



Major sporting events and their effect on hotel occupancy

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Super Bowl XLII has come to a successful conclusion; the New England Patriots fell short of their quest for perfection and the New York Giants stunned the sporting world with perhaps one of the greatest Super Bowl upsets ever. However, perhaps the biggest winners in all of this are the hotel owners and operators in the Greater Phoenix Area. The Valley Hotel and Resort Association estimated that occupancy rates throughout the valley would be as high as 85-90%.

Mega-sport events like the Super Bowl and the Olympics bring large crowds needing overnight accommodations. There are a variety of ways to take advantage of these events and enhance occupancy rates, both during the event and for future bookings. The key, according to industry experts, is preparation.

Prepare well in advance

Westin and other resorts throughout the Phoenix area had executives visit the past two Super Bowls; not to enjoy the game, but to study what their counterparts in those host cities have been doing to prepare for the event. Bruce Lange of The Westin Kierland Resort and Spa says, "There are a lot of moving parts. You've got to take good notes. That's the only way you're adequately prepared."

What does that preparation entail? Perhaps the most important preparation is to realize that the mega-event doesn't necessarily mean a large financial windfall during the event itself, but rather that it provides the opportunity to spur repeat business. Most of the attendees at the event are corporate decision makers, and this is an opportunity for hotels and resorts to make a lasting impression.

Make a lasting impression

The Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale took this desire to make a lasting impression to perhaps the highest level. The nine-year-old resort underwent a head-to-toe makeover just for the Super Bowl. As the host site for many NFL and team executives, the luxury resort saw this as a perfect opportunity to put forward, "a brand-new product for many high-profile guests," according to general manager Tom Kelly.

However, a complete makeover is not always necessary to reap the benefits of increased occupancy during major sporting events. Numerous organizations have created a niche in the marketplace through the development of sport-hotel packages for large events like the Super Bowl, Olympics and soccer's World Cup. These companies work with hotels and ticket brokers to provide their guests with first-class accommodations, tickets to the event, souvenirs, and other amenities the event attendees might want or need.

Consider all levels of sport events

Fortunately, the need for adequate lodging is not limited to these few major events. There are programs also available for the next tier of events as well. Again, lodging establishments and ticket brokers are combining forces to provide rooms and tickets for nearly every level of sporting activity. Collegiate football and basketball, Major League Baseball's spring training, and even major youth sport competitions are potential sources for increased occupancy for the entrepreneurial hotel manager.



For the interested executive, a telephone call, email, or a visit to the website of the sport organization sponsoring the event is frequently all that is needed to get the ball rolling. These organizations have a vested interest in providing adequate housing for participants and spectators and are more than happy to work with the lodging providers to ensure the success of their event.

For more information and examples of these types of programs, visit one of the following websites: www.sportstraveler.net, www.sportstravel.com, www.primesport.com, or www.thebiggamerooms.com. ✧

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