning rather than the end of the opportunity. What have we done with what we have learned? In short, I believe many in Australian businesses, particularly tourism businesses, have a confidence to do business that they didn't have before the Olympics. We know how to solve problems, governments and private industry know how to work together, we can get the trains and buses running on time, we can get people through airports quickly, we can keep going through the doors of the world media with even more new story ideas and we can give service that is second to none in our own Australian style.

I was asked today to talk about effective marketing of sport tourism destinations. What better marketing can you have than first class service, first class facilities, first class organisation and, as we already had, a first class destination. And how did three of those four aspects come about? Because government and private industry combined in a partnership never seen before in Australia. There was financial investment and there was a philosophical or brainpower investment in getting it right. It paid dividends during the Olympics and it is continuing to pay dividends today.

This dividend became obvious just in the last month. On 18 April 2002, the International Rugby Board awarded Australia the sole hosting rights for the 2003 Rugby World Cup. The event is the world's third biggest sporting event

behind the Olympics and the Football or Soccer World Cup. The Rugby World Cup involves billions of television viewers, two million seats to matches and around 40,000 international tourists visiting Australia over a seven-week period spending over USD150 million. It is an event that involves 48 matches in nine cities across Australia. Our Olympics experience has set us up very well for the Rugby World Cup.

Australia being awarded the sole-rights to the 2003 Rugby World Cup has a very interesting story behind it and it is very much in line with what we are talking about today. It was back in 1998 that Australia and New Zealand submitted a bid to the International Rugby Board where Australia would host 25 of the matches, including the final, and New Zealand would host 23 of the matches. Soon after being awarded the right to host the Rugby World Cup, in the shadow of the Olympics, the Australian Rugby Union (ARU) got on with the job of beginning to organise the event. It stepped up a notch after the Olympics when several Games staff joined the ARU. Australia's planning was in full swing because as we knew first hand, planning, indeed over planning, was critical. However, the New Zealanders didn't have the same knowledge.

I should say at this point, this is not an Australian being critical of New Zealand. Indeed, the New Zealanders have just appointed a retired judge to investigate what I am about to tell you about. Mid last year, it started to become apparent that the New Zealanders were having trouble getting their act together for a whole variety of reasons. One deadline after another passed. Earlier this year, the New Zealanders couldn't commit to providing venues for the Rugby World Cup without the baggage of contracts for seating, corporate boxes and perimeter advertising. In short, to host Rugby World Cup matches you need what's called "clean" venues. Given this situation, the IRB decided to strip New Zealand of the sub-hosting rights and asked Australia if it could prepare a bid where it was the sole-host. Could Australia accommodate the additional 23 matches? Absolutely! We had the Olympics and other previous experience. We also have the most professional Rugby administrations in the world, both on and off the field. Australia was able to get agreement with its venues quickly. Venues were used to dealing with such requests for clean venues with the Olympics and other events and as a result they had no trouble accommodating such requirements. There were many other aspects to the IRB's decision. However the venues and the organisational abilities of Australia impressed the IRB no end, so much so, that the Chairman of the IRB, Vernon Pugh, described Australia's proposal in glowing terms. To quote from his news release "... the outstanding Australian proposal held an attraction, a professionalism and a logic which were irresistible." I doubt we would have been in such a position if it weren't for the Olympics.

One of the great legacies of the Sydney Olympic Games has been the recognition of the need to transfer knowledge. For years, host cities started from scratch when it came time to organise the Games they had been awarded. Certainly, there were official observer missions to previous Olympic Games however there was no formal handover. To their credit, the International Olympic Committee and the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic

Games set up a partnership to transfer the knowledge. At the same time, Australia has been happy to share its tourism experience with other host cities for the Olympics and other major events. The then Managing Director of the Australian Tourist Commission, Mr John Morse, addressed the inaugural WTO/IOC conference on Sport and Tourism in Barcelona in February 2001 and in September last year a similar gathering in Seoul was addressed by the former Deputy Managing Director of the ATC, Mr Bill Calderwood. Both papers are readily available. Many lessons from a tourism perspective have been learned in terms of branding, advertising, media servicing, publicity and working with the organisers and sponsors. Indeed, the IOC labelled the ATC and Australia's Olympics strategy and implementation a role model for future host countries. I am pleased to report that the one of the first phone calls made by the Australian Rugby Union was to the tourism industry. Both have agreed that an encore performance is required and to this end a Rugby Tourism Advisory Group has been established by the ATC and the nation's leading tourism lobby group, the Tourism Task Force headed by Mr Chris Brown. This relationship will again ensure that Australia stages the Rugby World Cup hand in hand with the tourism industry – resulting in a win for tourism, a win for the organisers (as many tickets are sold internationally) and a win for the country as a whole, in economic and social terms.

While there are many “big picture” sport and tourism stories to be told from the Sydney Olympics, there's a micro example that once again demonstrates the strong link between sport and tourism. While the ATC did much to exploit the opportunities presented by the Olympics, there was one aspect that few could have predicted, that being the use of a sporting star in a tourism campaign. It was a very beneficial spin-off after the Games. The Sydney 2000 Olympics gave birth to another swimming legend, a young Australian man by the name of Ian Thorpe, or the “Thorpedo” as he is otherwise known. Thorpe has cult status in Japan. He is on billboards, in magazines and whenever he appears in public, it is a major security operation to keep adoring fans at bay. After being approached by the ATC, Ian very kindly agreed to appear in the ATC's advertisements in Japan and from all reports they have been a big hit. This is yet another dimension to the sport and tourism relationship and one that shouldn't be overlooked.

So where is Australian tourism at today? Australia, like everyone else has had a difficult 12 months. Soon after the Games, when our expectations were so high, came an economic downturn in America, followed by the foot and mouth outbreak in Europe and then there were concerns about some economies in Asia. Australia, like everyone else suffered as a result of the terrorism activities in the United States. Australia's problems were compounded by the collapse of Ansett Airlines, an official Sydney 2000 Olympic Games partner in Australia. Australia responded very well to all events. The tourism industry lead by the Tourism Task Force lobbied federal, state and local governments who in turn committed USD130 million to assist the tourism industry recover from the international events and the collapse of the country's second biggest airline. This was an outstanding result and reflected the higher status that tourism today enjoys in Australia. At the same time, the fledgling domestic airline

Virgin-Blue (owned by Virgin Atlantic) stepped into the breach and began a rapid expansion. Today in Australia there is sufficient capacity and airfares remain competitive.

In probably the most significant move of all, the Australian government has commenced a major review of the tourism industry. This review is aimed at developing a 10 year plan for the industry covering funding, investment, policy, sustainability, skills, product and the environment. It will bring Australia into line with many other nations, particularly in Asia, that have incorporated tourism into their national economic masterplans. For too long, Australia lacked a coordinated national approach to tourism and the outcome of this review, hopefully, will give Australia a much needed edge over its competition – not only in terms of other countries but in terms of an edge in the battle for the leisure dollar on the domestic front.

At the same time, it is hoped that the review will add weight to tourism's cause in Australia. For one reason or another, tourism has been seen as being a lightweight industry in Australia. Many a politician and bureaucrat have made promises to support tourism but the action didn't match the rhetoric. One of the few disappointments of Australia's Olympic experience was the attitude of some politicians and bureaucrats. Some said, tourism no longer needs as much funding and policy support, you have had the Olympics, what more do you want or you (being tourism) have had your turn. What a narrow-minded and shortsighted view of the world that is. This is a major lesson for any city, state or country looking to host games. Don't let those with the money or the power fool themselves into thinking that they can use an event as a substitute for sound policy and funding. Tourism and events are in the national interest and governments are there to govern in the national interest. Or as one person said, in much simpler terms, you can't put on a party and not send out the invitations.

Following the same line, we do have a great party venue in Sydney with the construction of the Olympic facilities. This has been an issue of some debate in Sydney and Australia since we hosted the Olympics. To the credit of the Government of the State of New South Wales, all venues were paid for out of the annual budget, that is, nothing was put on the government credit card. We paid as we went and the private sector invested in some facilities. The facilities in Sydney are fantastic and we were spoiled with the Olympics. However, there's a fairly widespread view that the facilities aren't being used as much as they should be. There are several reasons for this. Many of Sydney's facilities are concentrated in one area and when there's no sport on at Sydney Olympic Park, you can't help but get the impression that it is a fairly barren place. In response, the government of New South Wales is looking to incorporate some residential, commercial, retail and leisure facilities into the park to give it some life and ensure its economic viability. It will happen, it will take some time and the challenge exists for us a community to find the events, not just the sporting events, but the cultural events as well, to fill these great facilities that we have. Like anything else that is new, it will take time for the community to embrace the concept of enjoying their leisure somewhere else. However, this will only

happen if they have a reason to go there. Who knows, I might be back to talk to you about finding a way for Australia to host a Football World Cup in a few years – now there's a way to fill venues! In all seriousness, Australia will probably mount a serious bid for the Football World Cup in the next 20 to 30 years and we will only be in a position to do that thanks to the Olympics, the Rugby World Cup and the Commonwealth Games that will be staged in Melbourne in 2006. I look forward to being a spectator rather than a worker at the Football World Cup in Australia!

In closing, I would like to congratulate the World Tourism Organisation, the Ministry for Culture and Tourism and the International Olympic Committee for staging this conference. We are being inefficient if we don't all share our resources and what we have learned. Australia learned a lot and had a terrific experience in hosting the 2000 Olympic Games. I have never seen Australia so proud – I have never seen so many people have fun. We had fun – we had games. We had fun and games!

## References

### Rugby World Cup

RWC News: <http://www.rugby.com.au/central/main.asp?sectionID=18>

Tickets: <http://www.rugby.com.au/central/gcm.asp?gcmID=107&SectionID=1>

General: <http://www.rugby.com.au>

IRB decision:

[http://www.irb.org/irbupdatepress\\_html/htmlfiles/RWC\\_HOSTING\\_ANNOUNCEMENT.htm](http://www.irb.org/irbupdatepress_html/htmlfiles/RWC_HOSTING_ANNOUNCEMENT.htm)

### Tourism Task Force

Response to the 2001 tourism crisis:

<http://www.ttf.org.au/mem/pdfs/TourismCrisis.pdf>

General: <http://www.ttf.org.au>

### Government of Australia

10 year plan: <http://www.joehockey.com/Docs/10yearplandiscussionpaper.pdf>

### Australian Tourist Commission

Olympic Games review: <http://www.atc.australia.com/aboutus.asp?art=1152>

Speech to Barcelona conference: <http://atc.australia.com/newscenter.asp?art=508>

Ian Thorpe campaign in Japan: <http://atc.australia.com/newscenter.asp?art=2114>

General information: <http://www.atc.australia.com>

Managing Director's latest speech (2/5/02):

<http://atc.australia.com/newscenter.asp?art=2329>

### Sydney Olympic Park

General: <http://www.sopa.nsw.gov.au>

Redevelopment: <http://www.sopa.nsw.gov.au/html/5009.cfm>

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Andrew Woodward has over 15 years experience in major infrastructure projects, transport, export industries, the Olympics, government and the media. Andrew specialises in corporate communications, public affairs, media management, crisis communications and project management. His Olympics and major events experience is significant:

2002		Director, Gavin Anderson & Company. Client: Australian Rugby Union – Rugby World Cup
2000	Secondment	Manager, Media Information Group, Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games
1997	2001	Manager, Corporate Affairs, Australian Tourist Commission
1995	1997	Director of Media, Office of the Minister for the Olympics and President of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, Michael Knight MP
1993	Secondment	Media Adviser, FIFA World Youth Football Championship, Australia
1992	1993	Manager, Media Relations and Public Affairs - Australia, Sydney Olympics 2000 Bid Ltd.

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