Looking Ahead to 2016

Looking forward to 2016, Rio De Janeiro is proudly hosting the Summer Olympic games. After years of planning, construction, & coordination, thousands will descend upon the city to bask in the glory of athleticism, competition, and international cooperation. However, as with all Olympics past, the end of the weeklong games will mark the cessation of a multiple year effort and commitment spent on preparation. Suddenly, the thousands of tourists will disappear, and the Olympic Venue will stand as a constant reminder of history. However, the end of the Olympics also creates a perplexing instance in which billions of dollars of infrastructure, resources, and employees are left to stand idly.

Many will argue that the Venues are left to stand as tourism attraction, and the corresponding tourism infrastructure will subsequently generate revenue for the host cities beyond the capacity of the games. However, this system favors the cities that already have a solid foundation of resources and tourism infrastructure, much like Rio De Janeiro, which maintains a strong international presence. Whereas destinations like Sochi, which is a popular domestic attraction in Russia, is unlikely to ever see the same type of popularity, and all of the newly installed infrastructure will cost a lot more money than it could possibly be expected to generate.

This dilemma fundamentally challenges the cost/benefit of hosting an Olympic event, and questions the value and estimated return on investment. More specifically, are the Olympic games profitable, and if so, on what criteria? Does the location of an event vastly impact the benefits of investment, and what happens to venues after the games are commenced? The answer is complicated, but typically, it seems as though the location of the Olympics would have a large impact on the estimated ROI.

Continuing on with the Sochi v. Rio De Janeiro comparison (negating the fact that one is a Summer Games & the other a Winter Games), compare the two as tourism destinations. Rio De Janeiro is a bustling city that captures an extremely solid piece of the international tourism market, and has already spent billions on infrastructure to accommodate its tourism needs. Therefore, the additional expenditure of an Olympic Venue would only involve building the venue itself. In this case, the investment might be worth it.

Inversely, a destination like Sochi is popular within Russia, but only gained international awareness because of its Olympic association. Moreover, the city is remotely located, and all of the necessary infrastructure had to be installed immediately prior to the event. Much of it remained incomplete at the opening ceremony, and much of it remains barely complete now that the games are over.
Sochi 2014: Behind the Scenes

Michael Rowlands

The Olympics is a global event that brings people together from all over the world. Athletes are given the opportunity to show pride in their country and exhibit the hard work that they have put in for many years. During the 2014 Olympics, athletes and tourists experienced subpar hospitality by the host country, Russia. In addition to the living conditions being harsh, the LGBT community was subjected to discrimination as well as an unwelcoming attitude. Social media allowed people to engage deeper into what the tourists and athletes were going through and raise awareness of these issues. The selection of Sochi, Russia for the Olympics elevated concerns for athletes, tourists, and reporters and ultimately impacted tourist perceptions.

Russia has received harsh criticism for the lack of preparation for such a large-scale event. The perspective of those at the Olympics differed greatly from those watching at home. Most of us saw the glamorous ceremonies and beautiful venues where the athletes competed. According to nydailynews.com, those who attended the Olympics did not hesitate to spread the word about conditions such as dangerous drinking water, broken-down rooms, and unusual signage in the bathroom facilities. Participants and tourists tweeted, hash-tagged, and shared photos of the shocking living arrangements; the unveiling of this news negatively affected people's view on Russia's ability to manage this type of event. Although Russia was commended for their opening ceremony, there were obviously struggles behind the scenes that affected the athletes and tourists.

With many people angry and confused about the living conditions, Russia added to their list of upset parties by openly stating that they did not support the LGBT community. According to The Washington Post, "President Vladimir Putin signed a law at the end of June prohibiting the promotion of nontraditional sexual relationships to minors." With a law like this set in place, LGBT activists and athletes were upset and concerned about potential arrests in Sochi. Sochi's stance on gay rights affected a segment of travelers that would have attended the Olympics and also made a bad impression on some of those who did attend the Olympics.

These problems ultimately affected how viewers, athletes, and tourists felt about the decision to host the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. This type of event is meant to enhance tourism to a specific location, but Russia struggled to keep up to the Olympic standard. It will be interesting to see how Pyeong Chang, South Korea compares to Sochi when they host the 2018 Winter Olympics.
Russian Tightens Anti-Gay Adoption Ban

Laura Walker

It is a known fact that the LGBT community contributes significantly to the tourism and hospitality industry. Many LGBT couples that travel have a large amount of discretionary income, as the majority are considered DINKs, or double income no kids. Their lifestyles allow them to spend money on travel, hotels, restaurants, bars, and other sectors of the industry. During the recent Olympic games in Sochi, Russia highlighted the anti-gay sentiments that exist there and it will be interesting to see how these policies impact future tourism in Russia.

In 2012 Russia banned all Americans from adopting children. The Russian government legally banned same-sex couples from adopting children in July of last year. A couple days after, another law prohibiting the exposure of gay propaganda to minors was enacted. This year in the middle of the Olympic games, Russia banned adoptions by single people from countries where same-sex marriage is legal, regardless of the prospective parent’s sexual orientation. Needless to say, Russia has a strong stance on homosexuality and has made no effort to sugarcoat it. The recent amendment came during a time when millions of people had their eyes on the country of Russia as they prepared for the 2014 Winter Olympics. Russian President Vladimir Putin has continuously made an effort to work against non-traditional western culture.

The question that remains is: how will Russia’s blatant anti-gay sentiments affect tourism? Not only travelers that are gay, but also those who support equal rights. It will be very interesting to see how it impacts other European countries because these types of laws against Americans have existed since 2012. So far, the biggest uproar has come from human-rights activists, who have criticized the International Olympic Committee for holding the Winter Olympics in Russia. Only time will tell how much these laws will directly impact tourism, but it is safe to assume that very few want to travel to countries where their personal preferences are not accepted.

Disabled Brother Inspires Bilodeau's Perfect Run

Blake Skversky

There were over 2,800 athletes from 88 nations that participated in the 2014 Winter Olympic Games. The XXII Olympic Winter Games had both negative and positive stories, but one of the most inspirational stories from the Olympic Games was that of Team Canada’s freestyle skier Alex Bilodeau and his brother Frederic.

Alex Bilodeau is an accomplished freestyle skier for Team Canada. Alex has won numerous medals at the World Championships and at the Olympics. During the XXII Olympic Winter Games, Alex became the first freestyle skiing gold medalist to defend his Olympic title. Alex is well known for his athletic accomplishments, but he has also gained exposure due to his brother Frederic. Frederic Bilodeau suffers from Cerebral Palsy. Cerebral Palsy causes physical disability in muscle tone and posture. Alex Bilodeau has stated his admiration for how positively his brother lives his life despite his disability.

Athletes train for many years to have the opportunity to qualify and participate in the Olympics. However, Frederic Bilodeau will never get that opportunity. Because his brother Alex realizes this, he pushed himself to achieve a gold medal in freestyle skiing. The story of Alex and his brother Frederic became one of the biggest news headlines of the Winter Olympics. Millions of people witnessed Fredric’s inspiration through his brother Alex as he earned a gold medal. The celebration images of Alex and Fredrick symbolizes what the Olympics are really all about.
A Few Notable Athletes From This Year’s Winter Games

Cody Erb

The most interesting man in the world competed in Sochi and no, it wasn't the Dos Equis beer guy. Hubertus Von Hohenlohe is a professional photographer who speaks five different languages. He was also previously a musician, where he released eight pop albums under the name 'Andy Himalaya'. Oh yeah, he was also the oldest alpine skier to compete in this year’s winter games at the age of 55. While the Mexican skier didn’t medal, his flashy wardrobe certainly garnered the attention of the world. “If you cannot win, then at least be stylish,” said ‘Prince’ Hubertus. In his lone run in the Men’s Slalom, Von Hohenlohe lost a ski not long after starting the race in which he could not finish. We don’t know the fate of his Olympic skiing career, but it will be interesting to see if he adds anything to his already impressive resume by the 2018 Winter Olympics.

Viktor Ahn is another athlete with a fascinating story. Ahn competed in the 2006 Olympics, where he won gold medals in the 1500 and 1000 meter short track speed skating games. He set an Olympic record with his time in the 1000 meter event. Despite his success in 2006, Ahn failed to qualify for the 2010 Olympics and eventually had a fallout with South Korea’s speed skating coach. Ahn claims that his coach stopped coaching and no longer associated with the short track skating star. However, this didn’t stop Ahn. In Sochi, he reclaimed his dominance in speed skating, but actually competed as a Russian citizen. Ahn won three gold medals and one silver out of the four events in which he competed.

He was .077 seconds from sweeping all gold in his events, while his former country didn’t produce one medalist in any short track event. Furthermore, the 2018 Winter Olympics will be held in Pyeongchang, South Korea. It looks like the tension between Viktor Ahn and South Korea will continue as long as he qualifies.

U.S. Hockey – Uniting for a Common Purpose

Adam Greene

Hockey has always been one of the most popular Winter Olympic sports. The majority of Olympic events that take place during the winter Olympics are individual sports as opposed to team sports, such as skiing and ice skating. There are only a handful of team-oriented sports that compete in the Olympics, and those tend to be more popular because it gives a country a chance to support a team as a whole rather than just an individual athlete.

While I did not get the chance to view too much of the Olympics in general, I ensured that I watched both U.S. men’s and women’s hockey. I was not alone in this, as many of my friends gathered together to watch games that were usually aired before 9:00am eastern time. United States Olympic hockey served as a way to unite everyone across the country. When the United States played Canada and Russia, NBC’s broadcast would cut to a bar in the U.S. where hundreds of people gathered to watch the game. U.S. Olympic hockey viewership broke a record on the NBC Sports Network with about 4.1 million viewers, and at one point drew a peak of 6.4 million viewers during the overtime shootout with Russia.

The United States has a lot of pride as a country, and the Olympics show that Americans band together to support sports like hockey. The hockey rivalry between Canada and the United States hockey reached a new level in Sochi when President Barack Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper bet a case of beer on the game. This helps prove that US hockey is important to the United States, and it serves as a way to come together and cheer for a common sports team. How often is it that the whole country is rooting for the same sports team? Only in the Olympics will you see the United States truly unite and cheer on the athletes who represent them and proudly wear that red, white and blue.
The 2014 Winter Olympic Games were larger than ever. This year, we were able to see the addition of twelve new events in Sochi, Russia. The new events include men's and women's ski half-pipe, men's and women's snowboard slope-style, men's and women's ski slope-style, snowboard parallel slalom, biathlon mixed relay, women's ski jumping, luge team relay, and a team figure skating event. In order to accommodate these new events, the games had to be extended for an additional day. The half-pipe and slope-style competitions emerged mainly due to their success in the extreme sports competition The X-Games. NBC reported that “the International Olympic Committee (IOC) added the events to provide a newer, fresher and youthful flare to the games.” The introduction of these new events was especially exciting for American athletes. Eight of the added events came from the X-Games competition, which is held in the United States. Ski and snowboard half-pipe and slope-style have become increasingly popular in the United States. As a result of this, 9 of America’s 28 Olympic Medals came from the new twelve events. Not only did Sochi hold the most events in Winter Olympic history, but it also displayed the most gender equality. In this year’s games, women made up 45% of the competitors while the men made up the other 55%. The addition of the twelve new events in Sochi allowed for 50 sets of medals to be contested by men, as opposed to 43 by women, while there were also five events in which men and women competed together. One of the new events, women’s ski jumping, fought especially hard to be included in the games. For the past ten years, the IOC continually turned down female ski jumpers. In 2008, female ski jumpers from five different countries sued the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the right to compete in the 2010 Winter Games. It was announced in April of 2011 that a women’s ski jumping event would be included in the Sochi Winter Games in 2014. The process of adding the 12 new events to the Winter Olympics happened in two stages. In April of 2011, during the Sport Accord Annual International Sports Conference, the IOC Executive Board made the decision to include six of the new events. The decision for the other 6 events was made in July of the same year at the 123rd IOC session. In order to have a sport considered as an Olympic event, the individual International Sport Federations must submit a formal proposal to the IOC. The key to adding new events is to explain how they can benefit the Olympic games. The benefits of the twelve new events at Sochi were that they created more gender equity, a broader audience, and youth appeal. Overall, the addition of the 12 new events was a great success for the 2014 Olympics in Sochi.

The 2014 Winter Olympics held in Sochi, Russia was the most expensive Olympic Games in history. Remi Galliard from CBS News stated, “the nation’s $51 billion investment - topping even Beijing’s estimated $40 billion layout for the 2008 Summer Games - transformed a decaying resort town on the Black Sea into a household name.” However, even with all of the money invested into this year’s Winter Olympics, there were still numerous reports of mishaps. There were actually so many issues with the host city that there was a Twitter account created to keep everyone around the globe informed of what was going wrong in Sochi.

The twitter account @sochiproblems, had over 300,000 followers throughout the duration of the Olympics. It reported the infamous fifth Olympic ring mishap during the opening ceremony, hundreds of stray dogs roaming around the Olympic Village (there have been reports that many have been euthanized), and open manholes that drop about 15 feet deep. Some attendees described the entire experience as a disaster. The controversies surrounding gay rights and corruption have now also been aired to the rest of the world, confirming many unpleasant assumptions about life in Russia.

The most common complaints have been about the new hotels that clearly weren’t ready for guests. Bobby Ilich from the International Business Times reported, “Johnny Quinn, a member of the U.S. four-man bobsled team, found himself locked in a bathroom. With no phone or way to call for help. He smashed the door open, and posted a picture on Twitter of the large hole he bashed in to escape.” The bathroom door in his hotel was made of thick cardboard, which established many rumors about poorly built hotels. Some guests even indicated that hotels did not keep their reservation. Many guests entered their rooms only to learn that other guests were already sleeping there. Various visitors and athletes have also criticized the hotels about their lack of working appliances. @sochiproblems suggested that lamps and televisions would not work, and even yellow water would come out of the faucets.

Although there were problems surrounding the Olympics, the actual games themselves were reportedly a success. All in all, Sochi endured many of the same problems most cities that host the Olympics have. When considering the growth of social media since the last Winter Olympics in Vancouver, the widespread scrutiny of major events such as the Olympics will only continue further into the future.
During the weekend of February 27 through March 1, 2014, seven students from Temple’s School of Tourism and Hospitality Management attended the Sports Industry Networking and Career (SINC) Conference located at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The seven students in attendance for the weekend were Kyle Solomon, Daniel Miller, Brandon Colston, Kyle Lane, James Spinelli, Andrew Goleman, and Benjamin Revitsky. All of these students are currently seniors majoring in Sport and Recreation Management, and are enrolled in Montague-Ridall & Associates Senior Professional Development Seminar class for the spring semester. Throughout the weekend these students represented Temple in an exceptional manner while building on their vast knowledge of the sports industry. They educated themselves through a variety of panels including the future of sport consumption, sport data & analytics, sport tourism, athlete representation and sport marketing. In addition to attending the panels, the students also had interviews with well-known companies in the industry. Some of these companies included The Aspire Group, Disabled Sports USA, George Washington Athletics, and The Washington Redskins. Furthermore, Temple’s Masters of Science in Sport Business program was one of the major sponsors for the entire conference, notably sponsoring the networking reception that took place on Friday evening. Our very own Dr. Joseph Mahan even moderated the sport data & analytics panel. It was an overwhelmingly successful weekend for the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, and we would like to personally thank Associate Dean Dr. Elizabeth Barber for ensuring that this weekend could happen.