ST. MORITZ SPORT TOURISM STRATEGY

Olympic City: St. Moritz  
Country: Switzerland  
Edition of the Games:  
1928 and 1948 Olympic Winter Games

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Permanent since 2000  
Locals and Visitors  
Official website

The St. Moritz Sport Tourism Strategy is a comprehensive plan elaborated and implemented by the alpine City of St. Moritz designed to boost the level of sport-related tourism in the area.

The strategy consolidates and builds on the global reputation of St. Moritz as the spiritual home of elite winter sports in order to attract and retain tourists. This reputation was first established with the hosting of the second ever Winter Olympic Games in 1928, followed up by the hosting of the 1948 Games, thus making St. Moritz the first dual host of the event.

The St. Moritz Sports & Events Department - a body dedicated to the City’s sports, events and cultural programme – is responsible for the design and implementation of the strategy.

The Sport Tourism Strategy relies on a number of key pillars to drive tourist numbers. The first of these is the bidding for and hosting of elite national and international sporting events. This helps to drive the profile of the City internationally and portray St. Moritz as a leading centre of elite sporting activity.

The second pillar revolves around marketing the City as the perfect place for elite athlete preparation. Key advantages such as high altitude, quality facilities and ease of access have been used to attract some of the world’s very best winter sport athletes to the area. The final pillar is investment in infrastructure. Renovating Olympic landmarks and installing the most state-of-the-art equipment further builds the image of St. Moritz as a traditional centre of quality and expertise in the field of elite winter sport. This high qualification in winter sports has not prevented St. Moritz to develop summer activities to complement its winter offering.

The reputation of St. Moritz as a winter sports destination has gone from strength to strength. The City hosts an average of 80 – 100 elite winter sports events every year and has fast become the location of choice for elite athlete preparation. Over 20,000 overnight stays recorded for elite sport training activities recorded over the most recent two-year period.
OBJECTIVES

Promote the City by leveraging its affiliation with the Olympic Movement

The connection of St. Moritz with all things Olympic is an integral component of the Sport Tourism Strategy. This link helps to associate the City with high performance and to do this on a global level. The City has a strong relationship with Swiss Olympic – the National Olympic Committee for Switzerland – as well as many of the other national federations from across the country. This has resulted in the welcoming of many elite training camps to the City, as well as assisted in the securing of hosting rights to many elite national competitions, two fundamental pillars of the Strategy.

Develop human capital and generate social cohesion

Expertise is a word that nicely sums up everything the St. Moritz Sports Tourism Strategy is trying to achieve. The promotion of the City as experts in all areas of elite winter sport is of course supported by real commitment and investment in the development of this expertise. Every new state-of-the-art facility, every elite training camp run and every event hosted helps to build up the knowledge and expertise of the City and its residents involved in delivery. This investment in this human capital is in pursuit of a long-term sustainable vision for St. Moritz as the destination of choice for elite winter sports tourism.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Internal & External Stakeholders

- St. Moritz Sport & Events Department
- Local winter sports resorts
- The Canton of Grisons
- Swiss Olympic
- Various National Sporting Federations

Finance and Cost

The annual cost of the activities linked to the strategy is included as a large part of the City’s overall marketing budget for the year. The total annual expenditure on marketing for St. Moritz is approximately US$ 4,000,000 per annum.

Use of the Olympic Brand

The various initiatives activated under the Strategy often involve the Olympic brand or related elements. For example, the local “Olympic Training Centre” is often part of activities undertaken, while the Swiss Olympic Logo is often used in promotional publications and on site at numerous events.
Human Resources and Time

The Sports & Events Team has 8 full time members. When it comes to the hosting of major sporting events, separate organising committees are created and staffed with persons with the relevant requisite skills.

EVALUATION

The success of the Strategy is assessed on an annual basis. This is performed on a quantitative basis, with KPIs being the focus of attention. This includes looking at key metrics such as the number of overnight stays, the number of elite athlete engagements, the number of spectators at hosted events and the level of media coverage received, for example.

KEY CHALLENGES

Restricting the offering to winter sports

By marketing the City as the leading experts in elite winter sports tourism, there is an inherent danger that potential markets for other types of tourism are being ignored. Given the fact that by their nature winter sports can only be practiced seasonally, this leaves a significant gap in terms of market demand for the resort for large parts of the year.

To account for this, the strategy has recently widened its scope to include other sports not traditionally associated with the resort and which can be practiced outside the winter schedule. The resort has begun to focus on summer activities such as hiking, mountain biking, sailing, paddle boarding and golf in its marketing and through its website and other communications channels. St. Moritz has also developed activities such as running, trail running, cycling, triathlon and athletics. St. Moritz also hosts the Sailing Champions League every year in September. These sports are seen as being particularly well suited to the alpine location as well as remaining in line with the image of St. Moritz that underpins the broader strategic direction.

Shedding an old-fashioned image

While the reputation of the resort as a top class winter sports destination was given a huge early boost by hosting two of the first five Winter Olympic Games, it has been a significant amount of time since this took place. This has presented difficulties in shedding the view of the City as a traditional, old world alpine town stuck to its past glories. All the footage from these first Olympics are in black and white and the equipment used was extremely basic, totally contrary to the vibrant, cutting-edge image that the City now seeks to project.

Rather than ignore or downplay this history, it is instead integrated as a major part of the bigger story of the City. This depicts St. Moritz as the spiritual home of winter sports and one which has always been at the forefront of developments in winter sport at various points in time. Olympic venues that previously lay dormant have
been renovated in the City, upgrading these landmarks in line with modern standards while retaining their Olympic heritage.

KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Adopt a business mind set**

St. Moritz has taken the example from similar cities in the United States in adopting a more business-like approach to their sports tourism operations. This is particularly the case when it comes to the staging of elite events. The processes involved in hosting competitions often involve dealing with private rights holders. Furthermore, staging an event means dealing with numerous private suppliers and customers. As a public entity, profit is not the underlying motive, but maximising revenues can help professionalise operations as well as reduce the reliance on government funding, maintaining public support for the work being done.

**Maintain full centralised control**

The St. Moritz Sport & Event department is a separate and distinct body responsible for the oversight of the City’s sports, events and cultural programme. Under this mandate, they are the sole authority for the design and implementation of the Sports Tourism Strategy. This allows them to have full control and flexibility over the strategy, reducing inefficiencies and cutting through red tape. The body manages the accreditation process for elite athletes who want to undertake high altitude training at various areas within the resort for example, while also being fully responsible for digital and print communications for the City.

**Ensure a solid external communication**

As a brand, St. Moritz needs its Sport Tourism Strategy to be backed up and supported by a solid communication policy. The Sports & Event team does not only organise and support events but also regularly disseminate content and information through its communication platforms. Those platforms include the website, social media, newsletters and Events brochures.

CONTACT

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