

**Skiing - quo vadis?
Leveraging the future of snow sports**

Tobias Luthe
Ralf Roth

Skiing is an emotional sport and part of a life style for millions of people worldwide. It forms an important economic backbone of mountain tourism, while being deeply embedded in socio-cultural traditions. The sport and the industry have come under pressure due to changing consumer preferences, technical advancements, socio-economic developments and climate change. How well are we prepared to understand such multiple influences in order to develop skiing and snow sports in a successful direction? How resilient is the snow sports industry? What are the leverage hubs for actively designing the future of snow sports?

This speech disentangles the complex system of skiing and snow sports and discusses leverage hubs and elements for actively steering snow sports into a sustainable direction: 1. Being part of the social network of tourism stakeholders in mountain destinations, ski schools, instructors and activity providers are central actors. Their role and capacity to steer tourism remains underestimated, while their responsibility to act in a sustainable way needs further elaboration. Destination governance networks are more and more evolving as informal and flexible constellations – how can skiing stakeholders employ strategic functions within these networks? 2. Type, origin, demand and behavior of tourists have been changing rapidly. Multifunctional and overlapping activities are one direction the ‚hybrid‘ snow tourist of the future demands. The traditional role and technical training of professional ski instructors will be evolving to that of a multifunctional and flexible service provider focusing more on intercultural and language skills, and on becoming environmental ambassadors. Such changes impose new demand on training and educating snow sports instructors towards tourism service providers. 3. Climate change is a main driver of change for the skiing world. Despite of our scientific understanding of climate change drivers, such as the effects of increased carbon dioxide emissions from travelling on warmer temperatures and a lack of snow, the gap between environmental responsibility and personal welfare maximisation is increasing. How shall we as skiers span this gap between chasing the best snow conditions around the planet by plane, gearing up each season with the latest equipment and advocating environmental responsibility?

There is scientific evidence for the need of a more active, innovative and flexible engagement of ski and snow sports stakeholders in preparing and adapting to such changes. This speech illustrates the leverage potential of new commitments of the snow sports community with comparative international figures to support the proposition of design elements for the future of skiing and snow sports.