



University of Zagreb  
**Faculty of  
Economics & Business**

**STC'16**  
**Sport Tourism Conference -**  
**Red, green and blue strategies**

**Edited by:**  
**Kristina Bučar**  
**Sanda Renko**

**Zagreb, May 2017.**

# **STC'16 Sport Tourism Conference - Red, green and blue strategies**

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## **PROOFREADING:**

The papers are printed on basis of manuscripts provided by the authors, who are responsible for the style and form of the English language.

## **PUBLISHER:**

Ekonomski fakultet Zagreb Sveučilišta u Zagrebu; Trg J. F. Kennedyja 6;  
Zagreb

**YEAR OF PUBLISHING: 2017.**

ISBN (e-Book of Proceedings): 978-953-346-009-3

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## FOREWORD

There is an increasing role of sport and tourism in the global economy related to economic and social contributions as well as its potential for growth. Therefore, it is crucial that the mutual relationship between sport and tourism and sustainability is understood. As sustainability takes the approach of balancing the needs of today with those of the future, it is important to be aware of the impact that sport and tourism have not only on the external environment and the conservation of natural resources but on economics and social (cultural) well-being as well.

This publication is the result of a scientific conference *Sport Tourism: Red, Green and Blue Strategies (STC'16)* held on April 6 to 8, 2016 at the Faculty of Economics, University of Zagreb, Croatia. This “red, green, blue” approach of sport tourism encompasses three strategic orientations of today’s tourism activities taking into account its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, and the environment and host communities.

In the scope of Red Strategy development, sport tourism developed quickly with mostly one purpose: how to get as much money as possible, without taking care of the environment. As an answer on a Red Strategies and lack of care for nature and local people, appeared the idea of Green strategies. They promote economic growth while reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, thereby minimizing waste and inefficient use of natural resources, and maintaining biodiversity. The Blue strategies are focused on a life without polluting. Thirty-one high quality papers included in this publication address a number of issues raised above. They represent both theoretical and practical approaches to the study of complex area of sport, tourism and sustainability.

In such a way, the publication has become an inevitable source in writing scientific works, bringing answers to many questions and highlighting further trends and perspectives of sustainable development that can be attributed to sport tourism.

Zagreb, May 2017.

Kristina Bučar, Ph.D  
Sanda Renko, Ph.D

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# **EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS FOR MAJOR SPORTS EVENTS: THE CASE OF FIBA EUROBASKET 2015, CROATIA**

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## **Abstract**

Major sports events with a long tradition, established reputation and international media profile like the FIBA EuroBasket competition have always attracted both domestic and foreign visitors. A greater number of visitors generate greater consumption, which ultimately leads to positive economic benefits for the host region. Consequently, cities and countries compete for the right to host these events, being aware of the significance of the well-targeted promotional activities. The sports event promotion is a key factor when it comes to the number of tickets sold. It also directly contributes to the event's brand and influences attendance rates, its media representation and brand exposure. To that end, the purpose of this paper is to analyse the promotional campaign of FIBA EuroBasket 2015. Although the competition took place in four different countries, namely, Croatia, France, Germany, and Latvia, this paper focuses only on the elements of the sports promotional mix applied in the Croatian part of EuroBasket 2015. Specifically, it conducts a qualitative case study of the overall promotion and

the individual elements of the sports promotional mix for that competition. The results show that six out of seven elements of the sports promotional mix were included in the event's general promotion - advertising, publicity, personal contact, incentives, atmospherics and sponsorship. The element found lacking was licensing. The study gives managers a valuable insight into (in) effective management of sports events promotion and the individual elements of the promotional mix.

**Key words:** Croatia, FIBA EuroBasket 2015, major sports events, promotion, sports promotional mix

## 1. Introduction

Major sports events are a global phenomenon and an important part of the tourism industry. They are no longer merely about providing good sport (Green, 2001: 1), but also need to provide entertainment, excitement and enterprise. All three elements are critical to the success of any event (Hoyle, 2002: 2), so the marketing in general and the promotion in particular, serves not only to ensure awareness and energy surrounding the event, but also to secure a vital external funding through sponsorship (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013: 97) and potentially fulfil multileveled economic, social, and political agendas by means of attracting visitors (Emery, 2010). In the world of sports, marketing, promotion and advertisement are fundamental tools for generating great profits (Lee, 2005: 1).

Kurtzman and Zauhar (1997) point out that sports events represent a very specific type of sports tourism. They can be defined as those sports activities attracting tourists who are mostly spectators (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2003), and generating significant and heterogeneous flow of travellers (Higham, 2005). Major sports events of international nature (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013: 4), though not destination specific (Funk, 2008: 5) attract a lot of delegations and international media and provide benefits/legacies for the host region. These types of events are increasingly popular with host regions as they are smaller than mega-events, e.g. Olympic Games (easier to host, logistically speaking), yet many provide the same legacies and benefits as mega-events (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013: 4). Rugby World Cup, UEFA Cup, NFL Superbowl (Funk, 2008: 5), Commonwealth Games, Jeux de la Francophonie, Pan American Games (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013:4), UEFA Champions League, or FIBA EuroBasket fall into category of such events. The last decade has seen unprecedented demand to host major sports



events (Emery, 2010) as they have become a common tool for local and regional economic development (Getz, 1997; Lesjak & Axelsson, 2014: 77; Swart & Smith-Christensen, 2005; Van den Berg, Braun & Otgaar, 2000; World Travel Market, 2015: 20). Major sports events have the power to impact the socio-cultural (Emery, 2010; Masterman, 2014: 2), economic (Emery, 2010; Green, 2001: 1; Swart & Smith-Christensen, 2005), political (Emery, 2010), and the environmental dimension of their host destination (Swart & Smith-Christensen, 2005). According to the World Travel Market (2015: 20), 84% of the trade believe in the positive effect major sports events have on the host's tourism industry. They are especially important in periods of shoulder season, representing a massive factor in decision-making for tourist arrivals (Salgado-Barandela *et al.*, 2014: 115). In addition, major sports events enhance the destination's international visibility (Cornelissen, 2007: 242), and its profile and place on the global tourism map (Berčič *et al.*, 2010; Goeldner, 2006).

There is an exponentially growing field of research associated with sports events. Researchers are trying to understand various aspects of sports events such as planning, marketing, volunteering, economic impacts, legacy (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013), sponsorship, decision-making, media coverage, etc. The focus of the paper in question will be promotion of major sports events. From the standpoint of event promotion, they are still primarily advertised as hedonic consumption (Green, 2001: 2). For that reason, sports marketing texts (e.g., Brooks, 1994; Shank, 1999; Shilbury, Quick & Westerbeek, 1998) often mention that sports marketers should recognise consumers' free choice in investing their leisure time, and start competing with other leisure activities in order to win their clientele. Accordingly, event organisers are required to start thinking beyond the nature and quality of sport provided; organisers have to invent the ways to make events more appealing to larger audience (Green, 2001: 1-3). "More people" does not only mean "more sold tickets" and greater consumption during the event. It also implies unsurpassed media attention and event's brand exposure. Millions of people follow coverage of these events through television, radio and (background) newspaper stories (Gijzenberg, 2014: 2). The objective of the present study is to analyse the overall promotion and representation of sports promotional mix of FIBA EuroBasket 2015 held in Zagreb, Croatia. Based on the literature review, the analysis was guided by the following research questions:

- (i) Was the promotion of FIBA Eurobasket 2015, Croatia successful?
- (ii) Which elements of the sports promotional mix did it include and to

what extent?

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. Sports events promotion**

Promotion refers to raising customer awareness of a product or brand, generating sales, and creating brand loyalty (McCarthy, 1964: 769). Accordingly, promotion as a part of the sports marketing mix represents the sum of various activities and efforts made by organisations or companies in order to introduce their products and bring them closer to potential or existent consumers. In this regard, competitive sports and sports events can be observed as forms of pure sports products bearing in mind the specific features of sports events (Novak, 2006: 297). Moreover, sports events are always new, original and unique, "the premiere without reruns" (Džeba & Serdarušić, 1995: 202). Promotion is, therefore, vital in creating awareness of the event, a desire to participate, and a feeling by the potential participant that the investment of time and money validates the benefits the event offers (Hoyle, 2002: 30).

Džeba and Serdarušić (1995: 202) define the promotion of sports events as all the information and persuasive content targeted at the public, especially the users of sports services (current and potential sports fans), athletes and sports authorities, companies and other entities which constitute the sports event "environment", directly or indirectly contributing to its success. According to Irwin, Sutton, and McCarthy (2008: 3), sports promotion represents the deployment of a fully integrated set of communication activities intended to persuade consumers toward a favourable belief or action as a tactical component of the overall marketing campaign. Guided by this definition, a promotional activity consists of all means of communication and persuasion available to sports organisations when targeting the defined consumer groups.

The objectives of the promotion and dissemination of information about sports events can be set within the short or long term (Chisnall, 1995: 283). Short term objectives include immediate ticket sales for the event, informing the market about the event venue and generating revenue, while long term objectives may be developing a primary demand for visiting sports events, inducing an interest among children and youth for doing sports, strengthening the brand and image of sports event or particular sports, etc. To achieve these goals, sports marketers use different elements of

promotional mix. Some of these elements, despite having a long tradition, have changed due to technology advancement, social trends and other environmental factors. In particular, sports promotion refers to advertising but also to sales promotion, publicity and public relations (Novak, 2006: 297).

Scholars generally reduce the list of promotional tools to four distinct components making up the traditional promotional mix: advertising, publicity, sales promotion, and personal selling. However, these four categories do not adequately address characteristics germane to sports (Irwin, Sutton & McCarthy, 2008: 3). Based on Kotler's (1982) non-profit mix, consisting of advertising, publicity, personal contact, incentives, and atmospherics, Irwin, Sutton, and McCarthy (2008) suggest a sports promotional mix covering categories which reflect promotional tactics used within sports industry with more precision. According to these authors, the sports promotional mix consists of advertising, publicity, personal contact, incentives, atmospherics, licensing, and sponsorship.

*Advertising* can be defined as any paid form of non-personal communication and promotion of ideas about goods or services by an identified sponsor (Kotler & Armstrong, 1994). As a paid form of non-personal communication, sport-related advertising may incorporate facility signage or naming rights, commercials broadcast, direct mailings, outdoor signage such as billboards or bus panels, the use of athletes as products endorsers, and manufactured media. Manufactured media includes all forms of print and electronic media purchased or possibly produced by a sport organisation in order to promote the core product, in this case, the sports event. This may include broadcast advertorials, infomercials, or informational newspaper inserts, as well as regular programming formats (Irwin, Sutton & McCarthy, 2008: 4).

*Publicity* represents non-personal stimulation of the demand for a product, service or business unit by planting commercially significant news about it in a published medium or obtaining favourable presentation that is not paid by the sponsor (Kotler & Armstrong, 1994). Organisers use that technique in order to create a favourable impression of the event in the consumer's mind, and to stimulate event's publicity. In order to achieve these goals, they stage press conferences, produce press releases, accommodate the requests of media members (Irwin, Sutton & McCarthy, 2008: 5), organize charity events, seminars, TV and radio presentations, etc.

*Personal selling* is the part of the traditional promotion mix, but when it comes to sports promotional mix, Irwin, Sutton, and McCarthy (2008) use the term personal contact instead. *Personal contact* refers to any person-to-

person communication involving an organisational representative and one or more current or prospective stakeholders that may achieve any number of vital promotional objectives, ranging from building goodwill to generating sales. Personal contact is critical to the success of a promotional campaign. It adds a human element to the relationship between the sport organisation and the customer, allowing for a two-way dialogue, which is virtually absent from other forms of marketing communication.

The concept of traditional *sales promotion* does not involve all sport consumption experiences, so Irwin, Sutton, and McCarthy (2008) use the term *incentives*. According to Kotler (1982), incentives represent all emotional, social, psychological, functional, or financial conditions that encourage an overt behavioural response. Incentives represent costs to the provider and benefits to the receiver. The number and types of incentives are still evolving and are limited only by the imagination and creativity of marketers (Kero, 2002: 3). In the context of sports events, incentives might mean lower ticket prices, prize contests, free T-shirts, jerseys or hats.

*Atmospherics* consists of all efforts to design the place of purchase or consumption so as to create specific cognitive or emotional effects in consumers. This includes all point-of-purchase communications such as displays, posters, signs, and in-store materials designed to influence the choice of point of purchase. Atmospheric elements such as cheerleaders, mascots, banners (Irwin, Sutton & McCarthy, 2008: 10) and music provide added entertainment for fans of all ages. Experiencing this special atmosphere represents an essential part of the total service provided by the sports event organizers (Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010: 211). According to the literature on sports marketing, the special atmosphere in sports stadiums is one of the most important reasons why people attend events (Bauer, Sauer & Exler, 2005; Holt, 1995; Pfaff, 2002; Wochnowski, 1996).

*Licensing* trademarks and copyrights have become an essential part and the fastest-growing component of the promotional mix for sports properties (Kolah, 2005). Similar to a corporate brand, a recognisable symbol of a team, league, or event, fosters consumer awareness and identity in the marketplace. These symbols can have unparalleled commercial value, and sports logos are emblazoned on all types of consumer products ranging from jackets, caps, T-shirts (Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy, 2008: 10), to towels, bedding, and toys. Specifically, sport properties have strategically implemented licensing businesses not only to increase sales, but also to establish brand awareness in the marketplace (Sherman, 2003). From the consumers' perspective, consuming event-licensed products (i.e. wearing

jerseys or hats) creates or maintains their connection with the event or the team (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998).

*Sponsorship* is considered to be the youngest element of the modern sports promotional mix (Dibb *et al.*, 1997). One way of providing a sufficient funding to perform sport activities, especially championship activities, is the use of sponsorship of private enterprises and factories (Meenaghan, 2001; Smith, 2008). It can be defined as the financial or material support of an event, activity, person, organisation or product by unrelated organisation or donor (Dibb *et al.*, 1997). Sport sponsorship is one of the most important means (sources) of income in common sport (Elahi *et al.*, 2006; Smith, 2008; Strelize, 2005). General funds will be made available to the recipient of the sponsorship deal in return for the prominent exposure of the sponsor's name or brand (Dibb *et al.*, 1997). The studies by Roy and Graeff (2003) and McDaniel (1999) support the idea that the consumers' response to sponsors is positively impacted by a perceived fit between the sponsors and the event, while Koo *et al.* (2006) found that the likelihood of a consumer correctly recalling the event's sponsor was positively impacted by the perceived image fit between the event and the sponsor brand. All of this suggests that sponsors and event marketers could both benefit from seeking out sponsorship arrangements where the event and sponsors brands have some level of congruence (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013:130).

## **2.2. EuroBasket 2015**

EuroBasket is the European basketball competition, one of the most prestigious in the world (Vaquera *et al.*, 2015). The first EuroBasket was held in 1935 in Geneva (Switzerland) and the one in 2015 was its 39<sup>th</sup> edition (FIBA, 2016). During that period, the competition sparked the interest of researchers from various research areas (Gudaityte *et al.*, 2016; Lesjak & Axelsson, 2014; Lesjak, Axelsson & Uran, 2014; Ličen *et al.*, 2016; Vaquera *et al.*, 2015; Zupančič, 2014). EuroBasket 2015 was to be originally held in Ukraine. However, the FIBA Board decided to relocate it to another destination. "The decision was taken after a careful consideration of the continuous political situation and security issues in Ukraine, which are deemed as less than favourable for the staging of such an important and demanding event" (FIBA, 2014). As a result, a new bidding process was opened to all European states. Initially, 16 states expressed interest to host the competition but officially, 8 entered the bidding process: Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Latvia, Poland, and Turkey (FIBA, 2014a). The bidding process ended in September 2014 when, for the first time in the

history of this competition, four countries were awarded the right to be the host: Croatia, France, Germany and Latvia (France was assigned to host the Final Phase) (FIBA, 2014b). The Group Phase part of the competition was held from 5 till 11 September, and the Final Phase from 12 till 20 September 2015.

Each of the four hosts was granted the right to select a Federation partner for commercial and marketing criteria (FIBA, 2014c). Croatia chose Slovenia, France chose Finland, Germany chose Turkey and Latvia chose Estonia. Croatia hosted Group C with teams from Slovenia, Macedonia, Greece, the Netherlands and Georgia. The competition in the Group Phase lasted 6 days (matches were played during 5 days, the third day being a rest day). The competition was held in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. Zagreb already hosted EuroBasket in 1989 when the host nation Yugoslavia won the gold. The second opportunity for Zagreb, and the first for Croatia to host such an important competition, represented a valuable opportunity for both Croatian basketball promotion and the promotion of Croatia as the country of sport and tourism.

### **3. Methodology**

This research applies a qualitative case study methodology which provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their context, using a variety of data sources. It ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 544). Further, the descriptive case study was applied among seven different types of qualitative case studies (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 547-549). That type of case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003).

A hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy which also enhances data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). Potential data sources may include, but are not limited to: documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artefacts, direct observations, participant-observation, websites, social media sites, TV and radio channels, newspapers and magazines. Data from these multiple sources are then converged in the analysis process rather than handled individually. Each data source is one piece of the “puzzle,” with each piece contributing to the researcher’s understanding of the whole phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 554).

As was suggested by Baxter & Jack (2008), and Yin (2003), the data were

collected from various sources, more precisely, from official websites of four EuroBasket 2015 organisers; FIBA Europe (<http://www.fibaeurope.com/>), EuroBasket 2015 Organization (<http://www.eurobasket2015.org/hr/>), Croatian Basketball Federation (<http://www.hks-cbf.hr/>), and Croatian Government (<https://vlada.gov.hr/>), as well from their official profiles on social media platforms; Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and LiveBasketball.TV (<https://www.facebook.com/FIBA>, <https://www.youtube.com/FIBA>, <https://twitter.com/FIBA>, <https://www.instagram.com/fiba/>, <https://www.livebasketball.tv/>; <https://www.facebook.com/hks.cbf/>) searched by keyword EuroBasket 2015. The data were also gathered from the official websites of the top three daily newspapers in Croatia (Bratić, 2014); Jutarnji list (<http://www.jutarnji.hr/>), Večernji list (<http://www.vecernji.hr/>), and 24 Sata (<http://www.24sata.hr/>), from the official website of the top daily Croatian sports newspaper, Sportske Novosti (<http://online.sportske-novosti.hr/>). Further, the data were gathered from the official website of most popular Croatian internet portal (DotMetrics, 2015), Index.hr (<http://www.index.hr/>), and the official websites of the three most watched Croatian TV channels (Agency for Electronic Media, 2016: 2); HRT (<http://www.hrt.hr/>), Nova TV (<http://novatv.dnevnik.hr/>), and RTL (<http://www.rtl.hr/>). All websites were searched using the keyword EuroBasket 2015. The research timeframe included the data available between 1 September 2014, and 31 December 2015.

All the elements of the sports promotional mix, already discussed in the literature review section, are listed and analysed in Table 1. They were analysed from the time and frequency management perspective and the target group perspective. Three researchers independently analysed each element of the sports promotional mix of EuroBasket 2015, Croatia. Each of them gave a descriptive evaluation of both promotion elements and the entire promotion. The results of descriptive evaluation of all three researchers were compared and matched ( $r>0.95$ ).

#### **4. Descriptive case study**

The EuroBasket 2015 Organisation and the Croatian Basketball Federation (HKS) were responsible for the organisation and promotion of EuroBasket 2015 in Croatia. The project was supported by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia, and the City of Zagreb. The Croatian Government covered the expenses of the competition organisation

which amounted to HRK 40.9 million (approximately € 5.6 million), while the overall expenses reached HRK 66.1 million (around € 9 million) (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2014). The data on the event's promotion budget are not publicly available.

Both national and the international promotion of EuroBasket 2015, Croatia, started with FIBA Europe's announcement on 8 September 2014, published on their official website. Croatia, among four selected countries, was awarded the right to host EuroBasket 2015 (FIBA Europe, 2014). During the next few months, EuroBasket 2015, Croatia was promoted on the same website and in the same context every few days, mostly using these words "EuroBasket 2015 will be organised in four countries - Croatia (Zagreb), France (Montpellier and Lille), Germany (Berlin), and Latvia (Riga), for the first time in history" (FIBA Europe, 2014a). This news was communicated by social media mentioning Croatia as one of the host countries. As the host country, Croatia attracted most attention on YouTube where the film "Host Cities – EuroBasket 2015" showed the beauty of Zagreb. After that, Zagreb and Croatia were no longer in the focus of interest, until the staging of the competition in September 2015. The championship was broadcast via livebasketball.tv, as well as via FIBA's more than 160 broadcast partners around the world, followed by posting on YouTube (FIBA, 2015).

During the preparation period for the EuroBasket in Croatia, HKS was trying to inform the public about the competition and events related to EuroBasket 2015, Croatia on their official website and their Facebook profile. EuroBasket 2015 was not set up as an official web page, or a profile on any social media, but was communicated as a special section on the HKS official website and on the HKS Facebook profile. In September 2014, HKS reported that Croatia would be one of the four hosts of EuroBasket 2015 competition. The news stirred up an enormous interest of Croatian printed and TV media such as Jutarnji list, Večernji list, Sportske novosti, HRT, Nova TV, RTL, etc. In December 2014, all media shared the news from Disneyland, Paris, where Frenkie, the official mascot of EuroBasket 2015 and the event's official logo, were presented. The logo figure depicted a supreme basketball player - a superhero in his moment of triumph. Both Frenkie and the logo contained the colours of all four host nations. The red represented Croatia, dark red Latvia, yellow Germany, while blue represented France (HKS, 2014). Unfortunately, this information did not attract the attention of the Croatian media.

In February 2015, Croatian organisers held the first press conference at the Panorama Hotel in Zagreb, where they reported about the upcoming event



and the ticketing strategy (HKS, 2015). The first general public tickets for Zagreb Group C were put into circulation on 16 February. This package guaranteed tickets to all five games including the team of the spectator's choice. The tickets to single games were released from 15 March to 15 April. The second phase of the single ticket sales started on 1 July. Children under the age of 6 had free admission if their parents had a valid ticket. Invalids in wheelchairs also had free admission. The price of the single game tickets ranged from 10 (75 HRK) to 33 Euros (250 HRK) (EuroBasket 2015, 2015), which was a smart promotional move as their price was the lowest in all four countries. For example, single game tickets for Arena Riga began with 15 Euros (EuroBasket 2015, 2015). Such ticketing strategy aimed at informing the public about the upcoming event and encouraging them to buy the tickets which could be purchased from Eventim.

The second press conference was held in April, also at the Panorama hotel. The EuroBasket 2015 organisation informed the media that the ticket sale was going according to plan. The tickets for the Croatia – Slovenia match were, by then, sold out. The organisational committee also presented the partnership agreement with Laško (HKS, 2015) and called for volunteers.

Croatia went on to promote EuroBasket 2015 with Frenkie, the mascot, making a tour of basketball competitions all over Croatia. Frenkie was first presented to the general public at the finals of the Krešimir Ćosić Cup in Vukovar. Its task was to socialize with fans, entertain the audience, and hand out convenient gifts. The tour continued in Rijeka, at the All Star Cup, and the Primary schools championship in Zagreb. In the course of the next few months, Frenkie visited several primary schools in Zagreb and Down 21 Association. It was accompanied by Gordan Giriček, the EuroBasket ambassador, and the members of the Croatian national team and 'Cedevita' players Miro Bilan, Tomislav Zubčić, Josip Popić, Ivica Zubac, Marko Jagunić-Kuridža, Nik Slavica, and Ante Toni Žižić (HKS, 2015). They played basketball with children, answered their questions and signed autographs.

Frenkie also went to the FIMBA World League basketball veterans' championship held in Zadar in 2015. The tournament featured 48 teams from 18 countries. The mascot made its appearance on number of occasions such as the International Students Sports Day on Zagreb Main Square, the 62<sup>nd</sup> Zagiping at Dom sportova (Open international table tennis championship for juniors and cadets in Zagreb), the revue tennis tournament "U ritmu Rija" held at Floraart, the 33<sup>rd</sup> "Večernjak" cycling race, the "Čest is d'Best" street festival where the basketball competition "3 x 3" was staged with Cedevita players, Markus Lončar, Toni Perković and

Luka Barišić (HKS, 2015).

In the first days of June, FIBA European champions' trophy arrived in Zagreb. For two days the trophy was exhibited at Dražen Petrović Memorial Center where people had free entry in order to take its photo. On that occasion, there was organised a basketball relay race from Krešimir Ćosić Square to Dražen Petrović Square. Several prominent names of Croatian basketball participated in the relay, namely, Franjo Arapović, Veljko Mršić, Aramis Naglić, Aco Petrović, and young national team members. The first official sponsor of EuroBasket 2015, Croatia, the Triglav Group, also attended (HKS, 2015).

In order to promote basketball and the championship, the City of Zagreb and HKS initiated the renovation of outdoor basketball courts in all primary schools in Zagreb. The first court was renovated in June, when basketball boards were set in the colours of EuroBasket 2015, containing the logo of EuroBasket 2015 and the mascot Frenkie (HKS, 2015).

In July and August, HKS organized "3 x 3" tournaments to mark the forthcoming EuroBasket and its promotion in Šibenik, Zadar, Pula, Rijeka, Slavonski Brod, Osijek, Karlovac, Split, Ljubuški, Mostar, Drniš, and Zagreb. Frenkie appeared everywhere in an effort to motivate the audience and stir up interest in basketball. All registered teams won the EuroBasket 2015 T-shirts, while the top three teams won the sponsor packages. The best teams from Osijek, Ljubuško, and Drniš won the tickets both for the match Croatia - Germany at Zagreb Arena on 14 August and the last rehearsal tournament held in Zagreb Arena from 26-28 August. Besides Croatia, the tournament host, other participating countries were Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, and Estonia. The tournament promotion started at the beginning of August with billboards featuring three Croatian national team players and displaying the promotional slogan, "Warm up the Zagreb Arena for basketball September". There was also a list of specified sponsors - HEP, Konzum, Laško, Franck, PBZ Card, Santa, Autotrans, Lenovo, Terme Tuhelj, Spalding, Bauerfeind, Jutarnji list, Sportske novosti, Narodni radio, and Laganini radio. The matches were broadcast on HRT 4. During the tournament, Zagreb Arena was not branded with EuroBasket 2015 promotional materials as FIBA did not allow HKS and FIBA sponsors' interference.

Knowing from experience that Croatian fans buy tickets just before the match, the EuroBasket 2015 organisation board decided to launch a separate campaign (HKS, 2015) targeting the general public. The billboards were set up on 7 August, less than a month before the competition started. In comparison, France set up the billboards in April (PA-Sport, 2015), and

Germany during June (DBB Journal, 2015). The beginning of August saw the launch of a city-light campaign, a radio campaign and a TV campaign on national television (HRT). A sticker album was published, as well.

Ten days before the competition, the EuroBasket 2015 organising committee held the third press conference in order to provide detailed information about the organisation, ticket sales, plans and expectations. At that time, Arena Zagreb was decorated with EuroBasket 2015 billboards and panels, FIBA and sponsors' logos. The presenting partner of EuroBasket 2015 was Beko and the global partners were Champion, Head & Shoulders, InterSport, Japan Airlines, Molten, Peak, and Tissot. The national partners were Triglav and Laško.

The last "3 x 3" was held in Zagreb on 1 September. As a part of the Eurobasket 2015 opening ceremony, the Zagreb mayor Milan Bandić entered a free throw contest with basketball players Gordan Giriček and Slaven Rimac. Another participant was Jasenko Houra, a lead guitarist of "Prljavo kazalište", the band that held a concert at Ban Jelačić Square on 3 September (HKS, 2015) after the Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović and the president of FIBA Europe Turgay Demirel jointly declared the EuroBasket 2015 officially open. The ceremony was broadcast worldwide.

On the eve of championship, the HKS president held the fourth press conference. He voiced his displeasure over the lack of sponsorship by Croatian companies and the National Tourist Board, which did not recognize the opportunity for self-promotion via EuroBasket (Index.hr, 2015). At that moment, only 65,000 tickets were sold, 10,000 less than it was originally planned. They further tried to boost the ticket sale by including a free entrance to Dražen Petrović Memorial Center.

Near the end of August, the newspapers and the Internet portals reported about the poor promotion of the championship which caused a lot of negative publicity, particularly on the part of Index.hr Internet portal. The unfavourable image was strengthened by statements of our national representatives Bojan Bogdanović and Luka Žorić who claimed that people were not aware about the coming championship. Luka Žorić said: "I'm looking forward to European championship, but I still don't have any special feeling about it. EuroBasket is just around the corner and lots of people ask me where it is being played." At the press conference, the HKS president talked about his dissatisfaction with the general promotion of the championship (Index.hr, 2015). The fact that the sale was 10.000 tickets behind the plan reinforced his attitude.

## **5. Results and discussion**

The results of the descriptive case study show that six out of seven elements of the sports promotional mix were included in overall event's promotion, i.e. advertising, publicity, personal contact, incentives, atmospherics, and sponsorship (Table 1). The licensing was not a part of the promotional campaign, even though it should be an essential part of the sports promotional mix (Kolah, 2005). The most successful and the most effective part of promotion was personal contact, followed by publicity and incentives. Atmospherics was medium, but advertising and sponsorships were very poor. The weakest part of promotion was sponsorships, although they should be one of the most important sources of income in sport (Smith, 2008). These are the main findings of this paper, and the answers to the second research question.

The answer to the first research questions "Was the promotion of FIBA EuroBasket 2015, Croatia successful?" represents the sum of all promotional elements evaluated together. The researcher shows that the overall promotional campaign was good (medium) although the majority of implemented elements of the sports promotional mix could have been carried out much better. The elements potential, except personal contact, was only partially exhausted despite its significant role in promotion of sports event.

In comparison with the EuroBasket 2015 promotional campaigns in France, Germany and Latvia, the next part of this chapter explains the reasons why particular elements of the promotional mix were evaluated with certain descriptive marks. As we mentioned earlier, the licensing was not included in the promotion, even though it should have been, so it got the poorest mark. Along with licensing, the advertising and sponsorships were given slightly higher, but also poor grades. The reason for that was belated launch of the advertising campaign whose target group was the general public - only a month before the competition. Before that, the general public was not aware of the fact that Croatia was hosting the competition, since the majority of earlier promotional activities were focused on children and basketball fans. In addition, EuroBasket 2015, Croatia did not get an official website or a profile on any social media site, even though it is a known fact that social media are cost effective tools of advertising which attract huge public.

As the event did not attract the general public, it did not attract sponsors, either. The only two sponsors recognising the self-promotion opportunity via EuroBasket 2015, Croatia, were Laško and Triglav Group. Both companies

were from Slovenia, also one of the hosts of the EuroBasket 2015. That fact only confirmed the inadequacy of the event's promotion.

Despite the mascot Frenkie being the principal event promoter, present at all sorts of sports and public events from February till September, atmospherics got the medium grade. This was mostly due to the public lacking much information on competition, so that the atmosphere was missing not just in Zagreb as the host city, but in the entire country as well. Publicity and incentives were assessed as very good. Numerous publicity techniques were used, ranging from press conferences to different events. However, we find that only four press conferences for this type of event are not enough. Staging of all events that preceded EuroBasket 2015 (e.g. "3 x 3" tournaments, Masters at Ban Jelačić Square, the relay race, the courts' renovation campaign, the "Priljavo Kazalište" concert, the opening ceremony for all four host countries, etc.), should have created positive publicity and atmosphere, attracted the public and sponsors, and provided an opportunity to reignite the spark of interest in basketball. On the other hand, there was the negative publicity concerning free T-shirts (which participants did not get), free tickets for the rehearsal tournament and ticket prices for the "3 x 3" tournaments. In addition, there was a lot of negative publicity in the media about the poor promotion of championship. Incentives got a rather high grade, due to affordable ticket prices, starting from €10.

Personal contact was the strongest and finest part of the event's promotion. The ambassador of EuroBasket 2015, Croatia, Gordan Giriček and Croatian national team players visited primary schools in Zagreb and had personal contact with children in the form of socializing, taking photos, playing tournaments, etc. Moreover, Frenkie had a lot of personal contact with children and adults visiting various sports and public events throughout Croatia and several towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Table 1:** Elements of the sports promotional mix

Elements of the sports promotional mix	Included	Time of introduction	Frequency	Target groups	Not included	Evaluation
Advertising	Facility signage Billboards Citylight campaign Radio campaign TV campaign Sticker album	With delay With delay With delay With delay With delay With delay	Enough Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough Enough	<i>General public</i> <i>General public</i> <i>General public</i> General public General public Children	Social media The event website	<b>Poor</b>
Publicity	Press conferences	On time	Not enough	Media		

	Press releases Renovation of school basketball courts "3 x 3" tournament Masters at Ban Jelačić square Basketball relay race FIBA's trophy arrival in Zagreb Two fan arenas Opening ceremony for all four countries "Priljav kazalište" concert	On time With delay  On time On time  On time  On time On time On time On time	Not enough Not enough  Enough Enough  Enough  Enough Enough Enough Enough	Media Children  Basketball fans General public / Basketball fans  General public / Basketball fans General public / Basketball fans Basketball fans / Media General public General public		<b>Very good</b>
Personal contact	Gordan Giriček and members of Croatian national team: Visited schools and played tournaments with children Played Masters at Ban Jelačić Square Participated in relay race Frenkie visited: Primary schools Down 21 Association Basketball competitions Students' Sports Day Various sports events Floraart Cest is d'Best	On time  On time  On time  On time  On time On time  On time On time  On time On time	Enough  Enough  Enough  Enough  Enough Enough  Enough Enough	Children  General public / Basketball fans General public / Basketball fans Children  Children  Basketball fans Students  Sports fans General public General public		<b>Excellent</b>
Incentives	Free tickets for children under six Free tickets for people in wheelchairs The lowest ticket price of all four host countries Prize contests Free tickets for the	On time  On time  On time  On time On time	Enough  Enough  Enough  Not enough Not enough	General public  General public  General public  General public Basketball fans	Free jerseys Free hats	<b>Very good</b>

	rehearsal tournament Free T-shirts	On time	Not enough	Basketball fans / Children		
	Free entrance to Dražen Petrović Memorial Center	On time	Enough	General public		
Atmospherics	Mascot Frenkie	On time	Enough	Children / General public	Displays Posters Signs In-store materials	<b>Good</b>
	Cheerleaders	On time	Not enough	General public		
Licensing	-	-	Not exist	-	Logos on: Jackets Caps T-shirts Towels Bedding Toys	<b>Very poor</b>
Sponsorships	Laško	With delay	Not enough	General public	Greater number of sponsors	<b>Poor</b>
	Triglav Group	With delay	Not enough	General public		
<b>Evaluation of the overall promotional campaign</b>						<b>Good</b>

## 6. Conclusion

There are various reasons why countries (and cities) bid to host sports events, especially mega or major ones. Sports events generate various economic, socio-cultural, political and environmental impacts by attracting significant flow of travellers (sportsmen/women and delegations, spectators, media representatives, etc.). In addition, millions of people follow coverage of these events watching TV, listening to the radio, reading stories in newspapers and online, etc. This gives hosts a great opportunity to gain international visibility, primarily achieved through adequate promotional activities based on an effective promotional mix.

A qualitative case study analysis was applied to the research into seven elements of sports promotional mix (advertising, publicity, personal contact, incentives, atmospherics, licensing and sponsorship) for the FIBA EuroBasket 2015 held in Zagreb, Croatia in September 2015. All elements except licensing were included in the overall event's promotion. The most

successful and the most effective was the promotion by personal contact (via the communication between players and schoolchildren, and official mascot's Frenkie's visits to various events), that was conducted on time and with sufficient intensity. The weakest element, apart from licensing, was sponsorship with only two sponsors. Certain types of media were inadequately used, especially when compared to other host countries (the use of billboards, the Internet and the social media). Most of the elements were included on time (publicity, personal contact, incentives, atmospherics), but lacked the sufficient level of intensity (advertising, publicity, sponsorship). They were also misdirected (launched too late for general public), or followed by negative connotations (the HKS president's dissatisfaction with the National Tourist Board response and the national representatives' statements that people were not properly informed about the championship). In general, the overall promotional campaign was evaluated as good.

## **7. Managerial implications**

The present case study gives managers a valuable insight regarding the (in) effective management of sports events promotion, and the elements of the promotional mix, respectively. Promotion is a vital part of any event's visibility and the successful promotion performance is a prerequisite for success of the entire event. It is not only essential to include all the elements of the promotional mix, but also to make sure their timing is spot-on and intensive enough. The case subjected to analysis in this paper portrays the consequences of delayed advertising, resulting in the lack of atmosphere, 10.000 visitors less than anticipated, only two official sponsors and, ultimately, possibly poor economic benefits for the host city and the country which supported the event with considerable financial resources. A proper level of intensity of the individual promotional mix elements is of great importance for promotion success. A small number of press conferences and press releases lead to poor media awareness of the event, subsequently translating to poor awareness of the general public. Moreover, the excessive use of certain promotional elements may cause needless expenses while failing to produce desired results. Next to the proper time and frequency management, a target group is that critical moment in the event promotion and the key puzzle piece of promotion success. If the target group visiting major sports event is general public, and not only sports or basketball fans, then the promotion and its elements will focus on that particular target



group in order to achieve optimal results with limited resources.

## 8. Future research

This paper can be a prelude to an entire FIBA EuroBasket 2015 analysis of promotional activities. For instance, further research could be directed towards comparative analyses of promotional activities among host countries, as well as success of each promotional campaign. Future research could focus on each element of the promotional mix separately, its timing and frequency management. Future studies focusing on the sports events promotion could also generate insight into economic, social and environmental benefits for the host regions.

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## **SPORT AND TOURISM – MOTIVES, ATTITUDES AND SATISFACTION OF TOURISTS IN CROATIA**

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### **Summary**

Sport and tourism are two very important phenomena in Croatia. The image of Croatia is often related to sport as a result of Croatian athletes achieving great success in various sports competitions across the world, as well as due to the fact that sport is an important aspect of the country's culture. Tourism is one of the key economic activities, it continually grows and it is closely tied to sporting and recreational activities. The reasons for this are the natural resources the country has at its disposal, and the fact that sporting and recreational activities are becoming an increasingly important aspect on the tourist market. The goal of this work is to highlight areas which require improvement showing the survey results on sport and recreation as motives to visit Croatia, and level of satisfaction with the elements of destination supply. The data were collected as a part of a larger survey on attitudes and expenditure of tourists in Croatia (Institute for Tourism, 2015) conducted on 4,035 respondents interviewed in 76 destinations in the seven coastal counties that account for more than 90% of total overnights realized in Croatia. Results are shown in terms of age, travel party and frequency of visiting Croatia. They illustrate that sport and recreation is among the top ten motives. According to age, 'sport and recreation' dominantly motivates the younger age group (younger than 29). The results also show that satisfaction with the diversity of sporting facilities is moderate. Generally, results indicate that further improvement of the quality of sporting and recreational facilities is necessary, as well as better promotion of sport and recreational possibilities among tourists who are

already vacationing at the destination. The main recommendation point out better cooperation of sports and tourism organizations on the national as well as on the local level.

**Key words:** satisfaction, motives, sport and recreation, tourism destination, Croatia

## **Introduction**

Sport and tourism share historic roots, stemming from the times of the first Olympics when athletes became tourists as they travelled to the Games. Connections between sport and tourism can be traced to ancient times (Standeven & De Knop, 1999). Both sport and tourism are multifunctional and complex social phenomena whose direct and indirect effects are significant, but seldom measured.

Being an athlete means frequent travel to foreign countries in order to partake in sports competitions, while major sports events such as the Olympics, as well as the European and World Championships, are tourist attractions with substantial economic and other positive impacts on the image of the host country. Such a correlation of sport and tourism is recognized and backed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), who regularly renew their partnership stating – “sport and tourism are two major forces in service of mutual understanding, culture and development of the society; sport and tourism share common goals – creating bridges and understanding between different cultures, lifestyles and traditions; they promote peace and good will among nations, they motivate and inspire young people, and they offer everyone fun and enjoyment that relieve the pressures of everyday life.” (UNWTO, 2010) The partnership of these two organizations began in 1999 in order to strengthen ties between tourism and sport, and back numerous initiatives in the field on both the national and international levels. Croatian Olympic Committee adopted Strategic plan for sport development and Olympic movement (COC, 2015) and emphasised the need for establishing closed collaboration between sport systems and tourism organizations in Croatia. In this strategic documents the authors recognized weaknesses of poor connections between this very important socioeconomic phenomena in Croatia. In order to achieve better results four development directions were identified: more intensive promotion, product development,



organization of major sporting events and the development of sport infrastructure.

Many reviews of the relationship between sport and tourism commence with a comment on the respective sizes of the sport and tourism industries and/or the increasing convergence of sport and tourism in the practice of providers and participants (Weed, 2009, p. 616). The democratisation of sport and tourism has resulted in the most sports offering the potential to generate tourist activity (Higham & Hinch, 2002, p. 176).

It is important to mention the growing demand for sports and recreation activity in tourism destinations. Important drivers of a new demand are- the observed trends of growing preference for shorter, more intense and high quality holiday- the growing demand and acceptance of higher accessibility and facility density- the disconnection from nature as a result of changing lifestyle and growing urbanization (Margaryan & Fredman, 2017). Along with sports and recreation facilities, natural and geographical features are very important contents of sports tourism product, and the development of their features and quality must be based on the natural and geographical resources of a specific area (Bartoluci, Čavlek et al., 2007, pp. 343-348). Croatia possesses extremely diverse natural resources for numerous sport activity and outdoor recreation so the development of sport tourism is a top issue among scientific and professionals.

Both sport and tourism are social and complementary activities, which have been developing continually in Croatia and both became part of the national culture. It can be said with certainty that both phenomena are of paramount importance to Croatia as a country that traditionally offers major support and monitors the development of sport, while tourism is the backbone of the economy. Considering the investment, the results show that Croatia is a very successful sporting nation (proved by an increasing number of medals won at major events over the years), (COC, 2015) while tourism is also an activity that has been growing over the last decade, regardless of the economic crisis, and it is competitive with a frequent assertion of great, yet untapped resources. These resources most certainly include the natural and social assumptions for development of particular aspects of sporting tourism. Research conducted over the last several years has shown that most tourism products in Croatia rely on some form of sport or recreation (Boranić Živoder & Čorak, 2014); however, sports and tourism organizations are not yet connected well enough to have a more intense influence on the development of sports tourism. Sport and recreation tourism products consists of numerous of activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, rafting,

sailing, etc. For example, regarding to the adventure activities UNWTO (2014) points out that there are two main categories of adventure activities, hard and soft adventure. Both are highly lucrative segments (UNWTO, 2014).

The latest research of the tourist demand in coastal counties of Croatia indicated a continuing interest and demand for various sporting activities, while satisfaction with the current offer is not very high, indicating a gap between the supply and demand, which must be bridged in order to achieve adequate tourism development. The primary goal of this paper is to shed light on the interests and preferences in the tourist demand considering some sociodemographic characteristics, as well as propose a possible course of action with regard to the tourism policy, in order to adapt the offer to the tourists' needs as soon as possible.

## **Methodology and results**

The data were collected as a part of a larger survey on attitudes and expenditures of tourists in Croatia – “TOMAS Summer survey 2014” (Institute for Tourism, 2015; Marušić, Sever & Čorak, 2017). The survey was conducted during the summer months of 2014 (June-September), and includes 4,035 respondents interviewed in 76 destinations in the seven coastal counties that account for more than 90% of total overnights realized in Croatia. The questionnaire encompassed main travel characteristics (including motivation), social demographic profile of tourists, and activities during stay in destination, level of satisfaction with various elements of the Croatian tourist product and tourists expenditures. Except for consumption and age, all questions were closed-ended, some of them with multiple responses. Satisfaction is measured on a 5-point Likert scale. A stratified sample has been chosen and strata include the different types of accommodation facilities (hotels and similar facilities, camps and private accommodation) and major generating markets (16). Results have been weighted by actual data on tourism flows to be representative of tourists' population in the survey year. Majority of the results connected with sporting activities, motivation and sociodemographic profile was used for the purpose of this research. According to the research goals descriptive analyses was applied.

In the decision to visit Croatia the survey shows how motivating sport and recreation activities are as the level of satisfaction with these elements of

tourism supply. Furthermore, these two characteristics depends on age, travel party and frequency of visits.

**Table 1:** Top ten motives for visiting Croatia in 2014

Rank	Motives	%
1	Passive rest and relaxation	75.1
2	Entertainment	43.0
3	New experiences	29.9
4	Enjoying food and drink, gastronomy	26.3
5	Visiting natural attractions	20.6
6	Sport and recreation	6.8
7	Visiting cultural landmarks and events	6.6
8	Visiting friends and relatives	6.1
9	Health reasons	4.1
10	Scuba diving	3.2

Source: Database of the Institute for Tourism (2014).

The research results illustrate that sport and recreation is among the top ten motives, and in 2014 it was ranked 6<sup>th</sup>. This can be connected with the research undertaken for the needs of the “Strategy of Croatian Tourism 2020”, whose results have shown that the image of Croatia is closely related to sport. In other words, sport was the first association at the mention of Croatia among 6.3% of the respondents who has not been previously to Croatia (Institute for Tourism, 2011). These results indicate the need for improving the offer of sporting activities due to the already established image, and because sport and recreation are among first ten motives that attract tourists to visit Croatia. However, there are differences according to demand characteristics (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Sport and recreation as motives to visit Croatia in 2014

	Characteristics	Rank	%
Age of tourists	<29 yrs.	6	7.6
	30-49 yrs.	6	7.3
	50 <	9	5.6
Travel party	With family members	6	7.9
	Alone	8	8.3
	With a partner only	9	4.2
	With friends or acquaintances	6	9.0
Number of visits	First visit	7	5.1
	Second visit	7	5.3

	3 to 5 visits	6	8.6
	6 or more visits	7	7.2
Total		6	6.8

Source: Database of the Institute for Tourism (2014).

Predictably, according to age, 'sport and recreation' dominantly motivates the younger age group (younger than 29), while this declines with ageing. Apart from that, it is evident that 'sports and recreation' is a more important motive for family guests and those visiting with friends, as well as those who have already been to Croatia between 3 and 5 times. Nonetheless, while younger guests are more motivated by 'sports and recreation', these aspects of the offer are not negligible as motivation among older guests. Considering the global trend of healthy living, it is to be expected that older guests will become increasingly motivated by some forms of 'sports and recreation' suitable to their age (Kasriel-Alexander, 2016). It is, therefore, important to assert the specific activities and sports resources aimed at this population.

**Table 3:** Level of satisfaction with the element of tourism supply at the destination in 2014

Rank	Elements of tourism supply	Level of satisfaction
1	Scenic and natural beauty	Very high
2	Friendliness of staff in the accommodation establishment	Very high
3	Suitability for a family holiday	Very High
4	Personal safety	Very high
5	Picturesqueness and tidiness of destination	High
6	Friendliness of the local people	High
7	Service quality in the accommodation establishment	High
8	'Value for money' for the accommodation	High
9	Comfort of accommodation	High
10	Food quality at accommodation establishment	High
11	Value for money gastronomic offer	High
12	Quality of food outside the accommodation establishment	High
13	Clean beach	High
14	Suitability for short break holiday	High
15	A wealth of gastronomic offer	High
16	Environmental preservation	High
17	Quality of information in destination	Low
18	Supply of organized sightseen trips	Low

19	Accessibility of this place	Low
20	Shopping opportunities	Low
21	Equipment on the beach and beach tidiness	Low
22	Presentation of cultural heritage	Low
23	Wealth of sport activities offered	Low
24	Quality of tourism signage of attractions	Low
25	Variety of entertainment opportunities	Low
26	Variety of cultural events	Low
27	Quality of local transport	Low
28	Destination suitable for people with special needs	Very Low

Source: Database of the Institute for Tourism (2014).

#### Levels of satisfaction



Although sport and recreation as motive was stated by 6.8% tourists, it is important that the results also show that satisfaction of tourists with the diversity of sporting facilities is only in the medium range, which indicates a need for stronger, better devised development of this elements of tourism supply. This is additionally evident from Table 4, in which respondents of the most motivated age group (younger than 29) are the least satisfied. It is safe to assume that their expectations are higher, they are more demanding and critical. Apart from that, couples with children and guests visiting with friends also expressed lower satisfaction with 'the wealth of sport activities offered', which proves that the offer of sports and recreation (mostly sport infrastructure and sport programs) at given destinations must be adapted according to target market segments. Interestingly, satisfaction with the sporting and recreational options increases with the number of visits, which could be indicative of improvement in quality, but possibly also the guests' better knowledge of the destination and what it has to offer, which could, in turn, indicate the need for better promotional strategies and/or quality of information about the sporting possibilities and options during the guest's stay at the destination.

**Table 4:** Satisfaction with the supply of sporting facilities in 2014

	Characteristic	Rank
Age of tourists	<29 g.	Low
	30-49 yrs.	Middle
	50 <	Middle
Travel party	With family members	Low
	Alone	Middle
	With a partner	Middle
	With friends	Low
Number of visits	First visit	Low
	Second visit	Low
	3 to 5 visits	Middle
	6 or more visits	Middle
Total		Middle

Source: Database of the Institute for Tourism (2014).

Levels of satisfaction



According to the research results on consumption, small proportion of average daily consumption is being spent on 'sport and recreation' during the stay at the destination. In the structure of the tourists' average daily consumption, only 2.8% (1.83 euros) is spent on 'sport and recreation'. As much as 73% is still being spent on accommodation and food in restaurants and bars. These results indicate a need for enriching the destination tourism product with the possibilities for sport, culture and fun activities for tourists. Why are the investments in sport tourism in Croatia one of the most feasible ones? First, Croatia is already recognized as a "country that is associated with sports", thus expectations have been set, and secondly, the development of sporting and recreational activities is trend in the growing health concern all over the world and it can be anticipated that the demand for an active and healthy holidays will increase with great probability.

## Conclusion

Sport has become an important motive, but also the substance of staying at the destinations. Sporting and recreational needs often arise as a consequence of a modern way of life and work, greatly influencing the demand for sporting and recreational activities in tourism, serving as an encouragement for the development of sporting and recreational tourism. The main strategic document for Croatian tourism – “Master plan and tourism development strategy until 2020”, shows that more than half of the tourism products rely on sport or recreation (nautical tourism, golf tourism, cycling tourism, mountaineering tourism, eco-tourism, adventure and sport tourism – diving, kayaking, rafting, hunting and fishing, snow sports, sporting preparations and training, sports events). A smaller number of tourists still visit Croatia in the summer motivated solely by sport, but most sporting tourism usually takes place off season, utilizing various types of accommodation and attracting tourists of various profiles. Depending on the type of resources in a particular region, with further development of sports tourism Croatia could come closer to the realization of its long-term goals – reducing seasonality, increasing revenue and diversification of the offer, without negative effects and pressures of an increase in demand during the summer months. To a great extent, sporting tourism utilizes natural resources or the infrastructure concerning nature (the sea, the rivers, walking-paths), which can bring excellent results in a short time if the organization, inventive “service packaging” and target promotion are effective enough. The results have shown that the tourism product must be improved in accordance with the needs of targeted segments.

Due to insufficient cooperation between the sporting and tourism institutions, the need for athletes to actively participate in the promotion of Croatian tourism has not yet been recognized, nor are tourism organizations sufficiently involved in the organization of sporting and other events in order to make them part of the traditional tourism products in a particular area. To this day, the Croatian tourism marketing has not used the needs of contemporary tourism clients and the tradition of our sports to establish a more intense communication with specific targeted segments. The product must be advertised even when the guests are already at their destination, and it is also necessary to connect tourism and sports organizations.

Croatia has achieved notable success in organizing major sporting events in numerous sports. Our advantageous geographic position in Europe, which ensures great accessibility, and the managerial abilities of many people in the national sports associations are insufficiently used in the organization of

major international competitions or other events. Although it is clear that such events lead to significant direct economic, and indirect promotional effects, an evaluation of such effects has not been undertaken until this day. In the circumstances when public funds are dwindling, it is certain this will become an important starting point for an evaluation of impacts, or the cost-benefit analysis of the organization of sporting events. In 2010, UNWO has organized an international conference with the theme of “Tourism, Sport and Mega Events”, issuing a manual on mega-events and their influence on the sustainable development of tourism (social dimensions, evaluation of effects, behaviour of spenders).

Both sport and tourism stimulate investment into infrastructure projects such as sports complexes, airports, roads, hotels and other facilities, which can be utilized and enjoyed by the local population and the tourists alike. Although the accommodation capacity in Croatia is currently not a limiting factor in the development of sport, many facilities could be categorized as facilities for accommodation of athletes, which would require appropriate adaptation (for example, an adaptation of the food offer and other facilities required for a particular sport – equipment, wellness and fitness facilities). The development of particular forms of sport could have an influence on greater use of the existing capacity in sports halls and other sports infrastructure, which has been insufficiently used in numerous destinations. Nowadays, the relationship between sporting and tourism organizations relies on individual, *ad hoc* activities of organizing and carrying out events, but it is neither planned nor systematic. Therefore, an establishment of a strategic partnership, as well as the determination of mutual goals, priorities and activities are a basic prerequisite for the implementation of the aforementioned developmental ideas. Such a partnership could successfully follow the example of the main international organizations, better utilize the resources and potentials for an even more successful development of both, sport and tourism.

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## **VISITOR'S PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BEHAVIOUR IN PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS: A CASE STUDY OF ALT PIRINEU NATURAL PARK - SPAIN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Recreational and sport activities in protected natural areas (PNA) have increased in recent years. Specific policies regulate PNA, thus are an appropriate time and environment to promote health and wellbeing through the practice of physical activity and sport. Identifying the visitors profile is essential in PNA to provide targeted programmes. The purpose of this study is to identify visitors' profile in relation to the type and intensity of physical activity according to metabolic equivalent (MET) consumption in order to investigate the association between physical activity behaviour and visitors' characteristics at Alt Pirineu Natural Park, Spain. Visitors to the Alt Pirineu Natural Park completed structured surveys to analyse their type and

intensity of physical activity (independent outcome) according to the MET compendium in relation to the dependent outcomes such as: sociodemographic data and visiting behaviour. Visitors completed 1600 surveys from 16 accesses to the park during 12 months. One hundred thirty-five (8.6%) visitors reported sedentary activities (remaining at the park entrance), 129 (8.2%) light-intensity activities (driving 4x4 vehicle, fishing trout), 1036 (65.8%), moderate-intensity (hiking, mushrooming, riding ATV or motorbike, snow shoeing, downhill skiing) and 274 (17.4%) reported vigorous-intensity activities (trekking, climbing hills, MTB, Nordic skiing and ski touring). Twenty-six cases were discarded. The results were discussed in terms of visitors' groups and management implication.

**Keywords:** Protected Natural Areas, physical activity-intensity, visitors segmentation, health-enhancing physical activity

## INTRODUCTION

Protected areas provide multiple and valuable ecosystem services to society, such as biodiversity conservation, clean air and water, recreation and environmental education (Romagosa, Eagles & Lemieux 2015). However, protected natural areas (PNA) are not only promising means to satisfy ecosystem services, but they also are an ideal environment to promote physical activity (Bedimo-Rung & others, 2005). Protected areas, such as national parks, natural parks or wilderness areas are popular tourist destinations. It is not surprising then, that a number of research and community initiatives are focusing on the contributions of protected areas to the enhancement of physical activity and health.

While health and physical activity promotion as a matter of policy may be a newer trend in protected areas, biodiversity and landscape conservation are well monitored. Despite the evidences of park and protected areas as places to exercise (Bedimo-Rung, Mowen & Cohen, 2005; Kaczynski and Henderson, 2008; Mowen and Baker, 2009; Pietilä and others, 2014; Romagosa, Eagles and Lemieux, 2015), there are only few studies that include physical activity outcomes; especially in Europe and Spain. Indeed, much of past physical activity research has been focused in urban parks and has been developed mainly in the USA and Australia (Calogiuri & Chroni 2014; Romagosa, Eagles & Lemieux 2015). Currently, little research exists on the amount of physical activity in PNA and even less research focused on physical activity intensities. Some of the few examples we can find in the

research carried out by Larson, Whiting, Green & Bowker (2010), Mowen, Trautwein, Graefe & Son (2012), Veitch & others (2015) and Brown, Weber & Schebella (2016). However, whereas the major part of them take in consideration this perspective in a complementary way, only the study carried out by Mowen, Trautwein, Graefe & Son (2012) based their research in METs approach. In this case, the study carried out by these authors take in consideration the visitors participation in vigorous and moderate physical activity at the park during their visit applying a systematic survey and conclude, that demographics, activity type, and desired psychological experience preferences played a significant role in shaping park-based physical activity intensities, but their influence varied depending on the intensity level (moderate vs vigorous). Understanding physical activity intensities in protected areas could not only foster management decisions on visitor and resource management, it can also contribute to the evaluation of protected areas as destinations for promoting physical activity. Incorporating and analyzing physical activity intensities and visitor characteristics associated, would help to engage specific program and policy interventions to increase physical activity in these areas.

The purpose of this study is to identify visitors' profile in relation to the type and intensity of physical activity according to metabolic equivalent (MET) consumption in order investigate the association between physical activity behaviour and visitors' characteristics at Alt Pirineu Natural Park, Spain.

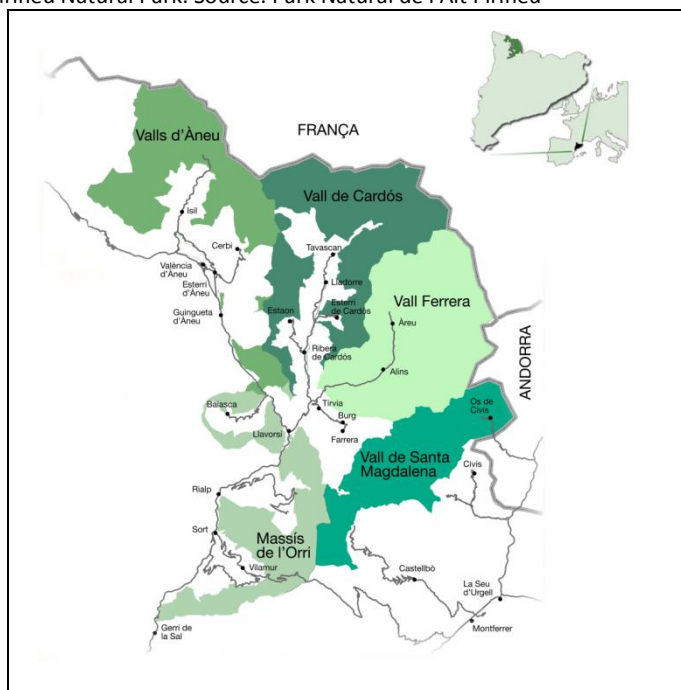
## **METHOD**

### ***Study area***

The present study was carried out in the Alt Pirineu Natural Park, which was established in 2003 by the Catalan government and covers an area of 69,850 hectares (172,600 acres), including the highest peaks of the Catalan Pyrenees. It stretches over the counties of Pallars Sobirà and Alt Urgell (Figure 1). This is an area of great ecological value and scenic beauty that preserves a series of traditional communal rights over the exploitation of local resources. For management purposes, the park is divided into five geographic areas: Vall d'Àneu, Vall de Cardós, Vall Ferrera, Vall de Santa Magdalena and Massís de l'Orri. One of the park's most important features is that it has a vast provision of trails and managed areas to practise outdoor activities such as hiking, mountain biking, snow activities and off-road driving. The recreational offer includes more than 173 trails (for more

information, see Farías, 2011b). Moreover, Alt Pirineu Natural Park has a large number of protected species, both animal and vegetable, and a variety of landscapes ranging from Mediterranean forests to alpine flora. Landscapes include lake Certascan glacier, the largest in the Pyrenees, and the highest peak of Catalonia, *Pica d'Estats*, which has become a symbol of Catalonia region. The park also includes settlements up to fifteen towns, where visitors can enjoy an interesting cultural heritage, both architectural and archaeological and sacred art and also participate in some of their festivals and traditions, some of which are really ancient.

**Figure 1** : Alt Pirineu Natural Park. Source. Parc Natural de l'Alt Pirineu



Sources: Parc Natural de l'Alt Pirineu. Generalitat de Catalunya.

### **Data collection**

Data from 1600 on-site structured interviews distributed proportionally between 16 controlled entrances or sampling points according to the number of visitors was collected. The on-site interviews were held between

July 2010 and June 2011 on 2 to 15, depending on the entrance, according to two main criterions: 1) the amount of visitors using the entrance, estimated by a sensor pressure resulting in three categories (i.e., priority entrance, more than 10,000 visitors per year; medium entrance, from 3,000 to 10,000 visitors per year; and secondary entrance, less than 3,000 visitors per year), and 2) the time of the year that the entrance was open. For instance, while entrances Tavascan and Sant Joan de l'Erm are open all year long, Fornet and Cerbi entrances are closed during winter and during some months of autumn and spring. In total 131 sampling unities were taking in consideration. See table 1.

Visitors were interviewed between 10 am and 7 pm. The respondents were approached on their way out of the reserves through the main entrances because most of the questions included in the questionnaires referred to the activities they had (e.g., place visited, activity practiced and length of visit)

The survey was conducted with the assistance of staff trained in field survey techniques. A random sample selection system was adopted depending on the route of access to the park. For example, we did one interview per car, one interview per group of walkers, of bikers and one of people using other forms of access. When a group was encountered, the researcher alternated asking the first adult male or female to complete the questionnaire. The average time spent on the interview was 8 minutes. The response rate was of 96%.

**Table 1:** Sampling distribution and surveying days for each access point

Sampling points	Type of access	Total days
1. Fornet	Priority <sup>a</sup>	9
2. Cerbi	Priority	8
3. Tavascan	Priority	15
4. Esterri de Cardós	Priority	10
5. La Farga	Priority	10
6. Tor	Priority	10
7. Bordes de Virós	Priority	14
8. Coll de So	Priority	10
9. Sant Joan de l'Erm	Priority	15
10. Baïasca	Priority	10
11. Os de Civís	Intermediate <sup>b</sup>	6
12. Comes de Rubió	Intermediate	6
13. Mollera	Secondary <sup>c</sup>	2

14. Escaló	Secondary	2
15. Estaon	Secondary	2
16. Arboló	Secondary	2
Total		<b>131</b>

<sup>a</sup> Entrances with an estimated register higher than 10000 visitors per year;

<sup>b</sup> Entrances with an estimated register from 3000 to 10000 visitors per year;

<sup>c</sup> entrances with an estimated register lower than 3000 visitors per year.

Sources: Authors

### ***Questionnaire***

The questionnaire included 16 close-ended questions in two sections. The first included six demographic questions about the visitors (i.e., age, gender, residence, level of education, occupation, knowledge of the park and its protection status). The second section included nine questions related to visiting behaviour (i.e., group profile, accommodation, frequency of visits, length of visit in the park and park area, type of trail and sectors visited, and reasons to visit the park). Regarding the reason or motivations of visiting the area, we included nine items based on research by McColl and Reilly (1993), Wallace & Smith (1997), Chhetri & Arrowsmith (2002) and (Farías 2011). Respondents were asked to specify the three most important reasons in order of priority.

Although the survey used close-ended question, there was the possibility to register some other recreational or physical activities. In this case, the activity selected was highest intense form of physical activity and interaction with the natural environment. To facilitate comparison of the number of visitors to different trails, at each access point the trails were divided into two categories according to level of popularity and accessibility: 1) classic trails (i.e., hallmark trails in each area, which are better signposted and maintained than the others); and 2) other trails not included in the first category (i.e., no classical, did not know, no park).

### ***Data analysis***

Statistical analyses were made using PASW Statistic Processor (SPSS Statistics 18). First, we identified the different groups of activities. Then we classified these activities according to MET consumption (Ainsworth & others, 2000 and 2011). Activities that are considered sedentary required a metabolic consumption less than 1.5 METs, light intensity between 1.5 and 3 METs, moderate intensity required from 3 to 6 METs, and vigorous intensity require more than 6 METs (Table 2). Chi-Square test were conducted to

examine bivariate associations between park-based sedentary, light, moderate and vigorous-intensity physical activity, and socio-demographic, park visitation characteristics and opinions. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the park visitor group characteristics.

We deem appropriate to conceptualize the physical activities included in Table 2. *Hiking* is defined as all kinds of physical activity that involve hiking in the countryside, the forest or the mountains along trails or paths for more than 30 min. Whereas *Recreational Hiking* refers to a recreational activity that implied walking "for pleasure" at a moderate pace. *Mushroom picking* is defined as all kinds of tourist activities that involve picking mushrooms while walking in the countryside, mainly in forests. This is a very popular activity in the Pyrenees that requires more than 30 minutes of walking. *Mountaineering* includes only people climbing a peak and *Mountain Biking* incorporates visitors using a mountain bike. Finally, *Staying at the place* of arrival was used as a category for people who have not done any of the previous mentioned activities, and it included, for example, resting on picnicking areas.

**Table 2:** Recreational, sporting and tourist activities and MET classification

Activities	Total sample n=1562	%	Code <sup>a</sup>	MET	Category
Staying to entrance	135	8.4	09055	1.3	Sedentary
Recreational hiking (less than 30 min)	289	18.1	17090	3.3	Moderate
Hiking (more than 30 min)	436	27.3	17082	5.3	Moderate
Mountaineering	107	6.7	17040	7.3	Vigorous
Mountain biking	68	4.3	01009	8.5	Vigorous
Picking Mushrooms (more than 30 min)	199	12.4	08246	3.5	Moderate
Off-road driving	109	6.8	09105	2.0	Light
Moto-cross. Quads	22	4.0	15470	4.0	Moderate
Snow shoeing	36	2.3	19090	5.3	Moderate
Skiing cross country	81	5.1	19090	9.0	Vigorous
Skiing downhill	54	3.4	19160	5.3	Moderate
Snow mountaineering	18	1.1	19130	15.5	Vigorous
Fishing	20	1.3	04061	1.8	Light
Others	26	1.6	--	--	--
Total	1.600	100	--	--	--

<sup>a</sup> Ainsworth (2000): Sedentary behavior  $\leq 1.5$  MET; light (1.5 to 3 MET), moderate (3 to 6 MET), vigorous ( $>6$  MET).



## RESULTS

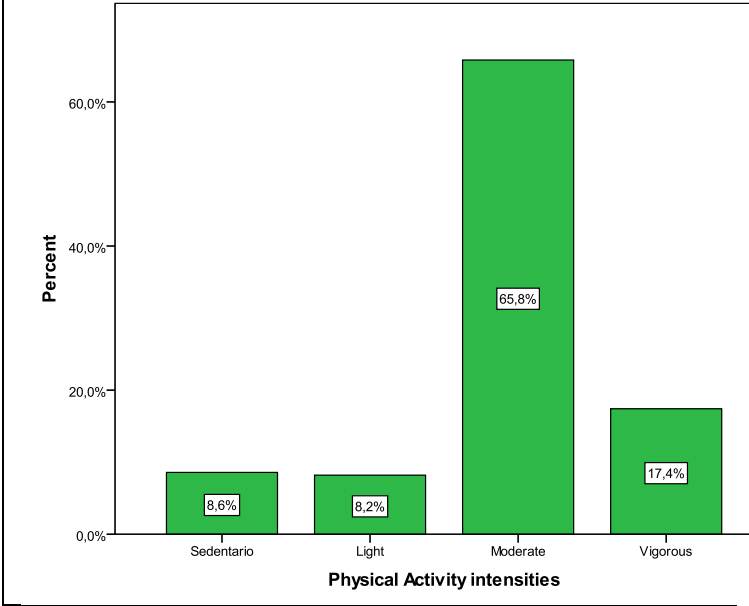
### ***Main characteristic of visitors***

Significantly, the sample included more men than women (67.2% and 32.8%, respectively). Respondents' ages ranged from 12 (the age of eligibility for participation) to 86, the 29% between 32 to 41 years. More than 54% were residents in Barcelona and 14.2% live in the Natural Park area. The 49% completed University education and have a wage-earner occupation (44.7%). Of the respondents, 36.1% had known about the area for a long time, 17.5% had heard about it by word of mouth (17.5%), and 83.5% were aware of the area's protected status. The respondents recorded their responses to several questions associated with visiting behaviour: about 31.1% were visiting the park with the family, 28.5% with their partner and 28.8% with their friends. They would stay in a hotel (23.2%) or second residence (20.2%), and 35.4% of them were visiting the protected area for the first time. Most of them visited the park for 0-6 hours (81.39%) and visit the classic trails (78.8%). See Total Sample in Tables 3 and 4.

### ***Physical activity intensities and visitors characteristics***

The results obtained in the current fieldwork shows that 135 (8.6%) visitors reported sedentary activities, 129 (8.2%) light-intensity activities, 1036 visitors (65.8%) moderate-intensity and 274 visitors (17.4%) vigorous-intensity. See Graph 1.

**Graph 1:** Physical activities intensities in the protected natural area



Sources: Authors

The socio-demographic characteristics of visitors according to physical activity intensities are shown in Table 3. Significant differences in park use according to physical activity intensities were observed for age, sex, education, occupation, and level of knowledge of protection status of the PNA. Comparing by age groups, a lower proportion of older adults and seniors (52 years and above) were observed in the Light activity group (23.7%) and a higher proportion of young adults (22 to 41 years) were observed both in Sedentary and Vigorous groups (47.4% and 55.2%, respectively). Although men were majority in all categories, a major proportion of women were observed in the Sedentary and Moderate visitors group (41.5% and 34.1%, respectively) and a higher level of men were observed in the Light group (81.4%). Moreover, regarding to level of education, a higher proportion of visitors with university degrees engaged in moderate and vigorous-intensity physical activity (47.5% and 57.6%, respectively). Finally, there is a positive relationship between the physical activity-intensity and the level of knowledge of protection status. The more visitors physical activity-intensity the more knowledge about the status of protection of the PNA they have.

**Table 3:** Variables that best define socio-demographic characteristics of the Alt Pirineu Natural Park visitors group (see text for more details)

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Sedentary n=135 (8.6%)</b>	<b>Light n=129 (8.2%)</b>	<b>Moderate n=1036 (65.8%)</b>	<b>Vigorous n=274 (17.4%)</b>	<b>Total N=1574</b>
<b>Age groups*</b>					
21 years or less	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%	2.9%	1.7%
22 to 31 years	13.3%	7.0%	12.0%	17.2%	12.6%
32 to 41 years	34.1%	20.9%	26.9%	38.0%	29.0%
42 to 51 years	27.4%	31.0%	25.7%	25.9%	26.3%
52 to 61 years	17.8%	27.1%	22.6%	13.1%	20.9%
Over 62 years	5.9%	12.4%	11.4%	2.9%	9.5%
<b>Sex*</b>					
Male	58.4%	81.4%	65.9%	69.7%	67.2%
Female	41.5%	18.6%	34.1%	30.3%	32.8%
<b>Current place of residence</b>					
Barcelona County	54.8%	53.5%	58.1%	57.2%	54.7%
Lleida County	16.3%	11.6%	10.4%	8.0%	9.5%
Tarragona County	9.6%	6.2%	4.9%	4.5%	6.6%
Girona County	1.5%	3.9%	3.8%	4.8%	3.6%
Other Provinces	5.9%	5.4%	7.8%	10.8%	7.7%
Other Countries	1.4%	5.5%	4.4%	5.4%	1.8%
Residence zone	8.9%	6.2%	8.6%	8.3%	14.2%
Andorra	1.5%	7.8%	1.9%	1.0%	1.8%
<b>Level of education*</b>					
Primary education	6.7%	10.1%	10.1%	4.7%	8.9%
Secondary education	20.7%	21.7%	15.4%	13.1%	16.0%
Vocational training	24.4%	24.8%	26.9%	24.5%	26.1%
University and more	41.2%	43.4%	47.5%	57.6%	49.0%
<b>Occupation*</b>					
Student	0.7%	1.6%	2.2%	3.7%	7.3%
Wage-earner	56.3%	34.1%	41.5%	42.8%	44.7%
Self-employed	16.0%	39.5%	25.6%	21.6%	25.6%
Government employee	13.3%	7.8%	15.0%	12.4%	13.8%
Unemployed	2.2%	4.7%	4.1%	5.5%	4.2%
Retired	6.7%	12.4%	8.5%	1.8%	7.5%
Homemaker	0.7%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	.4%
<b>How did you know about the area?</b>					
I live in the zone	9.6%	7.8%	8.8%	8.5%	11.7%

I did not know about it	8.1%	13.2%	7.9%	5.8%	8.8%
It's been a long time since I heard about it	34.1%	41.9%	36.7%	37.2%	36.1%
Word of mouth	21.5%	14.7%	18.8%	19.0%	17.5%
Signposting	5.9%	9.3%	9.1%	8.3%	9.1%
Tourism Office, agencies	5.2%	1.6%	3.2%	3.5%	2.6%
Maps, guides, books	6.7%	3.9%	6.8%	8.9%	6.9%
Internet or medias	5.9%	6.2%	4.4%	6.5%	5.1%
Others	3.0%	1.6%	4.3%	2.4%	2.2%
<b>Knowledge protection status*</b>					
Yes	78.5%	78.3%	83.9%	86.5%	83.5%
No	21.5%	21.7%	16.1%	13.5%	16.6%

\* Significance differences Chi-Square test

Sources: Authors

The characteristics of the park visit according to physical activity intensities are showed in Table 4. A higher proportion of friends group were observed in the Vigorous group, whereas family group were higher in the Sedentary group. Visiting the park alone or living in the area (accommodation) was concentrated in Vigorous group. Compared with the other accommodations, a higher proportion of second residence and hotel or hostel was observed in Sedentary and Light visitors group (51.8% and 51.1%, respectively). In terms of typology of trail visited (i.e., classical, hallmark trails in each area, which are better signposted and maintained than the others, or no classical, do not know) no long differences were observed between groups, except in the case of Sedentary visitors group. More than 45% of this visitors group stay outside the territory park (near to the border).

**Table 4:** Variables that best define visitation behaviour of the visitors Alt Pirineu Natural Park group (see text for more details)

Variables	Sedentary n=135 (8.6%)	Light n=129 (8.2%)	Moderate n=1036 (65.8%)	Vigorous n=274 (17.4%)	Total N=1574
<b>Composition of the group*</b>					
Alone	5.2%	6.2%	9.3%	16.8%	9.7%
Partner	29.6%	34.1%	25.8%	20.1%	28.5%
Family	37.0%	33.3%	34.5%	19.7%	31.1%
Friends	24.4%	25.6%	28.8%	41.2%	28.8%
Organized group	2.2%	.0%	.3%	0.7%	0.4%

(school)					
Organized group (Campus)	1.5%	.0%	.2%	0.7%	0.8%
Organized group (4x4, Travel agencies)	.0%	.8%	1.0%	0.7%	0.7%
<b>Accommodation*</b>					
Living near the Park	10.4%	14.7%	11.5%	17.2%	12.6%
No accommodation	13.3%	13.8%	13.7%	9.1%	13.2%
Second residence, flat, family, friends	24.4%	24.7%	21.4%	13.1%	20.2%
Country cottage	5.9%	4.7%	7.2%	3.3%	6.2%
Hotel or hostel	27.4%	26.4%	18.4%	10.6%	23.2%
Shelter	3.0%	1.6%	4.4%	10.6%	5.1%
Campsite	12.6%	12.4%	14.7%	10.6%	13.6%
Mountain hut	2.2%	.0%	2.6%	6.9%	3.1%
Others (mobile home. etc.)	2.7%	2.4%	4.7%	12.0%	7.8%
<b>Way into the park</b>					
Private car	94.1%	94.6%	83.5%	78.8%	84.5%
Taxi	.0%	.8%	1.3%	0.7%	1.0%
BTT	.7%	.8%	1.0%	17.2%	3.7%
Walking	3.0%	1.6%	11.0%	2.2%	8.0%
ATVs, etc.	.7%	1.6%	1.7%	0.0%	1.3%
Others	1.5%	.8%	1.5%	1.1%	1.4%
<b>Frequency of visits (last two years)</b>					
In live in the area	13.3%	19.4%	11.6%	12.8%	12.6%
First time	39.3%	34.1%	35.4%	33.9%	35.4%
Second time	10.4%	17.1%	16.2%	11.3%	14.9%
Between 3 to 6 times	21.5%	15.5%	19.6%	23.4%	20.1%
Between 7 to 9 times	6.7%	7.8%	8.1%	7.3%	7.8%
More than 10 times	8.9%	6.2%	9.1%	11.3%	9.2%
<b>Length of the visit to the Park*</b>					
Less 1 hour	3.7	1.6	1.9	0.0	1.7
From 1 to 2 hours	48.2	36.4	23.9	11.2	24.8
From 3 a 6 hours	39.6	55.1	59.3	45.2	54.89
From 7 a 10 hours	5.9	4.7	5.9	27.8	10.8
More than 10 hours	2.9	2.4	9.0	15.4	7.9
<b>Trail*</b>					
Classic	46.7%	79.8%	81,1%	84.7%	78.7%
Non classic	5.9%	6.2%	3.5%	7%	4.6%

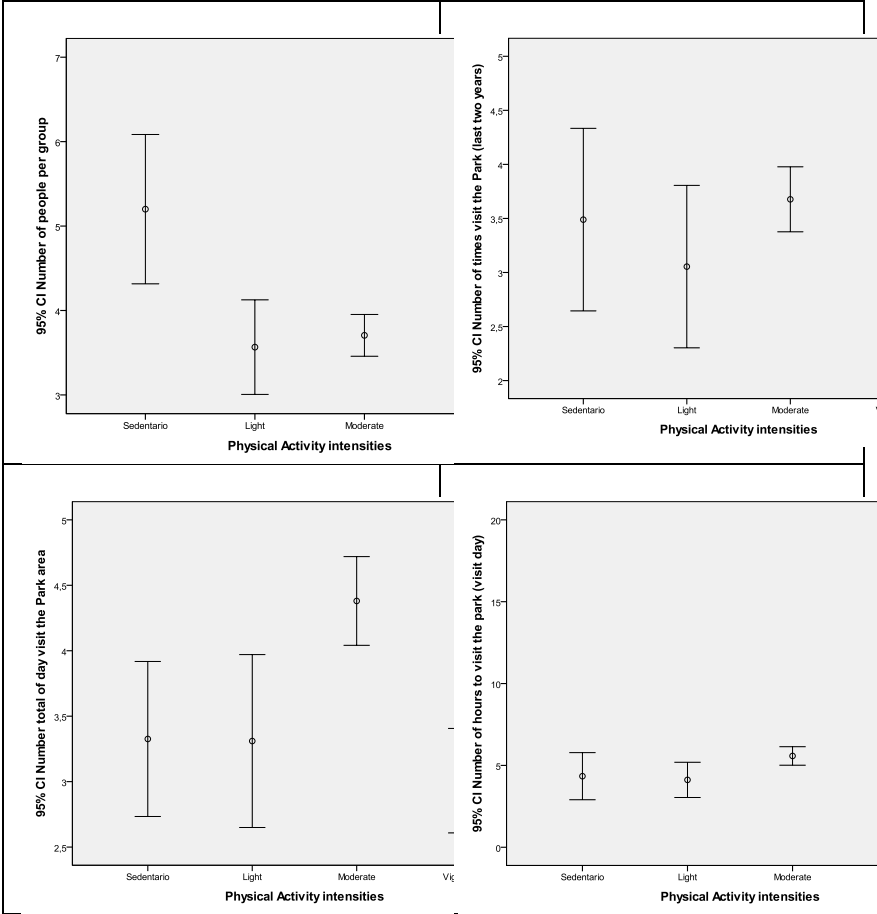
Don't know	1.5%	2.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%
No Park	45.9%	11.6%	15.1%	7.3%	16.1%
<b>Others places in the park</b>					
Yes	40.0%	34.9%	43.7%	35.8%	41.3%
Non	54.0%	61.2%	49.8%	60.9%	53.0%
I don't know	6.0 %	3.9%	6.5%	3.3%	5.7%

\* Significance differences Chi-Square test

Sources: Authors

Moreover, as it can see in the Graph 2, the results achieved regarding the number of people per group, frequency of visit and length of the visit in the park (hours) and in the park areas (days), show an interesting differences. For instance, higher level of frequency of visit (times visited the park during the last two years) and hours visiting the park are allocated in the Vigorous visitors group, whereas the shorter length of visit in the park (hours) was concentrated by the Sedentary and Light visitors group. The visitors in the Moderate group spent the most time visiting the park area (with a mean of almost five days).

**Graph 2:** Variables that best define visitation behaviour of the visitors Alt Pirineu Natural Park group (see text for more details).



Sources: Authors

Regarding the motivations to visit the PNA, the results obtained are showed in the Table 5. Whereas *to get closer to nature* and *to relax and disconnect* were the higher common motivations selected by practically all groups, except for the Vigorous group (relax motivation), the most active visitor group (Moderate and Vigorous) prioritise *to practice some exercise* (sport or physical activity). Moreover, *to spend time with family or friends* are, in the

case of less active visitors (Sedentary and Light visitors group) within the three main motivations to visit the protected natural area.

**Table 5:** Motivations to visit the park (see text for more details).

Variables	Sedentary n=135 (8.6%)	Light n=129 (8.2%)	Moderate n=1036 (65.8%)	Vigorous n=274 (17.4%)	Total N=1574
To get closer to nature	27.4%	31.6%	28.7%	25.2%	28.2%
To practise some exercise (sport or PA)	10.4%	8.8%	16.7%	29.8%	18.0%
To visit a particular trail o area	6.5%	11.4%	8.3%	9.3%	8.6%
To spend time with family/friends	21.8%	12.8%	11.9%	12.4%	12.9%
To know new places	11.8%	12.8%	8.4%	8.3%	8.7%
To relax and disconnect	17.8%	16.8%	14.9%	11.5%	14.4%
To pick mushrooms	.9%	3.7%	8.7%	1.6%	6.3%
Working related issues	.3%	2.0%	.3%	0.7%	.4%
Other reasons	3.0%	0%	2.4%	1.2%	2.5%

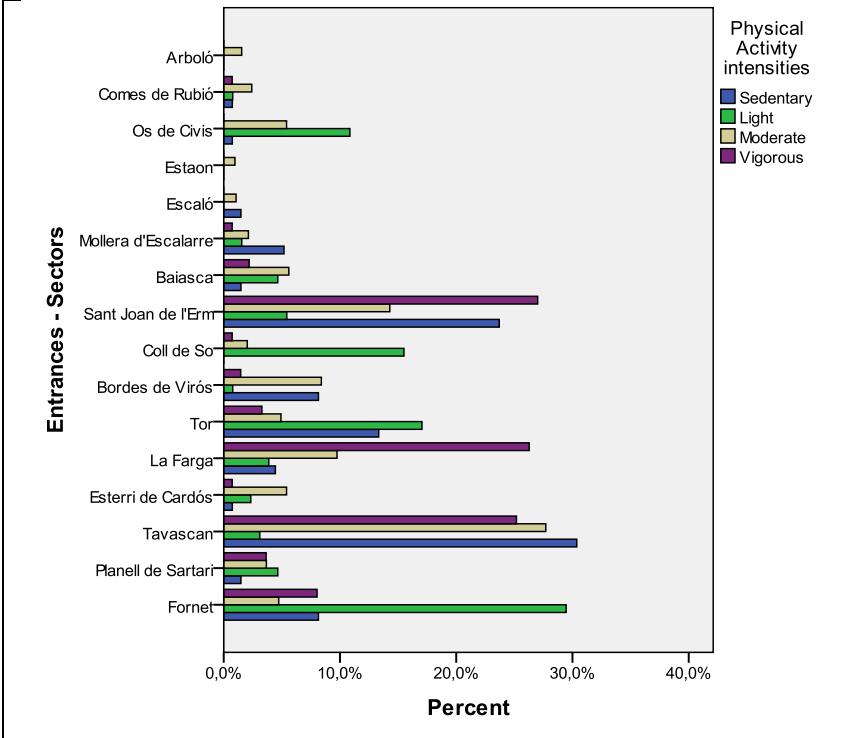
\* Significance differences Chi-Square test

Sources: Authors

Finally, as it can see in the Graph 3, the distribution of visitors group by sectors/entrances, according to physical activity intensities shows a higher proportion of the Sedentary and Vigorous visitor group in the same entrances: *Tavascan* and *San Joan* and a major concentration of Light group in the *Coll de So* and *Os de Civis* entrances.



**Graph 3: Distribution of visitor groups by entrances/access**



Sources: Authors

## CONCLUSIONS

This study describes the characteristics, visitation behaviour taking into account physical activity-intensities of visitors at Alt Pirineu Natural Park - Spain. According to Veitch, Carver, Abbott, Giles-Corti, Timperio & Salmon (2015), physical inactivity is a major contributor to the burden of chronic disease, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and overweight and obesity, understanding the characteristics of park visitors and park visitation is important in order to develop strategies to increase physical activity use in this type of areas.

In general, the results obtained show that the 83% of visitors do moderate to vigorous physical activity during their visit in the protected area (65.8% and 17.4%, respectively), in line with previous studies such as Mowen, Kaczynski & Cohen (2012). This is important to demonstrate the contribution of this type of areas as a promising place to satisfy current physical activity recommendations to maintain health issued by the WHO (2010).

In specific terms, and regarding the distribution of the entrance used by the different visitors group, we observed a non-homogenous distribution, for instance, both the visitors who performed sedentary or vigorous-intensity activities were concentrated in the entrances of *Tavascan* and *San Joan de l'Erm*. That shows no relation between the features and characteristics of the entrance in relation to the intensity of the physical activity.

Differences in socio-demographics visitors' characteristics and behaviour of visitation were observed according to the physical activity-intensity visitors group: age, sex, level of education, occupation, level of knowledge about the status of protection of the PNA group visit (included number of people), accommodation, length to visit in the park (hours) and in the park are (days). For instance, visitors performing sedentary and light-intensity activities were more likely to visit the area with family, to stay in a hotel or second residence and to spend more than 3.5 hours visiting the park, whereas visitors performing vigorous-intensity activities were more likely to visit the park with friends or alone, live in the area, visit the park more than two times per year and spend more than fifteen hours visiting the park.

Results obtained from motivations to visit protected areas also show some interesting differences that can contribute, especially, to increase physical activity in the visitors who take part on sedentary activities. For instance, visitors being sedentary from other groups in their preference *to spend time with family and friends* and *to know new places*.

Further research is needed to examine how physical activity-intensity varies in protected areas with different features and amenities. Also, how programming Protected Natural Areas' activities and supporting facilities can optimise protected areas-based physical activity for all visitors.

### **Acknowledgements**

This project was supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food of the Government of Catalonia.

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## **SPORT EVENTS IN PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS. A CASE OF CATALONIA NATIONAL AND NATURAL PARKS - SPAIN.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The rapid growth of sporting events held in the protected natural areas (PNA), such as trail running, mountain biking, raids or orientation races, highlights the need to know and analyse basic information in order to help to prevent or manage the negative environmental impacts and increase the positive social and economic effects (Newsome 2014; Fariás 2015). The purpose of this study is to analyze the current dimensions of the sporting events phenomenon in Catalonia's National and Natural Parks. The study was carried out considering all the sporting events held on of the most important PNA in Catalonia-Spain during the last three years (2013-2015), included one National Park and sixteen Natural Parks or Wilderness Areas. A

total of 337 cases were analysed in order to identify the main sport modalities, promoters and events characteristics. The data used in this study was based on some basic information such as: sport modality, number of edition, competitive status, promoter typology (public, private - profit and non profit -), number of participants and total distances. The results obtained, apart from corroborating the increase of this type of events in Catalonia PNA (more than 50% of the sporting events held in these areas are inside their seven first editions), bring into question some interesting characteristics such as: more than de 38% of the sporting events held in these areas are included inside trail running disciplines and more than the 78% are organized by public organizers. The current study not only adds a basic information to have in consideration in the analysis of the sporting events in PNA but also it includes, according to the results obtained, some practical management recommendation that might contribute to the development of policy with regard to the approvals process, management and tracking of this phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Protected Natural Areas, sporting events, events characteristics, organizers

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, no one discusses the increase of sporting events, especially in the natural environment. Events include running, mountain biking, kayaking, orientation, raids, etc. Although there are no reliable data on the actual situation or evolution, it is clear that their emergence and growth does not seem to be a temporary issue. For instance, despite not having general data regarding the number of events and participation of this types of events, it is estimated, in the case of the trail running races in national level, the development of more than 2000 mountain races per year, including all varieties of linear races: Trail, Ultra trail, *Km Vertial*, etc. (Europarc-España, 2015).

According to Newsome (2014), the rapid growth of sporting events held in natural environment that increasingly involves a wide range of protected natural areas (PNA) require to be considered as a crucial issue from the perspective of public use management in natural areas. As specified by Newsome & Lacroix (2011) the organization of sporting events taking place in natural environments not only raise questions regarding biophysical and social impacts, but also to managerial capacity to adequately supervise such

events and the appropriateness of such organised activities taking place in protected areas. In addition to this, Newsome & Lacroix (2012) have also called for an increased dialogue in connection with the trend towards *sportification* and in relation to the dilemma faced by many protected area agencies as to whether to sanction an activity or an event in a particular protected area.

Initiatives such as the recently launched nationwide by state agencies as Europarc-Spain, or regional agencies like the Rural World Foundation (Lleida – Spain), in setting up working groups to address this problem, not only in PNA, but also in rural areas, are a good example of this necessity. Here, we can consider the initiative in which one of the authors of this article has had the opportunity to participate and contribute, together with others specialists, managers of protected areas and sports organizations, which was focused, in this case, on developing a good practical guide on racing trails and running in PNA.

The purpose of this study, inspired by one of the needs arising in the discussion of this working group is, on one hand, to demonstrate and corroborate the dimension of the increasing of the number of sporting events held in PNA and, on the other hand, to make available to the parties involved basic data in order to contribute to the development of policy in regard to the approvals process, management and tracking of this phenomenon.

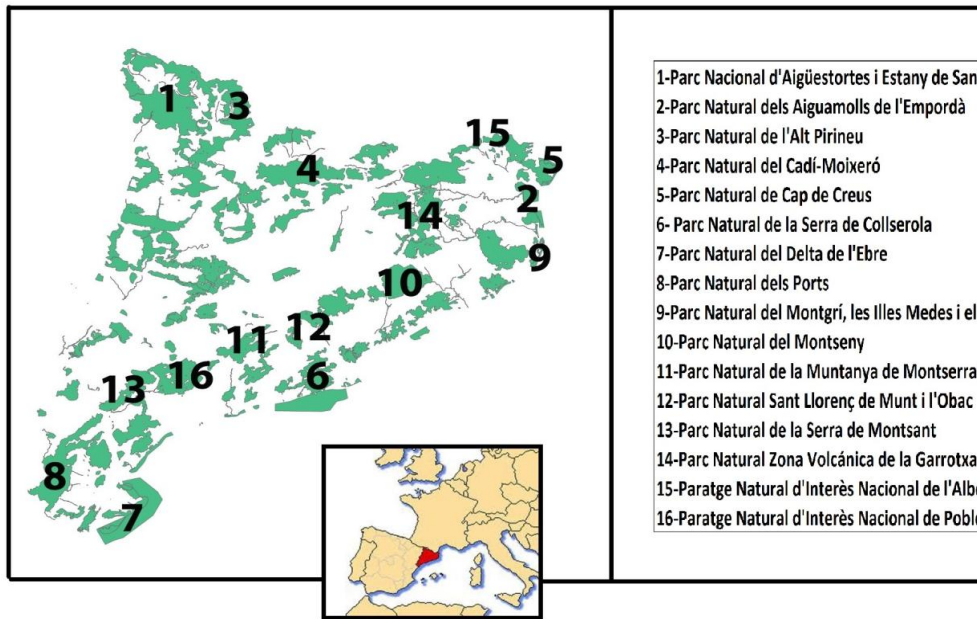
## METHOD

The study was carried out considering all the sporting events held on of the most important PNA in Catalonia-Spain during the last three years (2013-2015), namely one National Park and sixteen Natural Parks or Wilderness areas; including some Wilderness Areas with a specific category of protection such as *Paratges Naturals d'Interés Nacional* (Figure 1 and Table 1).

The *Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park* (2) and *Delta de l'Ebre Natural Park* (7) will not be considered in the presentation of the results, as there were no sporting events held inside their territory.



Figure 1: Protected Natural Areas included



Sources: Elaborate by authors

Table 1: Protected Natural Areas considered

	Name	Location (province and region)	Area (ha.)	Protection Category and complementary information
1	Aigüestortes i Estany Sant Maurici National Park	Lleida - <a href="#">Alta Ribagorça</a> , <a href="#">Pallars Sobirà</a> , <a href="#">Vall d'Aran</a> and <a href="#">Pallars Jussà</a> .	40.852 ha.	National Park
2	Aiguamolls del Empordà Natural Park	Girona - Alt empordà.	4.731 ha.	Natural Park*
3	Alt Pirineu Natural Park	Lleida - Pallars Sobirà and Alt Urgell.	69.850 ha.	Natural Park
4	Cadí de Moixeró Natural Park	Barcelona and Lleida - Berguedà and Alt Urgell.	41.060 ha. 1.751 ha.	Natural Park. Included Massis de Pedraforça

				Natural Park
5	Cap de Creus Natural Park	Girona - Alt Empordà.	13.844 ha.	Natural Park. Included three Paratges Naturals d'Interès Nacional
6	Serra de Collserola Natural Park	Barcelona - Barcelonès, Baix Llobregat and Vallès Occidental.	8.295 ha.	Natural Park
7	Delta de l'Ebre Natural Park	Tarragona - Baix Ebre and Montsià.	7.736 ha.	Natural Park *
8	Els Ports Natural Park	Tarragona - Baix Ebre, Montsià and Terra Alta.	35.050 ha.	Natural Park
9	Montgrí i Illes Medes Natural Park	Girona - Alt Empordà and Baix Empordà.	8.192 ha.	Natural Park
10	Montseny Natural Park	Girona and Barcelona - Osona, Vallès Oriental and La Selva.	31.064 ha.	Natural Park
11	Muntanya de Montserrat Natural Park	Barcelona - Bages, Anoia and Baix Llobregat.	3.630 ha.	Natural Park
12	Sant Llorenç de Munt Natural Park	Barcelona - Bages, Vallès Occidental and Moianès.	13.694 ha.	Natural Park
13	Serra de Montsant Natural Park	Tarragona - Priorat.	9.242 ha.	Natural Park
14	Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa Natural Park	Girona - La Garrotxa.	15.000 ha.	Natural Park
15	Albera PENIN	Girona - Alt Empordà.	4.207 ha.	Paratge Natural d'Interès Nacional
16	Poblet PENIN	Tarragona - Conca de Barberà.	2.460 ha.	Paratge Natural d'Interès Nacional

\* No sporting events.

Sources: Authors

The data used in this study were based considering two main dimensions: a) basic sporting events characteristics (including edition, typology of the promoters, competitive status and method), and b) general implementation events' characteristics (month, number of tracks, 2013-2014-2015 editions, total distance and number of participants). In table 2 you can observe a sub-

indicator considering the registry of each indicator in the specification of some registry criteria.

**Table 2:** Indicators to be considered in the characterization of the sporting events

Dimension	Indicator	Sub-indicator
Basic sporting events characteristics	Edition (in 2015)	Edition number
	Typology of organizer	Public Private non profit Private with profit
	Competitive status	Federated Non federated
	Modality	16 different modalities*
General implementation events characteristics	Month of event	12 months
	Edition 2015	Yes or No
	Number of tracks	Number of tracks**
	Total distance	Number of Km***
	Number of participant	Number of participants****
<b>Registry criteria</b> * The registry of the modality sport events was developed taking in consideration 16 different activities. In the case of the sport events with more than one modality, the criteria to identify the main modality was based on the major number of participants. It means, that in the case of trail running and walking events it was common to identify the event as trail running, because walking was a complementary activity. ** The identification of the number of track does not take in consideration if the tracks share or not part of the itinerary. All tracks were considered independently. *** The registry of the number of tracks was elaborated taking into account the total sum of all tracks. The distances between the different tracks were not differentiated. **** The registry of the number of participants was elaborated taking in consideration three possible ways: a) the official entry list; b) the finisher list or, in some cases, c) some news about the sport event once it was done.		

Sources: Authors

Finally, it should be noted that three were the main steps considered in the data collection:

Step 1- Request the list of authorizations available to the different natural protected areas considering the following ways: a) telephone contact with the responsible area and b) strengthening and explanation of the purpose of the project via email.

Step 2- Filtering data supplied according to the consideration of the following criteria: the event includes the practice of some physical activity that derived from previous registrations and included a registration fee.

Step 3- Searching for basic and additional information from secondary data: sporting event websites or organizers websites.

## RESULTS

### *Evolution and current situation*

First of all, and with regard to the number of sporting events taking place in the different PNA, the results obtained reveal the existence of an important concentration of the number of sport events taking place in these areas. Four of the sixteen PNA analyzed hold more than the sixteen percent of sporting events (*Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa Natural Park* -17.5%-, *Sant Llorenç de Munt Natural Park* -17.8%-, *Serra de Collserola Natural Park* -15.1%-, *Montserrat Natural Park* -10.4%-). Furthermore, it is interesting to consider that three of them are located in the province of Barcelona (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Distribution of sporting events by protected natural areas

	Protected Natural Area	Number of events	%
1	Aigüestortes i Estany Sant Maurici National Park	10	3.0
2	Aiguamolls del Empordà Natural Park	--	-
3	Alt Pirineu Natural Park	14	4.2
4	Cadí de Moixeró Natural Park and Pedraforca	17	5.0
5	Cap de Creus Natural Park	8	2.4
6	Serra de Collserola Natural Park	51	15.1
7	Delta del Ebre	--	-
8	Els Ports Natural Park	19	5.6
9	Montgrí i Illes Medes Natural Park	17	5.0
10	Montserrat Natural Park	35	10.4
11	Muntanya de Montserrat Natural Park	22	6.5
11	Sant Llorenç de Munt Natural Park	60	17.8
12	Serra de Montsant Natural Park	7	2.1
13	Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa Natural Park	59	17.5
14	Albera PENIN	3	0.9
15	Poblet PENIN	15	4.5

<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100</b>
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Sources: Authors

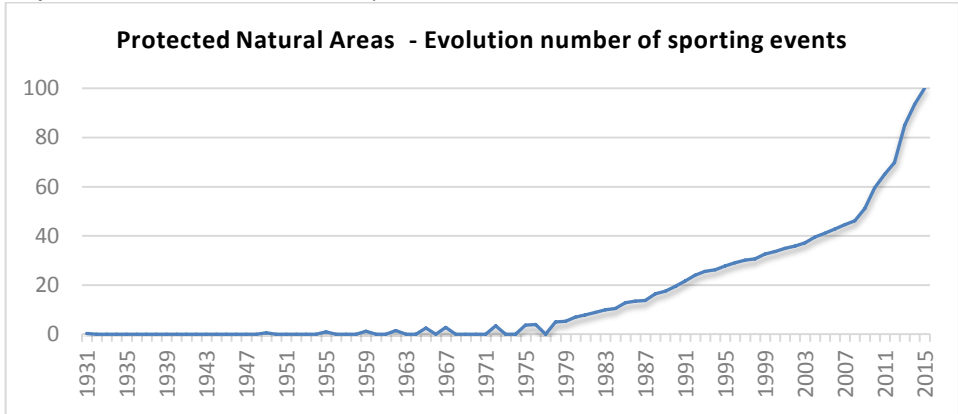
Moreover, in terms of the number of events taking place in these areas, as it is showed in the table 4 and illustrated in Graph 1, the systematization of the number of edition of the 377 sport event analyzed, leave no doubt about their increase. More than the 52% of the currently events held in these PNA are within their first seven editions, which means that in the last seven years the number of sporting events has duplicated; whereas only the 10% percent of the total sport events developed in these areas during the years 2013 and 2014 have not been developed during the 2015 year.

**Table 4:** Edition and currently number

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Number of events</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Edition</b>		
First edition	20	5.9
Second edition	26	7.7
Third edition	47	13.9
Fourth edition	15	4.5
Fifth edition	17	5.0
Sixth edition	26	7.7
Seventh edition	15	4.5
Eight edition	5	1.5
Ninth edition	6	1.8
Tenth edition	5	1.5
From 11 to 15	23	6.8
From 16 to 20	18	5.3
From 21 to 25	26	7.7
From 26 to 30	20	5.9
From 31 to 35	18	5.3
More than 35	22	6.5
No dates	28	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Current (2015 edition)</b>		
Yes	298	88.4
No	32	9.5
No dates	7	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: Authors

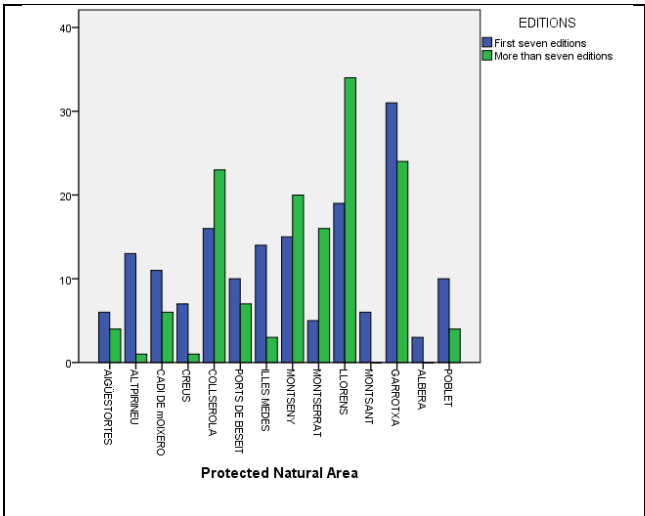
**Graph 1:** Evolution of the number of sport events in the Protected Natural Areas



Sources: Authors

In this case, it is interesting to highlight the presence of some important difference between the sixteen natural areas in relation to the number of edition and the power of attraction of the protection status. For instance, meanwhile the majority of the sport events held in the protected natural park created in the last fifteen year such as: *Montserrat Natural Park* (2002), *Alt Pirineu Natural Park* (2003) and *Illes Medes Natural Park* (2010) are in their five first edition (100%, 92.8%, and 82.3%, respectively), the sporting event taking place in the most historical PNA such as: *Montserrat* (1987), *Sant Llorenç de Munt* (1972), *Montseny* (1972), did not exceed 23%, 35% and 42%, respectively (Graph 2).

**Graph 2:** Protected natural areas vs editions



Sources: Authors

**Basic sporting events characteristics**

In specific terms and regarding the basic sport event characteristics of the 337 cases considered, the results obtained show the prevalence of sport modalities such a running, walking, and mountain bike. More than the 85% of the sporting events held in these areas involved these three sport modalities (Table 5). Moreover, according to the data included in the same table, some of the basic characteristics of the sporting events taking place in these areas are organized by private non-profit promoters (included federation, clubs, sport and non-sport associations - 76.8% -) and are included into federate competitive status (62.3%).

**Table 5:** Basic characteristics

Indicator	Number of events	%
<b>Modalities</b>		
Trail Running races	130	38.6
Walking	103	30.6
Mountain Bike	54	16.0
Cycling	14	4.2
Orientation	7	2.1
Raid	4	1.2

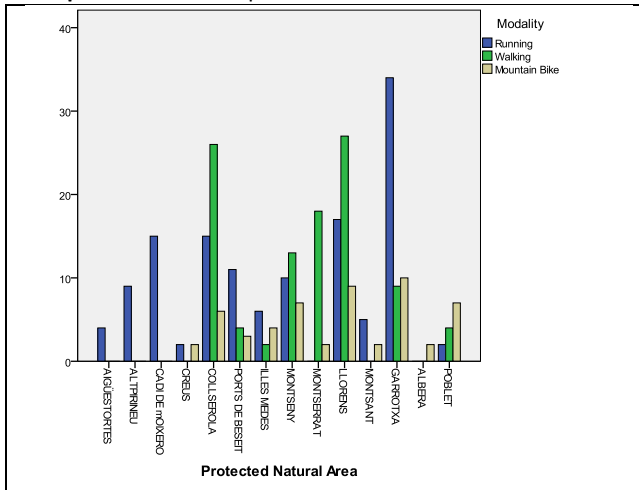
Climbing	5	1.5
Swimming	4	1.2
Snorkel	1	0.3
Kayak	1	0.3
Sky	4	1.2
Snowshoe	2	0.6
Duathlon	5	1.5
Triathlon	1	0.3
Others	2	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Typology of organizer</b>		
Public	41	12.2
Private non profit	265	78.6
Private for profit	21	6.2
No dates	10	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Competitive status</b>		
Federate	210	62.3
Non Federate	118	35.0
No dates	9	2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: Authors

In this point, it is interesting to highlight the results obtained in relation to the distribution of three main sport modalities (running, walking and mountain biking) among the different PNA. Whereas the trail running races take place in all PNA (even in some of them it is the only one), the walking sport modality especially concentrates above the PNA close to the city of Barcelona. See Graph 3.



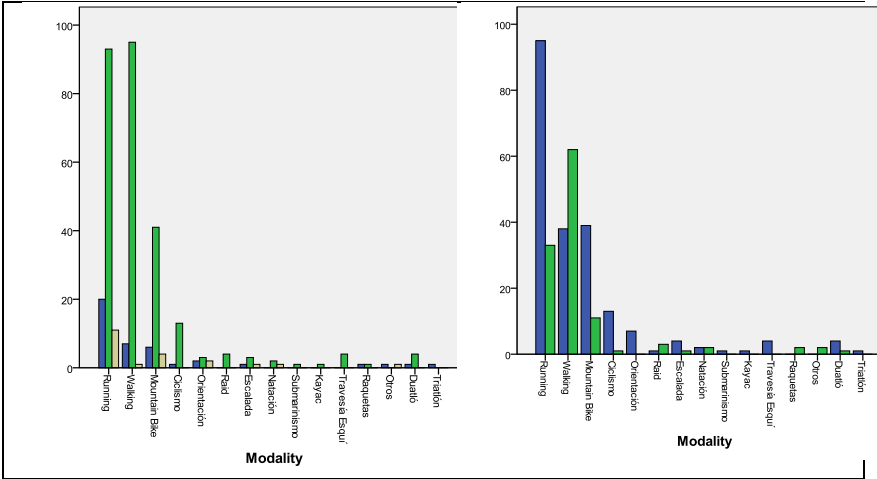
**Graph 3: Three main sport modalities in each Protected Natural Areas**



Sources: Authors

In addition, taking in consideration the relationship between organizer, competitive status and modalities, it is interesting remark the dates showed in the graph 4. For instance, with regard to the typology of the promoters (public, private non-profit and private with profit), whereas the private non-profit carried out the majority of trail running, walking, mountain bike and biking, the private with profit organizer are only present in orientation, climbing and swimming modalities. The trail running and mountain biking are included inside de federation system as well. See Graph 4.

**Graph 4: Organization typology and competitive status vs sport modalities**



Sources: Authors

**General implementation events characteristics**

Regarding the general implementation sporting events characteristics, meaning characteristics that may be more connected with the type and level of the environmental impacts associated, the results obtained reveal some interesting dates to have in consideration. For instance, although the spring season is one of the most critical periode in the bird conservation (nest-building and reproduction) more than 40% of the sport events are held in this season. On the contrary, and in this case apparently in favour of the minimization of impacts (minimization of area occupied or number of participants), more than the sixty percent of the sport events taking place in these PNA only implement one track. Furthermore, no more than 13% exceeded five hundred participants (8.1% from 501 to 1.000 and 5.3% more than 1000 participants). Table 6.

**Table 6: Implementation characteristics**

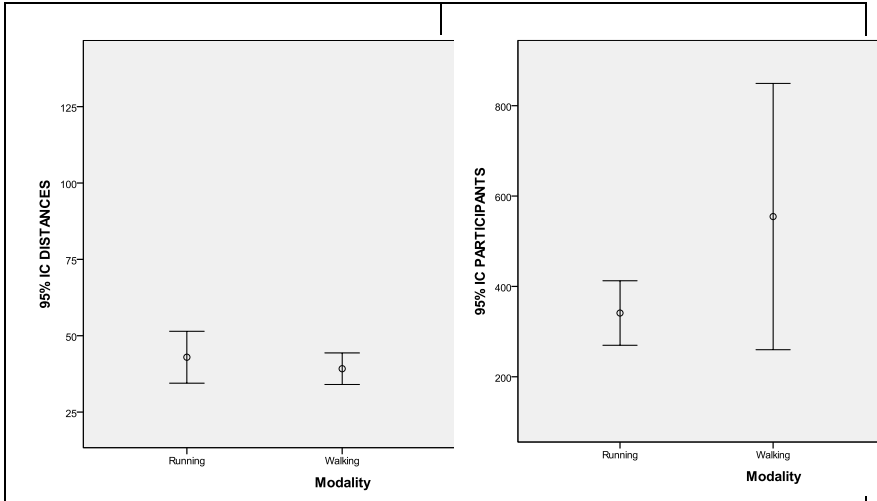
	Number of events	Average
Month of event		
January	9	2.7
February	18	5.3
March	36	10.7
April	38	11.3
May	53	15.7

June	44	13.1
July	35	10.4
August	18	5.3
September	25	7.4
October	38	11.3
November	19	5.6
December	4	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number of tracks</b>		
1 track	204	60.5
2 tracks	74	22.0
3 tracks	35	10.4
More than 3 tracks	10	3.0
No dates	14	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number of participants</b>		
Less than 100	53	15.7
From 101 to 200	82	24.3
From 201 to 300	40	11.9
From 301 to 400	22	6.5
From 401 to 500	24	7.1
From 501 to 1000	27	8.1
More than 1000	18	5.3
No dates	71	21.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: Authors

Finally, concerning values obtained in relation to the distances and the participants, taking into account that the register of the distances contemplate the addition of all tracks distances, the analysis of the three main disciplines indicated some important differences. Whereas walking is the sport modality with the lowest average distance but with the higher average value of participants, mountain biking is the sport event modality with the highest average distance but with the lowest average number of participants. Results that in this case, if we take into consideration that the number of participants and the tracks distances are one of the most important issues considered in the regulation of these sport event modalities, this type of data could help protected natural area managers to assess the consideration of separate kind of regulation for each modality. See Graph 5.

**Graph 5: Distances and number of participants vs sport modalities**



Sources: Authors

## CONCLUSION

In general, results obtained in the present study sustain the presence of a concentration and increasing number of the sporting events around Catalonia's PNA network. Whereas four of the sixteen PNA considered in this study hold more than sixteen percent of sporting events, more than 52% of the present events held in these protected areas are within their first seven editions, with important differences between PNA creation years. In specific terms, and regarding the main characteristics of the 337 events registered, the results obtained show the predominance of modalities such as running, walking, and mountain bike, and the prevalence of private no profit promoters included in a federation system.

In terms of environmental and management implication, on one hand, the result showed the necessity to improve or regulate better the distribution of the sport event along the year. Although the spring season are one of the most critical period in the bird conservation (nest-building and reproduction) almost the 40% of the sport events in this areas are held in this season. A calendar and reorganization of the events is necessary. On the contrary, the regulation of the number of tracks does not seem really critical, nor the number of participants, as usually believed. More than sixty

percent of the sport events taken place in these PNA only implement one track and only the 13% exceeded the five hundred participants

Finally, and taking in consideration that there is a not clear pattern comparing the modalities and the number of participants and distances included in the different sport events, it is a good option in terms of regulation or implementation measures to reduce the environmental impact, considering both distance and number of participants in the same way.

And last but not least, in terms of future research it could be interesting to compare the result obtained in the case of Catalonia with other regions in Spain, and increase the level of information registered in the track indicator. It means, to try to differentiate the coincidence or no-coincidence of the distances included in the sport events with more than one track and identify the distance or percentage of the track that take place in the protected natural area territory.

### **Acknowledgements**

This project was inspirited by EUROPARC-Spain trail running races in natural protected areas work group. The authors wish to thank the staff of all protected natural areas who collaborate facilitating information to this project.

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# **OLYMPIC GAMES: A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS FOR HOST COMMUNITIES?**

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## **Abstract**

The main objective of this paper is to investigate mega-sport events, with special attention on the Olympic Games. The organization of such event leaves a large stamp on host countries, with a significant impact on the economy, the well-being of the local community and the environment. This impact is meant to be positive, but due to a very intensive development, the principles of sustainability are neglected in many cases. The specific objective of the paper is to provide an analysis, on what scale are the principles of sustainability and green growth respected in order to ensure that before, during and after the organization of the event the mission of the International Olympic Committee, to encourage and support a responsible concern for environmental issues, to promote sustainable development in sport and to respect the local community is respected. The research methodology is exploratory, analyzing the existing pre- and post-impact studies of the Olympic Games from socio-economic and environmental perspectives to underline the main positive and negative aspects of the impact on the host communities. The outcomes of the research shows that the organization of the Olympic Games is an attractive opportunity for development and international recognition, and despite the high costs most of the governments are likely to bid to become host countries with promises in some cases hard to keep, and resulting in questionable positive impact for the host community. Therefore in the future there is high need to put into practice more rigorously the principles of green growth and sustainability, including innovative solutions and

revolutionizing of the bidding process in order to increase positive and reduce negative impacts of such events.

**Keywords:** Sport tourism, Mega-events, Sustainable development, Olympic Games, Socio-economic impact

**JEL Classification:** Q56, Z21, Z32

## **Introduction**

In recent years the Olympic Games developed into one of the most significant mega-sport events on the international stage and an important platform for cities and countries to express their group of values on the international stage. As Silvestre (2009) states, image creation relies on the enhancement of local features that make the host city/region stand out among competitors by revitalising strategic areas with perceived economic significance. Because many believe that the Games are an effective way of showcasing a city's and a nation's culture, there is still competition to win this prize. But when bidding to host the Games it is crucial to take in consideration both the potential positive and negative impact of the Games on the life of the local community, including the economy, social well-being and the environment. The Olympic Games is a mega-event, one that directly involves tens of thousands of people, including athletes, official delegates, volunteers, media personnel, spectators and, indirectly, an audience of billions through media exposure (Dean, 2014). Staging the Games involves many facets, including planning, sponsorship, tourism, advertising, security, transport, environmental and social impact, the media, and the costs and benefits to the local economy (Cashman, 1999). While sporting competition is the central purpose of the Games, they embrace different cultures, politics, ideologies, identities, arts, religions, commerce and, more recently, environment concerns, among other things. In addition, there is an underlying tension between Olympism and the Olympic Games (Cashman, 1999).

The Olympic festival is complex and evolving, leaving a large stamp on a host city,

as a consequence of the high expectations about the delivery of the Games. This impact on mainly has increased since 1984 as the Games have become larger involving more athletes and sports and a greater media and sponsor presence. Since then, both the number of cities bidding to host the Games



and the funds invested in Olympic bids were increasing, but this tendency seems to be changing in recent years. In countries where the government is not accountable to voters or taxpayers, it is quite possible to engage in wasteful spending that enriches a small group of private industrialists or government leaders without repercussions. Before the bidding for the 2022 Winter Olympics, four of the cities in liberal western democracies that initially indicated interest in staging the Games—Oslo, Stockholm, Krakow, and Munich—withdrew from the bidding after local voters expressed opposition to the bids, leaving the International Olympic Committee to choose which autocratic regime would hold the event. In the bidding for the 2024 Summer Olympics, both Boston and Hamburg withdrew their bids in the face of public opposition, and with Budapest pulling out recently, only Paris and Los Angeles remain in competition.

Sports tourism, phenomenon closely related to any mega-event, is a social, economic and cultural phenomenon arising from the unique interaction of activity, people and place (Weed and Bull, 2009). The Olympic Games have become the world's greatest peacetime event because it is an evolving and dynamic festival that has adapted to the needs of a changing society and world political structure and it is changing expectations of what sport should be. While there are opportunities for the Games there are also a number of threats that, unless they are dealt with, may jeopardise the future of the Games as a peak sporting event.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) in order “to ensure that the host cities and their residents are left with the most positive legacy of venues, infrastructure, expertise and experience unanimously voted The Olympic Agenda 2020 in December 2014. The agenda formulates a number of recommendations for the potential host countries, including the following, as key starting points for the current paper: introduces a new philosophy by 'inviting potential candidate cities to present an Olympic project that best matches their sports, economic, social and environmental long-term planning needs, commits to evaluate bid cities by assessing key opportunities and risks, and contributes to reduce the cost of bidding'. The IOC also commits to take a more proactive position and leadership role with regard to sustainability and ensure that it is included in all aspects of the planning and staging of the Olympic Games, including sustainability within the Olympic Movement's daily operations. Also, commits to reduce the cost and reinforce the flexibility of Olympic Games management and maximise synergies with Olympic Movement stakeholders.

The host cities are selected seven years before the event through an open-bidding process and are responsible for the entire bill for organizing the event, although the International Olympic Committee typically provides some funds to help defray the costs. Historically, host cities have come almost exclusively from rich, industrialized nations. Between 1896 and 1998, over 90 percent of all host cities came from Western Europe, the United States, or Canada, Australia, and Japan. Only Mexico City, Moscow, and Seoul - hosts of the 1968, 1980, and 1988 Summer Games, respectively - and Sarajevo, host of the 1984 Winter Games, bucked this trend (Baade and Matheson, 2016). More recently, the International Olympic Committee has encouraged bids from developing countries and has awarded the games on multiple occasions to cities outside the regions that had traditionally served as hosts. The 2008 Summer Games hosted by Beijing, China, which will in turn host the Winter Olympics in 2022 as well. The 2016 Summer Olympics was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the first time the event has taken place in South America. The 2014 Winter Olympics were organized in Sochi, Russia, with PyeongChang, South Korea, to follow in 2018.

### **Literature review**

The Olympic Games Impact (OGI) study was developed by the IOC to objectively measure and assign attribution to the potential effects of the Olympic and Paralympic Games on the host city, region and country, their environment and their citizens. The purposes of OGI are to advance the sustainability of the Games, to promote positive Games legacies, and to create a knowledge base for future hosts, with standardized data collected for 126 environmental, socio-cultural and economic indicators. Besides the IOC reports, academicians undertake research regarding the Olympic Games for many years, resulting in various impact reports from economic, social, cultural, environmental point of view, in many cases, with different results: *Understanding the Olympics* (2012 and 2016 edition) by John Horne and Garry Whannel, *Success and failure of countries at the Olympic Games* (2016) by Daniel Reiche, *International Handbook on the Economics of Mega Sporting Events* (2012) by Wolfgang Maennig and Andrew Zimbalist and various research articles, also collected by Baade and Matheson (2016).

An accurate financial accounting of Olympic expenditures in various cities is hard to find for multiple reasons. First of all, it can be difficult to disentangle spending on Olympic building projects from planned infrastructure improvements that might not be attributable directly to the games. Moreover, concerns about cost overruns or corruption may prompt officials

to limit the release of accurate data (Baade and Matheson, 2016). Also, when doing an impact analysis, it is crucial to take in consideration that Olympics have consistently produced final costs that exceeded their original budgets, from 1968 to 2012, every single Olympic Games ended up costing more than originally estimated (Baade and Matheson, 2016). The true final cost of the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics will never be known, because the host committee ordered a portion of the event's financial records to be burned (Jordan and Sullivan, 1999). Various economic impact studies done in advance of the Olympic Games have often produced large estimates of economic gains. The variation alone in these estimates suggests some reason for concern about their accuracy; indeed, these before-the-Games predictions are rarely matched by reality when economists look back at the data. Even when a highly positive estimate of Olympic benefits is not the explicit goal of an economic impact study, the methodology used in most studies is flawed in a way that biases the economic impact upwards. First, economic impact studies often ignore the "substitution effect" that occurs when local residents shift their spending from other goods in the local economy to the Olympics. If the study counts the purchase of a ticket by a local resident to an Olympic event without accounting for what would have been purchased in the absence of the Games, the impact of the Olympics will be overstated. For this reason, economists studying the effect of sporting events on local economies often advocate eliminating expenditures by local residents entirely. Second, the "crowding out effect" occurs when the crowds and congestion associated with a mega-event dissuades other regular tourists or business travelers from visiting the host region.

The act of winning the Olympic Games can be a catalyst for bringing forward general infrastructure investments that may have been on the drawing board for a number of years (Hughes, 1993). The worldwide publicity and infrastructure investment that the Olympic Games brings should enable a host city to attract further general investment, future events and more tourists (Getz, 2003). Cities undergo major transformations, expending huge resources into improving, constructing and creating what the IOC refers to as legacies, which remain in the host city and its hinterland for decades (Dean, 2014). But in the same time, discussions about the socio-economic impacts of the Olympic Games on the lives of socially excluded groups has exposed a divide between supporters and critics of the use of mega-sport events to achieve social goals. Some emphasize that "the presence of the Olympic spirit in the host city, and in the national imaginary does offer a real and rare opportunity to develop and mobilize cultural, communal and social

action - opportunities to catalyze large-scale transformation" (London East Research Institute, 2007). On the other hand, there are those that liken the Olympic Games to "a self-serving commercial circus of property developers, construction companies, equipment suppliers and commercial sponsors whose benefits do not necessarily extend to the local communities (Essex and Chalkley, 1998). A positive legacy of sporting facilities is the least promising of these claims. Academic studies of sports facilities on host communities are nearly unanimous in finding little or no economic benefits associated with stadiums and arenas (Coates and Humphreys, 2008). Furthermore, due to the nature of the sporting events sponsored by the Olympics, host cities are often left with specialized sports infrastructure that has little use beyond the Games, so that in addition to the initial construction costs, cities may be faced with heavy long-term expenses for the maintenance of "white elephants" (Baade and Matheson, 2016).

As most impact studies underline, there are three major categories on the cost side the Olympic Games: general infrastructure such as transportation and housing; specific sports infrastructure required for competition venues and operational costs, including general administration as well as the opening and closing ceremony and security. On the benefits side, there are also three major categories to be taken in consideration: the short-run benefits of tourist spending during the Games; the long-run benefits or the "Olympic legacy" which might include improvements in infrastructure and increased trade, foreign investment, or tourism after the Games; and intangible benefits such as the "feel-good effect" or civic pride. (Baade and Matheson, 2016). A final economic justification for hosting the Olympics is that the Games can serve as positive signal to businesses and consumers about the future state of the economy. Rose and Spiegel (2011) examine exports from 196 countries and territories between 1950 and 2006 and find that countries that host the Olympics experience an increase in exports of over 20 percent. Using a similar methodology, Brückner and Pappa (2015) examine consumption, investment, and output data over a similar time frame and range of countries and discover that all three measures of economic activity rise significantly around the time that the host country makes its initial bid as well as two to five years before the event actually takes place. On the surface, these results appear to vindicate the massive expenditures that are routinely incurred when hosting the Games, however, the same studies also show that unsuccessfully bidding for the Olympics appears to have similar effects on these economic variables (Baaden and Matheson, 2016).

Sport tourism in general has the potential to contribute to sports participation development and health promotion goals. Also, as the goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport in accordance with Olympism and its values according to the IOC, theoretically it is the perfect event to showcase cities and countries on the global platform. (Weed and Bull, 2009). But while many would see such development as a positive benefit that enhances the environment and image of the city, for those communities that are displaced in order to build new infrastructure for the Olympic Games, the experience can be traumatic (Jackson and Weed, 2003). In many cases, although these communities are living in comparative poverty and are usually relocated to improved housing elsewhere, such relocation is often to distant and unfamiliar suburbs far away from other families with whom friendships have existed for generations, the result being the destruction of working and social networks and, in some cases, entire communities (Weed and Bull, 2009). Another negative aspect of sports tourism can be related to visitor/host conflict. Some of these conflicts can relate to the use of the environment by sports tourists, but perhaps the most high-profile is the problem of spectator disorder at sports events, usually causing problems in soccer games, less in the case of the Olympic Games. However, it is also important that tourism developments are socially acceptable to local residents, when plans are developed, they should incorporate the needs of local residents. In order for major sports facilities built for mega-events to be sustainable in the long term, they need to be adaptable for local community use, but in many cases without proper planning for the post-Game period, Olympic venues are left behind are not in use, and consuming public money for maintenance (Weed and Bull, 2009). An often-heard criticism is about the large share of public money is invested in hosting the Olympic Games, thus threatening "core spending in health, education, welfare and transport" (Lenskyj, 2000). Critics of the Games, have dismissed the Olympics as an overhyped commercial extravaganza and a 'gross mass spectacle' in which corruption and nationalism are more prominent than highminded idealism contrary (Cashman, 1999). The current form of organisation of the Olympic Games stands in sharp contrast to the first editions held at the beginning of the last century. While in the past it used to be held alongside other events and staged in modest existing and temporary installations, the contemporary Games are a global spectacle per excellence and one of the most complex event operations around. Not only did the hosting of mega-events become a tool of urban politics but the hosting

requirements set by the IOC also became more demanding, posing challenges for local planners to address them while remaining sensitive to the local context (Essex and Chalkley, 2003). The Games have many continuing assets, such as the weight of tradition and the power of the Olympic sites and symbols and have long been etched in the public imagination and there is a fervent desire among the public to continue to believe that the Games are clean and credible, despite some evidence to the contrary (Cashman, 1999).

As Silvestre (2012) indicates, the short-term benefits of the Games are associated with the demand-side boost generated by the Games. They are driven by increased public spending in the run-up to the event, for example on infrastructure, and by a spike in consumer spending due to increased tourism during the event itself, creating a direct short-term raise in business activity, profits and employment, mostly in retail and hospitality industries. Long-term economic benefits are associated with the Games' ability to increase the growth potential of a city economy. This can be achieved through removing barriers to growth by creating conditions that facilitate the prosperity of local businesses, or by attracting investments. The Olympics can achieve these in a number of ways: providing new facilities, land and buildings, raising awareness of the city's offer, attracting enormous global attention, raising awareness of the city, helping attract business, investors, skilled labour and tourists. The arguments that the Olympics bring long-term benefits fall into several categories. First, the Games might leave a legacy of sporting facilities that can be used by future generations. Second, investments in general infrastructure can provide long-run returns and improve the livability of host cities. Third, the media attention surrounding the Games can serve as an advertising campaign that serves to promote the area as a destination for future tourism. Finally, the Olympics can promote foreign direct investment and increased international trade, as the Olympics causes investors and companies worldwide to become familiar with the area. They can also help local businesses access international networks and promote their products globally. The economic impact of a mega-event may be defined narrowly or broadly: the narrow definition calculates the economic impact of the event as the net economic change resulting from the spending power attributed to the event: ticket, sales, media rights, sponsorship, while the broader definition includes in addition the attraction of investments, visitors, the creation of new jobs and the contribution of the economic growth of the city/region, and also intangibles like 'image' and 'brand' and socio-cultural factors such as health and wellbeing, but in this

version it is much harder to have a proper measuring (London East Research Institute, 2007). The impact on the host community is complex: the economic impact of the Games influences on one hand the income of the population but on the other hand the taxes paid. The environmental impact influences directly the life of the local population like the building of new venues on natural sites and extra pollution in the construction phase.

## **Methodology**

An important factor in hosting the Games is the motivation behind bidding to host, the focus and the legacy what cities hope to achieve. The aim of the current research is to analyze the impact on the host communities, directly affected by the economic and environmental impact of the Games. The research methodology is exploratory, including the analysis of the IOC impact studies and the ones written by independent researchers from various perspectives, the national statistics of the host countries for pre- and post-Game period, tourism satellite numbers, post-Game usage of facilities. The final objective is to formulate a SWOT analysis which brings together all the negative and positive impacts, and shows on what scale the Olympic Games can be considered a sustainable business for the host community, with special attention to the last Winter Games in Sochi 2014, and the last two Summer Games: London 2012 and Rio de Janeiro 2016. Many of the benefits that the Olympics bring to a host city are intangible and hard to measure their positive or negative impact, but a SWOT analysis can be an adequate tool to assess both the positive and negative impact of the Games on the host community. All the aspects regarding economic, social and environmental impact are hard to be measured by exact indicators, but listing them in a "SWOT analysis" underlines the competitive advantages (strength), competitive disadvantages (weakness), opportunities and threats, match each factor to each other for the purpose of analyzing and drawing a series of correspondent and policy-making conclusions.

## **Research results**

Analyzing the various impact studies, we can conclude that a first set of major expenses involves general infrastructure to accommodate the anticipated wave of tourists and athletes that descend upon the chosen city, which can be a major challenge. While investment in the hospitality industry can in theory pay long-term dividends once the Games are over, heavy expenditures to meet a two-week period of peak demand may result in

severe overcapacity once the event is over (Baade and Matheson, 2016). The Olympics also require spending on specialized sports infrastructure, as most cities do not have the facilities in place to host all of the competitions, especially if large spectator viewing areas are desired. Even modern cities in high-income countries may need to build or expand sport infrastructure. However once the facilities are in place, the required list of costs is not over, as the Games require spending for operations including event management, the opening and closing ceremonies, and security. On the other hand, the revenues generated from the Games can be divvied up any way the organizers see fit, but ultimately the IOC exercises complete control over the event and can share as much or as little of largesse as they deem fit subject to the constraint of finding a city willing to host the event. Revenues from international sponsors are split between the International Olympic Committee and the Organizing Committees, while ticket revenue, domestic sponsorships, and licensing fees are kept by the host city. Obviously, the IOC could provide more generous subsidies to cities in order to defray the costs of hosting their tournaments, and international sports governing bodies, including the IOC, are often known for their lavish expenses (Baade and Matheson, 2016).

The impacts of holding the Olympic Games depend also on different economic structure of the host countries. In the case of developing countries, the economic impact of holding the Games is relatively higher, than in the case of advanced economies. The London 2012 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games are characterized generally as a major success, generating a remarkable buzz and uniting the country. In the case of Sochi, the entire concept of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games was embedded within the Russian Federal Target Programme, the motivation behind the concept was to create a legacy that extends well past the needs of the actual Games. In the same time, there is no doubt that the Olympic Games in Brazil had some positive impacts, providing temporary jobs, increase tourism and influence foreign investment, but the increase in tourism and foreign investment mainly has impact to the wealthy. Historically, development is highly uneven and tends to benefit private developers and construction interests while creating spaces of leisure for wealthy residents and the international tourist class.

The scale and extent of mega-events necessarily transform the city in many ways. Low income neighbourhoods are 'cleared' in order to make way for mega-event infrastructures and renovation. Tens of thousands are displaced, either through the physical destruction of their homes or through



market mechanisms such as rent inflation. The massive infusion of public money into construction projects is a boom for developers who are able to leverage the event to realize projects that under ordinary circumstances would be prohibitively expensive or fraught with bureaucratic delay. For the developers, representing a very small segment of the host community, the organization of the Olympic Games it can be considered a good business.

### SWOT analysis Olympic Games: 2012, 2014 and 2016

#### 1. Strengths

Impact type/ Olympic Games	London 2012	Sochi 2014	Rio de Janeiro 2016
General and sport infrastructure	The redevelopment of the Olympic Park and of Stratford City has combined the delivery of complex infrastructure (Silvestre, 2013)	Upgraded shore infrastructure, new transportation routes including a railway terminal, new trains and lines, bridges, tunnels, road networks, airport terminal (IOC, 2014) For the first time in Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games history, the sports arenas were located within walking distance of each other (IOC, 2014)	According to projections it is expected that for the 2016 Olympics, new hotels will be built in a number compatible with the expected boost in tourism demand (OGI, 2014)
Social impact	80 percent of respondents surveyed by the BBC reported that the event “made them more proud to be British.” (Baaden and Matheson, 2016) More than 20,000 previously workless Londoners secured employment (Silvestre, 2012) Narrowing the gap between Boroughs and the rest of the Capital: reductions in crime, improved school attainment, lowered share of the population without formal qualifications (Silvestre, 2012).	In Russia, winter sports enjoy great popularity and have a long history (IOC 2014) During the Olympic Games, more than 1.5 million people visited the Olympic Park (IOC, 2014)	Focus on People: planning and execution in an inclusive manner, delivering Games for everyone (OGI, 2014) The labour market is positive circumstance, with a low unemployment growth rate in real wages, an increase in workers’ purchasing power, and the formalisation of employment contracts (OGI, 2014)
Environmental	In 2010, The London	As part of its bid, Russia told	Strong sustainability

impact	Olympic Authority announced plans to make the London 2012 Olympics the „Greenest Olympics ever” by ensuring that they were fully sustainable and carbon neutral.	IOC members it would be staging a “zero waste” Games that followed green building standards.	plan: reduction of the environmental impact, and footprint, of projects related to the Games (OGI, 2014)
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## 2. Weaknesses

Impact type/ Olympic Games	London 2012	Sochi 2014	Rio de Janeiro 2016
General and sport infrastructure	<p>The London Olympics were staged in a much more difficult economic climate, limiting the initial catalysing effect of the Games in terms of attracting investment and supporting the growth of local businesses.</p> <p>The Stadium at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London, the site for most of the track and field events as well as the opening and closing ceremonies in 2012, was designed to be converted into a soccer stadium for local club West Ham United in order to avoid the “white elephant” problem. Before the Games, the stadium had an original price tag of £280 million. Cost overruns led to a final construction cost of £429 million, and then the conversion cost to remove the track and prepare the facility to accommodate soccer matches topped £272 million, of which the local club is paying only £15 million (Sky Sports 2015).</p>	<p>With \$51 billion expenditure on the 2014 Sochi Games, is the most expensive in history (Müller, 2015).</p> <p>The total cost was over \$55 billion, having increased 4,5 times since the bid. With a public share of 96.5 percent of funding, the Sochi Games have the highest share of public money of any Olympic Games on record (Müller, 2015)</p> <p>Sochi did not have any competition venues in situ, a total of 12 sports venues were built for the Games (Müller, 2015)</p> <p>A new highway and high capacity mountain railway corridor between the two clusters has cost more than the Lillehammer, Nagano, Salt Lake City and Turin Winter Olympic Games combined (Dean, 2014)</p> <p>There is no coherent plan of the afteruse of the venues</p>	<p>Rio de Janeiro, already one of the most popular tourist destinations in South America, still required the construction of over 15,000 new hotel rooms for the 2016 Summer Games (Baade and Matheson, 2016)</p> <p>Venues were spread around the city, not a compact Olympic site (OGI, 2014)</p> <p>Changes in transportation and sanitation combined with previous security projects have expanded the real estate market and house prices in Rio de Janeiro have increased dramatically.</p> <p>Budget: public spending, judged excessive and unnecessary is feared and contested by the Brazilians</p>

Social impact	<p>Conversely, London, with over 18 million international visitors per year, was already the most popular tourist destination in the world prior to the 2012 Olympics, and it was never likely that the event would raise its already impressive profile.</p> <p>UK Office for National Statistics (2015) reported that the number of international visitors to the country fell in July and August 2012, the months of the Olympics, and some popular shows in London's theater district actually shut down during the Games.</p> <p>Budget: London taxpayers paid an annual Olympic tax for the 2012 Games through the precept levied by the Greater London Authority.</p> <p>The Olympic Park is surrounded by some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country</p>	<p>Sochi Olympics will continue to be a burden for the Russian state, with expenses for operation, maintenance, and foregone interest and tax revenue in the order of \$1.2 billion per year (Müller, 2015)</p> <p>Houses of socially disadvantaged citizens were demolished to build Olympic venues (Müller, 2015)</p>	<p>The widening of roads for some of these corridors has already implicated the eviction and displacement of low-income settlements. Citizens are critical about high expenditures for the mega-event, instead of prioritizing investments in health and education.</p> <p>People who lost their homes to make way for the brand-new Olympic park, forcibly evicted from one of the city's favela; the venues due to be used for swimming and boating, found dangerously high levels of viruses and bacteria from human sewage in the water, and also the spiraling costs of the Games.</p> <p>Tens of thousands were displaced, either through the physical destruction of their homes or through market mechanisms such as rent inflation (Baade and Matheson, 2016)</p>
Environmental impact	<p>London's Olympic plan included green building measures like water recycling, halving the carbon footprint of all construction projects, and sourcing 25% of each project's material from recycled sources (OC)</p> <p>Unfortunately, as the games have drawn closer</p>	<p>Implementing the ambitious project: to stage the Olympic Winter Games in a subtropical climate</p> <p>Environmental and ecological damage is another risk, for example rather than brownfield or underutilised industrial areas, preparations for Sochi have involved using wetlands for some of its</p>	<p>Regarding environmental quality, Rio benefits from a still incomplete, but growing, monitoring network. Sand and air quality show satisfactory results, but an adequate water quality is still dependent on on-</p>

	officials have been distancing themselves from their original targets and have been focusing on “reducing” and “mitigating” the carbon footprint of the games (Silvestre, 2009).	Olympic developments speculating a loss to greenery and wildlife.	going sanitation investments. The beaches of Flamengo, Botafogo, and Leblon were classified as inappropriate for bathing (OGI, 2014).
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### 3. Opportunities

Impact type/ Olympic Games	London 2012	Sochi 2014	Rio de Janeiro 2016
General and sport infrastructure	The Games have supported the delivery of crucial infrastructure that will have a significant impact on East and South-East London (Silvestre, 2012) Business growth: the Olympic Park has significant potential for becoming a new business hub (Silvestre, 2012)	Transform Sochi into a year-round tourist destination by maximising both summer and winter tourism, develop Russia's first world-class ski resort, to create a national centre for winter sports, and implement a philosophy for investing domestically for the future (IOC, 2014) Tourism: Russia growing outgoing tourism market Olympic Games helps to create international brand Exhibits, conferences and sporting events will be organised at Sochi's Olympic venues (IOC, 2014)	The regeneration of the port accelerated by the bid to become a world-class port (OGI, 2014) A 'drastically' change in 'both'
Social impact	British businesses have used their 2012 experience to win contracts helping Rio de Janeiro to prepare for the 2016 Games. Significant increase in volunteerism during and after the Games	The Games has acted as a catalyst for attracting other major cultural and sporting events to Sochi including the Formula 1 Grand Prix series and the 2018 FIFA World Cup (IOC, 2014)	Symbolic significance of the event for the city over the years and the emergence of the city as a global destination
Environmental impact	Not notable	Not notable	Not notable

### 4. Threats

Impact type/	London 2012	Sochi 2014	Rio de Janeiro 2016
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Olympic Games			
General and sport infrastructure	However it is more of a concern that the Olympic legacy report published by the Government and the Mayor's office focuses on evaluating and forecasting the legacy outcomes, rather than on setting out a programme of action for the future.	Sochi is located too far from European center and the instability in the region threatens the long-term use of facilities	The Brazilian federal government was required to issue a blank check, guaranteeing any cost over runs. This paves the way, literally and figuratively, for corruption and graft (Silvestre, 2013)
Social impact	The size of London's economy means that the Olympic effect will be less significant than in Barcelona or Sydney, both much smaller cities.	Short-term jobs created during the Games, will not last if other events if facilities are not in use	With about 500,000 people visiting, a risk to spread the Zika virus around the world.
Environmental impact	Underutilization of venues	Sochi is located in a unique natural region which includes several national parks and protected UNESCO World Heritage sites.	After 6 months, Rio Olympic venues already falling into a state of disrepair, damaging the environment

## Conclusions

Mega-events have the potential to encourage growth if finances are structured and allocated appropriately, but can also negatively burden a host country in a number of ways. The complicated task to address the needs of the local population, improving their livelihoods and economic opportunities could fail in many ways. Even though the experience of the latest Olympic Games shows questionable positive impact on the host communities and the number of bidding countries is getting smaller, some leaders are still willing to get into competition for hosting this mega-event. The economic concerns may only play a small role in a country's decision whether or not to stage the Olympics and the desire to host the Games may be driven by the egos of a country's leaders or as a demonstration of a country's political and economic power and even if the overall effect of holding the Games is typically negative, large projects will still create winners. But the Olympic Games as currently conducted are not economically viable for most cities. The most important reasons include infrastructure costs relating to the venues hosting the events, corruption and the unreasonable and unrealizable economic expectations for the host city and nation. The legacy of new infrastructure can also leave behind a

collection of sporting venues and transport infrastructure that are still operational but now lack funding for improvement. Another threat is the underutilisation of sporting facilities and built new infrastructure as well as a potential burden to the taxpayer due to the high cost of maintaining the sporting facilities to a world-class standard, many Olympic venues remain underutilised. Costs of staging the Games have skyrocketed in recent years and the Olympics have reached a tipping point where the majority of potential host nations and cities in the industrialized, democratic West have come to the realization that hosting is more likely to drain rather than to enhance financial resources.

In order to ensure more sustainable and economically viable Games, the IOC should more rigorously respect the recommendations of the Olympic Agenda 2020. Sustainability plans has to be reinforced to be implemented. In the same time both the IOC and the host cities and nations have to be more proactive. The problem posed by the extraordinary sports facilities costs can be solved through expanding the Games either in time, or in space to avoid the two-week concentration in one host city. Another possibility could also be to name a few permanent locations for the Olympic Games and avoid the building of further sport infrastructure without plans how to use it on the long-term. The IOC could designate venues throughout the world that would rotate the staging duties. As yet another alternative, the IOC might award more than two Games to the same host, so that facilities could at least be used twice. It is crucial to ensure environmental-friendly Olympic Games, and mega-sports events in general, by greening the “product chain”, adopting green procurement policies and tools for the selection of suppliers and contractors, creating partnership with sponsors providing goods and services, by encouraging them to use the sport event as a showcase for presenting new environmentally friendly products, environmentally-friendly design of venues meeting both the sport and the social requirements of the territory. Building only what is needed in tune with local population, instead of building all the venues from scratch, with accessibility for all citizens, athletes, spectators and venue employees with high attention on functionality. Venues must be accessible to all citizens, using latest technologies to reduce energy consumption, water pollution and use more renewables. Special attention should be paid to the natural sites. All the future mega-events should also introduce smart movement facilities, smart food choices and the reduction of food waste, using a variety of simple and smart ways to educate athletes, sports governing bodies, cities and the wider public on sustainability. Also, to run

the Game properly, the organisers and the various governments will have to look carefully at the social implications of the Games and to take appropriate measures to deal with any Games-related inequities and injustices.

In modern businesses it is imperative to consider about success of the planned project, therefore entrepreneurs are faced with many problems in the implementation of sustainable businesses, because it is very difficult without the (financial) consequences for the project and/or business, to meet each premise of sustainability as they are not dependent variables so they generate possible high costs. Sustainable model of sports infrastructure significant must be adapted to the climate, potentials and the available resources, but also with the active protection and controlled exploitation of the environment and natural resources, business settings on sustainable development, functionality of the sports infrastructure system, marketing model of action with respect to values and new trends in market communication.

The business of sports is undergoing radical change, thanks to globalization, new financial approaches, innovations in media and technology. Also, when sport is integrated into sustainable development process, it will help to create healthy citizens general income, and becomes a perfect tool to promote peace and solidarity.

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## **The North Cape Walk – from Amateur to Professional Sport Tourism?**

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### **Abstract**

The North Cape Walk is an interesting sport or sport tourism case, not only because of its location in the proximity of the North Cape plateau, the famous tourism destinations and icon in northern Norway, visited by close to 300 000 tourists in 2015. While the number of tourist visits increased with more than 50% between 1990 and 2015, the number of participants in the North Cape Walk dropped from a peak of 996 in 1989 to a critical low of 69 in 2013. The downturn started already in the beginning of the 1990-ties, after the end of the Cold War. At the same time, almost everywhere else on the planet, sport tourism events were growing, not only in number of participants, but also in economic importance. In few years, it had become the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry (Gibson, 1998, Higham, 2005, Weed, 2006). What make the North Cape Walk an exception to this worldwide trend? Why do the organization and participation in the walk not benefit from the dramatic increase in tourist visits to North Cape, the common goal for both tourists and walkers?

The people of North Cape municipality, hosting the sport tourism event and claiming ownership to the mountain plateau, is known in the region for its high level of voluntarism and civism, especially in organization of sport and other cultural activities and events. For some reason, this capacity of social mobilization does not include the North Cape Walk. Since the downturn in the beginning of the 1990-ties, it has become more and more difficult to mobilize enough volunteers to organize the walk. The last 20 years it has been kept 'artificially' alive with a critical low budget and number of participants, mainly thanks to the effort of a handful local enthusiasts and a minimal economic support from local authorities. Why are the organizers of walk not able to capitalize on the strong voluntarism that still exist in the local community, and restore the traditional sport tourism event to former glory?

After the North Cape Walk hit bottom in 2013, the head of the local business association intervened. He claimed that the only way out of the crisis was to transform the walk into a modern marathon race and hand it over to an external professional event organizer. Is commercialization and professionalization the only viable solution to the recruitment and organization problems of the North Cape Walk? Is there no other way to save the walk?

**Keywords:** Sport, tourism, community support, voluntarism, partnership, professionalization

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world today, and sport tourism the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. A realistic prognosis for economic growth in the tourism sector until 2020 was 5 % compared with 10 % per annum for the sport tourism segment (Weed, 2006). The strong focus on sport, health and fitness, as well as advances in travel and communication technologies are contributing to this impressive increase in sport tourism activities and earnings. The economic downturn worldwide after 2008 does not seem to have slowed down or stopped this growth.

Even if the increase in sport tourism activities and events has been biggest in urban centers, for instance, the multiplication of marathon races we have seen organized in metropolises around the world; it has also benefitted smaller cities and communities in the periphery. The Midnight Sun Marathon (MSM) in Tromsø, situated in northern Norway, 650 km north of the Arctic Circle, is a good example. The 'Paris of the North', as visitors as well as the inhabitants call the city, attracts 6-7 000 runners from nearby and far away. Since the beginning in 1990, the marathon race has evolved into a big 2-days mid-summer feast, attracting a growing number of participants and spectators, and engaging a large part of the local population. The city of Tromsø has just above 75 000 inhabitants.

The number of tourist visits to Tromsø per year is almost the same as to North Cape, one of the most popular tourist destinations in Norway, close to 300 000 in 2015. The tourist traffic to the famous mountain plateau, the northernmost part of the European continent, far out in the Barents Sea,

has increased more than prognosticated, especially the last 10-15 years. The North Cape Walk is quite another story, as we shall see.

### **1.1 . Upturn and downturn**

A handful of local outdoor enthusiasts stood behind the first North Cape Walk ("Nordkappmarsjen"), or Midnight Sun Walk<sup>1</sup>, as they called the 70 km long walk the first years after its initiation in June 1975. The participants started in Honningsvåg, the center of North Cape municipality, and walked 35 km up to the North Cape plateau on 71 degree north, and the same way back again. The North Cape Walk was not only the northernmost mountain walk. It quickly got a reputation as one of the toughest walks in the world. In the early 1970-ties, there were an upturn of this kind of sport tourism events all over Western Europe, including Norway

Under the name of 'Friends of the North Cape Walk' the enthusiasts, supported by the community, organized more than 20 walks, before they had to hand the sport tourism event over to others because of burn-out. The armed forces played an important role, in establishing and developing the walk. The initiative came from an employee at a local air force base. He and his friends were inspired by popular walks elsewhere in Norway and Western Europe, like the famous Nijmegen Walk<sup>2</sup> in the Netherlands. Organized road and mountain walks were more popular than ever. In 1968 representatives of national mountain walk associations in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Lichtenstein came together and formed the first international organization for European walking enthusiasts, the "Internationaler Volkssportsverband" (IVV). Seven years later, in January 1975, the Norwegian branch of IVV, "Norges Turmarsjforbund" (the Norwegian Mountain Walk Federation) was established. In 2016, it reported a record high of more than 200 000 participants in road and mountain walks all over the country. What made the North Cape Walk an exception to this general trend?

People at the national secretariat helped the 'Friends of the North Cape Walk', one of the first local walk organizations to join the federation, with

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<sup>1</sup> The organizers of the Midnight Sun Marathon in Tromsø apparently copied the name of the race from the Midnight Sun Walk in North Cape.

<sup>2</sup> The 160 km Nijmegen Walk in the Netherlands, initiated in 1915, is as popular as ever. In 2016 the number of participants came close to 50 000. Because of capacity problems, the organizers have to limit the number of participants in the future. Roads and mountain walks elsewhere in Europe, including Norway, have experienced a similar upswing the last 10-15 years.

equipment, recruitment, marketing and organization of the walk. This support was important for the establishment, and development of the new sport tourism event the first years. However, some of the requirements imposed by the federation turned out to be an obstacle more than a helping hand later on, when recruitment, organization and funding problems turned up on the horizon. To make the road and mountain walks accessible for everybody, rich and poor, the federation decided that the participant fee should not exceed NOK 30 (4 euros)<sup>1</sup>. It did not allow time registration either, that was against their basic philosophy. Focus was on the social dimension of the walk, promotion of outdoor activities, community values and well-being. They did not approve the introduction of a marathon race, in combination with the walk to North Cape, in 1995, initiated to differentiate and strengthen the recruitment and organization basis of the sport tourism event. Another requirement of the federation that affected the walk negatively, according to one of the 'friends', was the introduction of shorter distances, 10, 20, 35, in addition to the original 70 km. Through that, the walk lost some of its reputation and image as one of the toughest road and mountain walks in Europe.

During the first 5 years, the number of participants increased from 70 the first year to a little bit over 700. In this period, most of the walkers were from the municipality of North Cape and neighbor municipalities. At the end of the 1980-ties, in 1989 to be exact, the North Cape Walk reached its one time high with 996 registered participants. The composition of the walkers changed gradually during the 1980-ties. At the end of the decennium, more than half of the participants came from 5-7 military garrisons in northern Norway. The number of locals participating in the walk had dropped from 75% in the beginning to less than 30% . It did not affect the organization of the event so much, since the military also helped with marketing, recruitment, and other kinds of logistics. They also supplied the local organizers with big heated tents, mobile first aid stations and toilets, plus food and beverages – all free of charge. Even in mid-summer, weather on 71 degree north can be rough. During the 40 years of the North Cape Walk the participants have had to deal with serious snow several times. The long distance of the walk combined with extreme weather conditions did not frighten the army personnel. It gave the military an excellent opportunity to

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<sup>1</sup> The limit set by the Norwegian Mountain Walk Association today is NOK 60 (7 Euros). According to the organizers of the North Cape Walk the fee does not cover expenses for buying diplomas and medals for the participants.

train new recruits, and at the same time show civic engagement through the support of the walk and the municipality of North Cape.

After 1989, and the end of the Cold War, the number of soldiers in the North Cape Walk dropped quickly. Around 1995 there were hardly any left. The number of participants was just above 100. The downturn was in many ways an effect of the dramatic reduction we saw in military activity and presence in northern Norway in the early 1990-ties. Three out of the seven garrisons represented among the participants of the walk until 1989 were closed. The withdrawal of administrative, logistical and economic support of the North Cape Walk was another negative consequence of the downsizing of military activities in the region. The local organizers of the walk realized that they had become too dependent on the army, and that they and the walk had arrived at a crossroad. According to them, the only way to save the traditional sport event from closure was to substitute the loss of participants and support from the military with other groups of participants, mainly from outside the municipality of North Cape. After a strong mobilization in the beginning the interest and support of the walk in the local communities had waned. Maybe they had to change the whole concept behind the walk. In 1996 and the following year they combined the walk with a marathon race, without success. The total number of participants stayed the same, just above 100, so they went back to the original concept. Economic support from the municipality and inclusion of the walk into the program of North Cape Summer Festival did not restore it to former glory, as they hoped. However, it kept the walk precariously alive for twenty more years.

The situation did not improve after the local sport association HT&IF ("Honningsvåg Turn og Idrettsforening") in 2008 took over responsibility for the organization of the North Cape Summer Festival, including the walk. The leaders of HT&IF, more precisely the sub-division for football, in charge of the festival, did not show any particular interest in solving the financial, recruitment and organizational problems of the walk. In fact, they took on the task quite unwillingly, as a precondition for the attractive contract on the summer festival put forward by the municipal authorities. While the festival easily could bring in more than 50000 euros to the local sport association, the North Cape Walk was a drain of money. It did not help much that the municipality sponsored the organization of sport tourism event with 8000 euros (NOK 70 000). Because of regulations imposed by the Norwegian Mountain Walk Federation, that they are affiliated to, the local organizers cannot improve the economy of the walk by increasing the

participation fee. HT&IF are not willing to use part of the money they have earned from the summer festival into the North Cape Walk, not even the money from the municipality earmarked for the walk. Since it was initiated 'outside' the local sport association, the current organizers do not feel any ownership or responsibility for the walk.

It is like a vicious circle. Without the necessary funding and support in the local community there will most likely be no new locally initiated marketing and recruitment campaigns, or initiatives to change and develop the concept and organization behind the traditional sport tourism event.

In 2013, the number of walkers dropped below 70 for the first time since the start of the North Cape Walk in 1975. Only 22 of the participants came from Honningsvåg and other local communities. In an interview at the local radio station<sup>1</sup>, shortly after the walk had finished, a member of the organizing committee, the football group of HT&IF, blamed the inhabitants of North Cape for the critical situation. They had turned their back on the traditional walk, according to him. There was no sign of self-reflection or self-criticism in the interview. If the community did not support the mountain walk anymore, they would have to close it.

## **2. 2. Professionalization, the only viable solution?**

No local initiative was taken to solve the marketing, recruitment and financial problems of the North Cape Walk until the leader of the local business association<sup>2</sup> raised the marathon idea again at a public meeting in Honningsvåg later the same year. According to him, the local community lacked the knowhow, organizational capacity and funding needed to turn the North Cape Walk into a success story again. Even if they could come up with the resources needed for that in North Cape, he was not sure it would save the traditional sport tourism event. They had tried several times to rescue the walk since the beginning of the 1990-ties, without success. Besides, this kind of road or mountain walks, without individual registration of time and any aspect of competition, was outdated, according to him. More important, a traditional mountain walk could not compete in popularity and economic success with a professionally organized road race. He suggested that they should convert the walk into an international marathon race, similar to the Midnight Sun Marathon (MSM) in Tromsø. This kind of sport tourism events attracted thousands of participants and

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<sup>1</sup> North Cape Radio, June 10, 2013

<sup>2</sup> Honningsvåg Trade and Industry Association

tourists all over the world, even in a relatively small and remote destination as Tromsø.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 5800 persons participated in the MSM in 2013 (Hinch & De la Barre, 2006, Higham, 2006).

To get the message through, the business association in North Cape had invited the director of Midnight Sun Marathon to the public meeting in Honningsvåg. He thought the proposal of turning the North Cape Walk into an international marathon race was a good idea and promised to support any local initiative to realize it. After all, the organizers of the Midnight Sun Marathon had copied, some would even say stolen, the original name of the mountain walk.

To succeed, they needed to outsource the marathon project to an external, professional sport event organizer. They were not able to do it themselves, according to the leader of the local business association, as the many failed attempts to save the traditional walk clearly indicated. Not everybody at the meeting agreed with him. But his ideas of turning the walk into an international marathon race, and outsourcing, commercializing and professionalizing it, was well received not only in the business community, but also by representatives of the local government and among the directives of HT&IF.

Almost 4 years has passed, but so far none of the local stakeholders has done anything to follow up the recommendations that came out of the public meeting in 2013. They have not contacted any professional event organizer outside the municipality, or taken any other initiative to solve the acute recruitment, organizational and financial problems of the North Cape Walk. Among the main stakeholders, nobody seems to care anymore about the destiny of the walk. Symptomatically, the mayor did not mention the walk in her opening speech at the North Cape Summer Festival 2016, even if it still figures as the first event in the festival program. The proposal of transforming the traditional walk into a modern, professionally organized, international marathon race also seems to be forgotten, even by its proponent, the head of the local business association. The sport tourism event and issue has overnight become irrelevant for the main stakeholders in the municipality, and taken off the official agenda. However, the discussion about the destiny of the walk continues in a small group of old and new friends, outside the local circles of power. Without real support from the local sport association (HT&IF), government and business

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<sup>1</sup> Approximately 6 000 participated in the Midnight Sun Marathon 2013 (including a the participants in a half-marathon and a 10 km run)



community it is unlikely that either the North Cape Walk or the proposed marathon project will be a successfully realized in the near future. (Hritz & Ross, 2010, Smith, 2010, Ziakas & Costa, 2011, Gibson, Kaplanidou and Kang, 2012, Üngüren et al., 2015, Hinch and Holt, 2016).

In the meantime, the walk continues its precarious ad-hoc existence and journey, from one year to the other, against all odds, with the same critical low budget and number of participants. What explains this remarkable resilience? The football group of HT&IF, the reluctant organizer of the walk, has just secured the contract for the organization of North Cape Summer Festival 2017, including the walk. It was the only bidder for the municipal contract, including the walk, as every year since 2008.

## **2. PROBLEM DEFINITION**

The problem situation of the North Cape Walk is in many ways paradoxical. In spite of the co-location with the famous tourism destination and icon and political and economic support from local government, it has struggled to survive on the edge of bankruptcy for the last 20 years. While the number of tourist visits to the mountain plateau has doubled, from 150 000 to 300 000, the number of participants in the walk has dropped from a 1 000 to less than hundred in the same period. This happened at the same time as road and mountain walks elsewhere in Norway and abroad experienced an increase in popularity. As far as I know, none of them took place in the proximity of a famous tourist destination such as the North Cape Plateau. The organizers of the walk should not have to make a great effort and use a lot of money in publicity and marketing to capitalize on this well-known brand name and tourist destination (Chalip, 2005). This seemed to be the main motivation for the name change in 1980, from the Midnight Sun Walk to the North Cape Walk. Apart from that, they did not use much time or money in the marketing of the sport tourism event, especially the tourism part. Unfortunately, the proximity or shared space with the great tourist icon and money machine did not help much in the promotion of the walk outside the municipality of North Cape, on the contrary. In the eyes of a local walk enthusiast it is condemned to a precarious 'low-life' in the shade of the mighty mountain plateau far out in the Barents Sea, and of SCANDIC, the international hotel chain that has got exclusive rights on the commercial use of the famous nature site.

However, this limitation has not prevented other agents and agencies, local and external, from successfully using the brand name and location of North

Cape, like the North Cape Film Festival<sup>1</sup>, the extreme sport reality series named 71 degree North<sup>2</sup> and even the local branch of the Norwegian Trekking Association (“Den norske turistforeningen”), North Cape Trekking Association<sup>3</sup> (Deery, Jago and Fredline, 2004, 2007, King, 2014, Kenwyn, 2015, Getz and Page, 2016).

Through the case study of the North Cape Walk we would like to find out why the organizers of the walk, from the old ‘friends’ to the football group of HT&IF, were not able to make more out of the co-location with and use of the famous tourist destination and brand name. Obviously, they did not have the same marketing and organization skills and resources as SCANDIC, the film festival or the commercial Norwegian TV channel. They got some help with marketing and organization of the sport tourism event from the municipality, the Norwegian Mountain Walk Federation and the military. But it was not enough, or the right medicine, to get the walk on its feet again after the downturn in the beginning of the 1990-ties. The exit of the armed forces after the end of the Cold War caused a serious blow to both the recruitment and organization of the walk. With limited resources, the organizers did what they could to attract new groups of participants from outside, but the walk did not recover fully after that (Chalip, 2006, Ahvenainen, 2013).

The second question we would like to raise is about social embeddedness, i.e., what kind of support the walk have had and still has today in the local communities around the mountain plateau, mainly in Honningsvåg, the municipal center. The people and leadership of North Cape is widely known and admired for their high level of voluntarism, manifested through close cooperation between public, private and voluntary sector, mainly in relation to sport, and other cultural activities. HT&IF, the local sport association,

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<sup>1</sup> The North Cape Film Festival, initiated in 2004 by handful of local film enthusiasts, attract today more than 5000 spectators from all over the world during one week in mid-September.

<sup>2</sup> In 1990, the Norwegian TV channel “TV Norge” initiated a new extreme sport reality series they called ‘71 degree North’, because North Cape was chosen as the finish line for the competition. The reality series soon became very popular, not only in Norway, but in many other countries too.

<sup>3</sup> The North Cape Trekking Association, established in 1996, is most popular among young people because of the great variety of outdoor activities they organize all year round. The success of the organization depends very much on the ability of the leaders to use the internet, especially social medias, to inform and promote their different outdoor activities.

organize today approximately 40% of the local population, among young and old. It offers a great variety of summer and winter sports, from gymnastics, swimming, athletics, football and handball to alpinism, snowboarding and skiing. To fund all this local sport activities and participate in sport events outside the municipality, HT&IF organize different cultural and social event such as the North Cape Summer Festival and Christmas and New Year celebration for the whole community, plus a very popular cabaret ("Turn-revye"), that they also travel around with in the region. The success of these socio-cultural events depends very much on the use of an informal network or partnership connecting all the main stakeholders in the community (Storey, 2010, Halpenny and Kulczycki, 2011). In 2011, through a joint effort with the local government and business community, HT&IF realized an old dream, the building of a multi-purpose hall worth more than 2 million euros. Most of the work was done on a voluntary basis by members of the local sport association. HT&IF also put in half the money needed to make the dream come through (Ziakas and Costa, 2011, Ryser and Halseth, 2014).

Why is this capacity of social mobilization and cooperation, still very much intact in the municipality of North Cape today, not used to rescue the walk? After all, the walk has been and still is the responsibility of the leadership of HT&IF and the football group, as part of the summer festival contract they have signed with the municipality. The local authorities and business community are the other main stakeholders. What have they done to change and develop the concept and organization behind the walk to better meet the requirements of the participants and supporters of this kind of sport tourism events today, both inside and outside the municipality? It is mainly a question about social embeddedness or the social basis of the North Cape Walk (Hinch and De la Barre, 2005, Getz, 2007, Hritz and Ross, 2010, Giddens, 2015)

The number of locals that participated in the walk increased steadily from around 50 at the start in 1975 until a little bit more than 300 ten years later. It started to go down long before the military withdrew from the walk at the beginning of the 1990-ties, after the end of the Cold War. Between 1970 and 1990 the municipality of North Cape, as many other coastal communities in Norway, experienced a dramatic drop in population, from approximately 6 000 to 3500 inhabitants. In most cases, the decline in population came as a consequence of radical restructuring and rationalization in the fish industry and the fishing fleet, often followed by bankruptcies, unemployment and increased outmigration. Even if tourism was growing in importance, the

fisheries were still the most important economic activity in the municipality of North Cape.

The dramatic population decline had no doubt a negative effect on the recruitment of both participants and volunteers for the traditional walk, as for other organized activities in the voluntary sector. Besides, we can expect that some of the local participants in the walk dropped out, because they got tired of walking the same route year after year. Age is obviously another factor we have to consider, even if a handful of the 'friends of the North Cape Walk' has participated in all the walks since the beginning in 1975. Burnout among the friends or the 'founding fathers', that both organized and participated in the walk until well into of the new millennium, was likely another limiting factor. Because there were no registration of time, the organization of the walk did not require many volunteers. With 10-12, they could manage. Even so, they had problem mobilizing enough volunteers locally already at the beginning of the 1990-ties. The organizing committee did not get any 'new blood' until the football group of HT&IF took over responsibility for the walk in 2008, as part of the contract for the North Cape Summer Festival. By then the walk had lost most of the broad social basis and support it had in the local community in the beginning (Ntloko and Swart, 2008, Smith, 2010, Kim et. al., 2015, Abdali et. al, 2016, Hinch and Holt, 2016). How did this happen, and why could the sport association, with such a strong social, political and economic position in the municipality, not restore and reactivate the traditional North Cape Walk?

Last, but not the least, we would like to find out why the project of transforming the walk into a classic marathon race, and handing it over to an external professional event organizer, did not work out as intended and expected. As mentioned before, the head of the local business association presented the new marathon project as the only way out of the serious recruitment, organization and economic problems of the North Cape Walk, at a public meeting in Honningsvåg fall 2013. According to him, they did not have the competence and capacity in the community that was needed both for a successful reactivation of the walk and for the realization of an alternative marathon race. Four years have passed since then, but so far the local stakeholders have done nothing to realize the marathon project, or for that sake, to reform the traditional walk. Maybe the marathon proposal was not seriously meant or perceived by the participants at the meeting. Or can it be that there are so little interest for this kind of sport events left in the municipality of North Cape, apart from lack of knowledge and capacity, that they are not only incapable of solving the problems with the walk

themselves, but also in finding and convincing a professional external event organizer to take over responsibilities. Or, is the explanation for this impasse and passivity of the local stakeholders another?

### **3. METODOLOGY**

Most of the information used in this paper was gathered through semi-structured telephone interviews with key informants, people with first-hand knowledge about the North Cape Walk, acquired mainly as participants, volunteers and/or as representatives of local organizations and institutions directly involved in the organization of the traditional sport tourism event. In the participants group I included an equal number of locals and people from outside the municipality, men and women, old and young (12). It was of course important to get the 'original' story of the remaining 'Friends of the North Cape Walk' (3). In addition I interviewed, members of the current organizing committee (3), leaders of HT&IF, including the football group (3), local government representatives, including politicians and bureaucrats (6), members of the local business association and business park (4), journalists at the local radio station and newspaper (3), the leader of North Cape Trekking Association (1), and the secretary of the Norwegian Mountain Walk Federation (1). I conducted the interviews between February and October 2016<sup>1</sup>.

I have reviewed all available documents and newspaper articles about the North Cape Walk, for the period 1975-2016. However, important information got lost when the archive of the 'Friends of the North Cape Walk' disappeared in connection with a relocation of their office in Honningsvåg at the end of the 1990-ties. Fortunately, I was able to recover some of this documentation through the secretariat of the Norwegian Mountain Walk Federation.

I have also used information from a research and development project in business and community development realized in all the five communities making up the Municipality of North Cape, between 2010 and 2012.<sup>2</sup> The R&D-project was elaborated and executed by Finnmark University College

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<sup>1</sup> An abstract about the North Cape Walk was presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sport Tourism Conference of IRNIST, "Red, Green and Blue Strategies", in Zagreb, Croatia, April 6-8, 2016

<sup>2</sup> Tor Gjertsen (2012) «Our Future – Our Responsibility». Local Development Workshops and Partnerships in the Municipality of North Cape. Project report. Finnmark University College.

(FiUC), in cooperation with the local authorities and business community. Socio-economic data from this project has served as an important community backcloth, also in our study of the North Cape Walk.<sup>1</sup> Focus has been on the relationship between the organization of the sport tourism event and the community of North Cape, more precisely, on how this relationship has changed over time and the factors that has caused these changes.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

### **4.1. Development of sport tourism “in the shade of North Cape”**

When the local organizers in 1980 decided to change the name of the mountain walk from Midnight Sun to North Cape, they expected that the name change would benefit the organization of the sport tourism event in different ways, mainly in marketing, but also in recruiting more participants from outside the municipality. Second, sharing the name with the famous tourist destination and icon would presumably generate some additional income, even if commercialization and profit was not the first thing on the agenda of the ‘Friends of the North Cape Walk’. They were comfortable with the policy of NMWF, that the participation fee should be affordable for anyone. It did not take long before the organizers of the walk realized that the great tourist attraction did not automatically benefit the walk, on the contrary. The ‘friends’ never found out how to use the privileged co-location with tourism magnet and money machine effectively in their efforts of increasing the number of participants and in strengthening the organizational and economic basis of the walk. This was, at least in the beginning, more a result of lack of knowledge and skills in marketing and organization, than lack of will. Other more powerful interest groups and organizations, on local, national and international level, capitalized fully on the popular tourist destination. The Municipality of North Cape, the host and owner of the walk and famous nature site, was not among them.

In 1956, the municipality initiated the North Cape Summer Festival in 1956, in connection with the opening of a new road from Honningsvåg to the North Cape plateau. Their hope was that the choice of name would help in the promotion of the festival, especially outside the municipality. However, the extra pull they expected from the famous tourist destination and icon

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<sup>1</sup> Honningsvåg Trade and Industry Association and North Cape Business Park

inside the municipality did not materialize in the form of more visitors and money. After a couple of difficult years they had close the festival. The municipality did not have the competence, capacity and resources needed to make the new summer festival a success. When they decided to reopen the festival twenty years later, in 1977, it was conditioned by the success of the North Cape Walk. In two years the number of participants, among them a majority of locals, increased from 75 to nearly 500. It turned out that the summer festival benefitted more from its new connection with walk than with the famous tourist site (O'Sullivan and Jackson, 2002, Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules and Ali, 2003)).

Before the municipality built the access road to North Cape in 1956, almost all the tourist traffic came with boats via Hornvika, a natural harbor next to the mountain plateau. The Norwegian shipping company, Coastal Express ("Hurtigruten"), transported most of them. In 1928, after forming "Nordkapp Vel AS", a share holding company, "Hurtigruten" negotiated with the Norwegian state a leasing contract for exclusive rights to commercial use of the North Cape mountain plateau during 90 years, without any participation of local authorities or businesses. In addition to Coastal Express, a national hotel chain and travel agencies were among the founders of "Nordkapp Vel AS". The members of the holding company changed over the years. After heavy investments in hotel and restaurant infrastructure and facilities, the tourist destination soon became a huge money machine for the leasing companies. The international hotel chain SCANDIC has acquired full control of "Nordkapp Vel AS", and all the tourist installations at North Cape. It collects approximately 15 million euros per year in revenues from the tourist traffic to the mountain plateau.<sup>1</sup> The Municipality of North Cape does not get any royalties or other kinds of economic benefits from the monopolist, except a yearly donation of 50 000 euros to 'Visit North Cape', a local destination company, and a small number of seasonal jobs. The symbolic investment pays off in the form of goodwill in the local communities, and more important, an increased number of tourists and profit for the international hotel chain. They are not interested in involving the people of North Cape in their lucrative business, or supporting the local economy, including various small-scale tourist enterprises, in any other way (Hall, 2005, Chalip, 2005, Jönsson, Lewis and Jönsson, 2014, Brewer and Freeman, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> SCANDIC do not make their budget or income public. The figure has been calculated from the number of visitors to the North Cape plateau in 2015.

They also support the North Cape Walk. It offers a free meal, usually a fish or meat soup, to the participants, after passing the finish line set up at the entrance of the North Cape mountain plateau. Moreover, the walkers are not obliged to pay the obligatory entrance fee of 25 euros to get access to the site. In return, some of the participants of the walk stay one or several nights at the local SCANDIC hotels.

The leasing contract for North Cape expires in 2018. The local government and population do not want a continuation of what they perceive as a 'feudal regime' that has no place in today's world. They want participation and a fair share of the income generated by the commercial exploitation of the famous nature site and tourist destination located inside the municipal borders. However, local stakeholders in government and business are not sure they are capable of taking good care of, less running the North Cape tourism enterprise successfully of their own. They would prefer that an external professional tourism agency, like SCANDIC, run the popular tourist destination also in the future, but hopefully with more say, participation and a bigger share of the profit for local government and business. Ninety years of monopolism in the tourist sector, combined with a strong dependency on state subsidies, has created a crofter mentality in the local communities of North Cape. Lack of self-confidence among local stakeholders and decision-makers in both public and private sector seems to be a bigger problem than lack of competence, capacity and funding (Dean and Taylor-Goody, 1992, Coates, 1993, Robertson, 1998).

The majority of the people we interviewed in North Cape also think that the organizers of the walk, from the 'Friends of the North Cape Walk' to the football group of HT&IF, have not used the North Cape brand properly in promotion of the sport tourism event (. Marketing has been minimal and insufficient all the way, especially during the last most critical years of the traditional walk, when they needed the most. You have to search very hard to find any information about the walk, on the internet or elsewhere. The Norwegian Mountain Walk Federation has a small notice about the North Cape Walk in their annual event calendar, and if you look carefully, you can find some information about the walk on the web page of North Cape Municipality, most of it outdated. Members of the organizing committee explain the minimal marketing efforts, as a consequence of their tight budget. They could do much more in promoting the walk, if they had more money.

However, the recruitment and organizational problem of the walk is not primarily a question of lack of funding. Neither the football group of HT&IF -



the organizers of the walk - nor the municipality -the owner of the walk - have the marketing and/or the organizational competence and capacity needed to solve the problems of the walk, according to the majority of the people I talked to in North Cape. There are alternative ways of marketing the walk that are both very effective in spreading information, and do not cost much, like internet and social media. Participants in the walk, especially the youngest ones, have been busy sharing information about the walk on the internet the last 8-10 years. The organizers of the walk are absent from the web, even if some of them privately are very active users of social medias like Facebook. Knowledge and skills in marketing and organization are no doubt important success factors, in addition to a strong economy and capacity of social mobilization. The basic problem of the North Cape Walk, however, seems to be lack of interest, motivation and commitment (Ross, 2001, Ziakas and Costa, 2011, Gibson, et al., 2012, Vargane and Serra, 2014, Peric, 2015, Hinch and Holt, 2016).

#### **4.2. Fragmentation and weakening of social basis and support**

An interesting question - and paradox - is why the voluntary sector in North Cape, under the leadership of HT&IF, and with support from local government and business, has not been able to deal with the internal and external challenges of the North Cape Walk, and turn it into the success it was once. They have, as mentioned before, an impressive record in voluntary work and achievements, not only in sport activities, but also in relation to business and business development.

The small and remote community of North Cape is not only known because of the mighty mountain cliff far out in the Barents Sea, but also for a varied and well-organized offer of sport activities, and overall, for a very high level of voluntarism among its inhabitants. The main sport association, Honningsvåg Turn og Idrettsforening (HT&IF), was founded already in 1904, as one of the first sport associations in northern Norway. Over the years, HT&IF's repertoire has expanded from gymnastics to athletics, cross-country and downhill skiing, swimming, handball and football. Close to 50% of the 3200 inhabitants in the municipality of North Cape, young and old, are involved in activities organized by HT&IF, directly and/or indirectly, in the administration of sport. The sport association is no doubt an influential actor in the community, not only in voluntary sector, but also in local politics and business (Putnam, 1993 and 2000, Hinch and De la Barre, 2005, Ryser and Halseth, 2014, Gjertsen, 2015).

Between 2010 and 2012, Finnmark University College (FiUC) and the University of Tromsø (UiT), in close cooperation with local authorities and business, organized local development workshops in the five communities, including Honningsvåg, that make up the municipality of North Cape (Gjertsen, 2012). We found that many of the local politicians and business leaders, including the current mayor and leader of the local business association, have, or have had, connections with the local sport association, HT&IF, either as active sportsmen/–women, or sport administrators. It has been and still is an important training ground for future leaders in public and private, as well as voluntary sector. A common background like this makes it easier to cooperate, also across borders on local and regional level. North Cape even ‘exports’ political, business and community leaders, trained by HT&IF, to other municipalities in the region<sup>1</sup>.

During the two years we worked on the joint research and development project in North Cape, we registered various formal and informal networks. The most active and powerful ones, connected leaders of HT&IF, the local sport association, the municipal council and administration and the local business community.<sup>2</sup> They did not only function across sectors, they were also inter-connected. The networks were not only used to share information about important community issues, but also to solve problems, and realize tasks of common interests, such as the building of a multi-purpose hall. They did not only exchange information and opinions, but also people (Castells, 1996). We found that many of the top-leaders in the local government as well as the business community had background as active sportsmen/-women and/or as sport administrators. Not surprisingly, we found the highest network density and activity level in Honningsvåg, the municipal center. Activities in the socio-political and socio-economic networks increase considerably during periods characterized by realization of important community events or projects such as the summer festival, the TURN-Cabaret and the construction of a multi-purpose hall in Honningsvåg in 2011. We could see the contours of what we best can describe as Network Governance and a tendency of meta-governance (Sterling, 2005, Sørensen

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<sup>1</sup> As an example, both the General Manager and Head of the Department of Education of the city of Alta, have a background as active football and handball players and sport administrators in the municipality of North Cape. Alta is the biggest city and regional center of Finnmark County, and host one of the five campuses of UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

<sup>2</sup> Honningsvåg Trade and Industry Association and North Cape Business Park represented the local business community.

and Torfing, 2007, Røyseland, Jensen and Aarsæther, 2008, Storey, 2009). All these, and other similar culture and sport events and projects in North Cape (with the exception of the film festival), were initiated, led or coordinated by HT&IF. In the case of the sport hall, local government and business representatives played second violin. Some of our informants described the local sport association as a kind of 'shadow cabinet' or alternative government with considerable political and economic power. We discovered that there were a lot of contact, mostly informal, between the leadership of HT&IF and the Municipality of North Cape, both with the political and administrative side. This extensive cross-border contact and cooperation was sometimes formalized into what we can call local development partnerships, for instance in the planning and building process behind the multi-purpose hall (Moseley, 2003, Sterling, 2005, Misener and Mason, 2006, Storey, 2010) .

Most of the networks we detected in North Cape between 2010 and 2012 had connections or ramifications to people and organizations outside the municipality, mainly on the regional level. This was also the case with the friends of the North Cape Walk, especially in the beginning. After the downturn started in the beginning of the 1990-ties, the people behind the walk lost contact with the outside world and became more introverted, also in relation to people in the local communities of North Cape. In At large, voluntary activities in the communities continued more or less on the same level as before, with a growing tendency of centralization and fragmentation. Downturn and/or extinction of one voluntary organization, event and activity, often led to the appearance of another. North Cape Trekking Association, established in 1996, is a good example. It soon became very popular, and recruited many outdoor enthusiast not only in North Cape, but also in the neighbor municipalities of Porsanger and Måsøy. The young, competent and enthusiastic leadership established contact and cooperation with people here, as well as in other municipalities in the region. They have kept close contact with the national trekking association, "Den Norske Turistforening", something they have used fully to their advantage, for instance through the participation in different training programs and advice and funding of outdoor projects and activities in North Cape and the neighbor municipalities. Apparently, they do not need help with marketing. In contrast to the people and organization behind the North Cape Walk, they are innate experts in using social media and the internet to promote their outdoor philosophy and activities (Putnam, 200, Misener and Mason, 2006, Weed, 2009).

Local activists have shown a remarkable innovative ability, through the use contacts and cooperation with external partners on regional, national and international level, to elaborate new projects, events and activities. The best example is perhaps the people and organization behind the international North Cape Film Festival. They have used their widespread network contacts and connections, as well as social media and internet, very successfully, not only in their information and marketing strategy and effort, but also in building competence and capacity in filmmaking and film festival organization (O'Sullivan and Jackson, 2002, Smith and Fox, 2007).

The high level of voluntarism in North Cape does not express itself only through sport and leisure activities. The municipality is also known, nationally and internationally, for the North Cape Film Festival, an alternative film festival with a strong northern focus, organized in September every year since 2004, by a handful of local film enthusiasts. Even if the film festival, as the North Cape Walk, gets some economic support from local government and business, and can use technical equipment and other facilities owned by the municipality free of charge, it is organized completely on a voluntary basis. The last 3-4 years the festival has attracted more than 5000 paying visitors. The success depends very much on the high quality repertoire of films with a northern focus, but also on a professional organization and marketing of the festival. Behind the North Cape Film Festival, we find a small group of very dedicated amateur and professional filmmakers, most of them locals. In contrast to the walk, they are also experienced marketing people. In spite of the monopoly of SCANDIC, the enthusiasts behind the North Cape Film Festival have been able to use the famous brand name successfully in the promotion of this important local culture event nationally and internationally. But, the success of the local film festival depends first and foremost on the quality and attraction of the product they have to offer.

In 2006, two years after the start of the successful film festival, the problem situation of the traditional walk was out of hands and not economically and socially sustainable any more. The few remaining 'Friends of the North Cape Walk' were not able or willing to organize the sport tourism event anymore, and they could not find anybody else to take over responsibilities. For the first time the walk was facing closure, even if the economic, organization and recruitment problems of the walk had existed for more than 10 years. In the last minute, the head of local branch of Red Cross, one of the 'founding fathers' of the walk, volunteered. However, with a rapidly ageing and decreasing membership stock, the local branch of Red Cross was not able to

continue the organization of the walk for very long. After two years, they were forced to give up. They could not any longer mobilize enough volunteers for the job, in their own organization or in the local community. They were not even able to recruit new members and support to continue their own organization. Red Cross was not the only voluntary organization in North Cape that had to close because of recruitment problems and economic difficulties. While some organizations in the voluntary sector, such as the organization behind the film festival and HT&IF, experiences growth in the number of activities, participants and incomes, the general trend in Honningsvåg as in the rest of the world was pointing downwards (Aarsæther and Bærenholdt, 2001, Hinch and De la Barre, 2005, Storey, 2010, Ryser and Halseth, 2014, Hinch and Holt, 2016).

As 'owner' of the North Cape Summer Festival, the municipal authorities felt they had to do something to save the traditional walk. They included a new clause into the leasing contract for the summer festival. The voluntary organization that got the contract had to organize the walk, as part of the deal. As a carrot, the municipality put up 6 000 euros for the organization of the walk. From 2008, the football division of HT&IF has been in charge of the walk and the summer festival. The local sport association took on this responsibility mainly to generate income to their different sport activities. However, while the organization of the summer festival brings in good money, the mountain walk does not. They would rather skip the walk, and concentrate their efforts on the festival, if they could. Even if the summer festival brings in close to 100 000 euros, the football group of HT&IF does not want to use any of this money to upgrade and promote the traditional walk, or for that sake, to transform it into an international, modern marathon race, as suggested by the local business association. If they have the knowledge, skills and capacity to do that is also questionable.

Sport activities and events have historically been organized by sport organizations, and purely for sporting purposes. We find that the same is often the case in sport tourism events, such as the North Cape Walk. The tourism part can therefore easily be neglected or even forgotten by the organizers, in the promotion and organization of the event. There are no additional, complimentary cultural or social activities organized especially for the participants of the walk, apart from the food and free access to the mountain plateau offered by SCANDIC. The explanation for lack of success in combining sport and tourism can be that *"many sporting events rely on volunteers, and may not have developed business or organizational skills or experiences. Both of these factors can lead to lost tourism opportunities,"*

(O'Connell, 2016). In the case of North Cape Walk, we can easily see that lack of business and organization skills or experiences among the organizers has prevented them from realizing the full commercial and recruitment potential in the co-location of the walk and the famous tourist destination and money machine of North Cape. On the other hand, profit making not been a priority issue among the organizers of the walk. (Hinch and De la Barre, 2005, Jönsson et al., 2014, Hinch and Holt, 2016).

If this is so, the question is if outsourcing and a professionalization of the organization behind the walk is the best or only solution to recruitment, organization and economic problems of the walk. Or, can the walk be restored to former glory again through a broad mobilization of volunteers in the community, as suggested by a minority of the people I interviewed in North Cape? Is the concept of road and mountain walks outdated, as claimed by the head of the local business association and is it necessary to change it into a more up-to-date marathon race to be successful?

### **The North Cape Walk – from amateur to professional sport tourism?**

The picture we are presenting of the walk and the community of North Cape is both contradictory and confusing. However, it reflects a process of growing complexity and fragmentation in the society, not only in North Cape, but in the rest of the world too. It is part of globalization. One negative effect of this general trend in society that we can observe in the Municipality of North Cape too, is not only a reduction in activity, contact and cooperation between people and organizations in the voluntary sector, but also between voluntary, public and private sector. That impede the kind of cross-border mobilization for the common good, as we have seen many examples of in North Cape in the past (Moseley, 2003, Aarsæther, Røyseland and Jensen, 2008, Hinch and Holt, 2016).

An interesting question is why the North Cape Walk seems to be the only exception from the rule of successful realizations of sport, cultural and social activities and events in the municipality through joint community action, in spite of the involvement of the main stakeholders, HT&IF and the local government. Is absence of business representation in the organizing committee the reason? Most likely not. Local business firms, mainly in the commercial sector, have supported the walk, as well as many other culture and sport activities and events in the municipality, with small donations in kind and money from the start in 1975 up until today. But, as long as the local business community does not see a bigger marketing and/or profit potential in the walk the local business community will not get stronger

involved. Apparently, the same goes for the marathon project, even if the proposal came from their own ranks.

It is, according to James Higham; *“important to recognize the need to attract or develop sporting events that complement the scale, infrastructure and resourcing capacity of the host city. To this end, it is perhaps necessary to develop a greater understanding of the tourism development potential of existing/regular sporting events and competitions”* (1999:89). The great tourism potential of the North Cape Walk is hardly explored, and less used, by any of the local stakeholders. This problem situation is not only caused by the commercial monopoly of SCANDIC, but also because of lack of business competence and skills.

Former studies of the community impacts of sport events have shown that; *“...social and economic benefits were strong predictors for support for further sport tourism development revealing a strong identification with the advantages of sport tourism in their city such as an increased cultural identity and social interaction”* (Hritz and Ross, 2010, page 119). Without these benefits, it is difficult for the stakeholders and others to identify with and mobilize support for the sport event in the host community or city, as we have seen with the North Cape Walk (Deery, Jago and Fredline, 2004, Getz, 2007, Smith, 2010, Hritz and Ross, 2010, Üngüren et al., 2015, Hinch and Holt, 2016).

When I asked people in North Cape about the impasse that had occurred in the local discourse and dealings with the walk and the marathon project after the crisis meeting in 2013, I soon realized that very few knew about the marathon race project apart from directives of HT&IF, the municipality and the business community. Consequently, the information gathering was concentrated on the North Cape Walk, more precisely about the critical recruitment, organization and economic situation of the walk, the causes and possible solutions.

To simplify the presentation of the findings I classified them in the five following categories;

- a) Lack of competence (in marketing, organization, fund-raising, tourism, etc.)
- b) Deficient organizational capacity (mainly meaning mobilization of volunteers),
- c) Insufficient funding and/or profit potential,
- d) Lack of interest, motivation and commitment among the organizers of the walk, and
- e) Erosion of social basis and support of the walk in the local community

It was difficult for the interviewees to decide which factor was the most decisive or important one. The problems of the walk were most likely caused by a combination of various or all of these, and possibly other not known, factors. While people outside the local establishment pointed their finger on those responsible for the organization of the walk, members of the organizing committee blamed the local inhabitants for not participating and supporting it any more. In 2013, only 22 out of 104 participants in The North Cape Walk were locals. The walk had lost much of the social meaning and basis it used to have in the community. Apparently, it had become irrelevant for a majority of the local population, including the political and economic leadership. Lack of marketing and organization 'know-how' and skills among the organizers of the walk, including the Municipality of North Cape, the owner of the walk, was part of the problem, but not the most decisive cause factor. Neither was the capacity of social mobilization. The North Cape Film Festival is the best proof of that, besides the multi-purpose hall built through a joint community effort in 2011 (Moseley, 2003, Gjertsen, 2012 and 2015, Ryser and Halseth, 2014).

A handful of the persons I interviewed, old and new friends of the walk, claimed that the biggest problem and the main obstacle for a successful reorganization and revival of the walk is lack of interest, motivation and commitment among the members of the organizing committee, HT&IF, and in North Cape Municipality. If they really want to do something with the deplorable situation of the walk, they have all the resources needed for that. First, they have to solve the dilemma caused by a requirement in the contract for the North Cape Summer Festival. To get the festival contract from the municipality, the bidder also has to take on responsibility for the organization of the walk. Even if the municipality puts in 10 000 euros as a carrot into the contest, as the situation is today, the winner will lose money on the walk. The football group of HT&IF, the only bidder the last 10 years, is very much aware of this. They accept the walk assignment reluctantly, and do not want to use surplus money from the festival, or any other resource under its control, to promote and upgrade the organization of the walk. Because of the connection with the lucrative summer festival, the football group does not want to give the assignment of the walk to somebody else, more motivated persons and/or organizations in the community. We have



to do with a situation of mutually conflicting or dependent conditions, in other words, a classical 'Catch 22' dilemma<sup>1</sup>.

On the other hand, there is not a line-up of people ready to take over the challenging task of restoring the North Cape Walk to former glory, which is, resolving the serious recruitment, organizational and economic problems affecting the walk today. That depends not only on the knowledge and the commitment of the current organizer and owner of the walk, but also on other, more fundamental external factors, such as the changes that have occurred lately in the socio-cultural fabric and composition of the local community. While the concept and organization of the North Cape Walk has not changed in 40 years, the preferences for this kind of outdoor leisure and sport activities have, by both participants and spectators. They have become more individualistic and performance-oriented, something that might have had a negative effect on recruitment and social support of the walk in the local community. Increased fragmentation and division have not only aggravated the problems of the walk, but probably also made it more difficult to find a 'local' solution to these problems (Higham, 1999, Chalip, 2005, Atherley, 2006, Hritz and Ross, 2010, Daniels and Norman, 2010, Brewer and Freeman, 2015, Hinch and Holt, 2016).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The North Cape Walk case is special and interesting in many ways, mainly because of its many inbuilt paradoxes, it's dramatic up- and downturn in the 1980/90-ties, and the remarkable resilience of this local sport tourism event over the last 20 years, in spite of a critical low number of participants, and almost continuous economic and organizational problems. Almost everybody in the community, except a handful of enthusiasts, have deserted the once so popular sport tourism activity and event. The biggest and most powerful actor, the local sport association, HT&IF, organize the walk very much against its own will. It is obliged to do that, to get the contract for the North Cape Summer Festival from the municipality, the absent and indifferent owner of the walk. The organizer, the owner, and the walk itself, are trapped in a Catch 22 situation, with the local business association standing on the sideline as a critical, but passive observer. Nobody seems to

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<sup>1</sup> A 'Catch 22' dilemma describes a somewhat paradoxical situation from which an individual, or in this case an organization, cannot escape because of contradictory rules.

claim ownership to the walk anymore. A lack of interest, motivation and commitment for the walk among the main stakeholders is perhaps the greatest obstacle for a change of the present situation, and for finding a viable solution to the problems of the walk.

Even if voluntarism in the Municipality of North Cape is not as strong as it used to be, there is still enough social cohesion, competence and capacity in the community to realize big socio-cultural events such as the annual summer and film festivals. Also the construction of a multi-purpose hall in 2011 was done through a mobilization of people from all sectors of society, under the competent and efficient leadership of HT&IF. However, this capacity of social mobilization in the communities of North Cape does not benefit the organization of the walk, at least not any more. It is struggling to survive, while other local organizations offering similar outdoor activities and events, such as North Cape Trekking Association, experience growing interest and participation. The case about the North Cape Walk is apparently loaded with contradictions and paradoxes.

Nevertheless, the walk continues its precarious and risky journey, against all odds, as if it has a life of its own. The intent of replacing it with a modern marathon race and turning it over to an external professional sport event organizer did not materialize. As far as we know, local stakeholders have done nothing to realize the marathon project, proposed by the local business association.

Even if outsourcing and professionalization does not seem to be the right medicine for the marketing, recruitment, organization and funding problems of the North Cape Walk, it could work for similar sport or sport tourism events elsewhere. However, we think it would be very difficult to persuade an external professional sport event organizer to take over responsibility for the organization of such an event in a small and remote rural community as North Cape, especially a sport tourism event with so many problems. The solution to the problems of the North Cape Walk, if there is any, more likely has to come from the local community.

### **Direction for future research**

There are more questions than answers in the case study about the North Cape Walk. To help find a solution to the problems with marketing, recruitment, organization and funding of the walk, including the question about the most realistic and viable solution, voluntarism or professionalization, it could be useful to compare the organization of the

walk with similar sport tourism events and destinations in other small and remote rural communities of the Circumpolar North. Two interesting cases we are looking into are the Svalbard Ski Marathon in Long-Year City on Spitzbergen, Norway, and the Emperor's Challenge, a half-marathon mountain race in Tumbler Ridge, a coal-mining town in northern BC, Canada. Both these sport tourism events are, as the North Cape Walk, organized on a voluntary basis, in Long-Year City by a local sport association (Svalbard Turn) and in Tumbler Ridge by a local hiking association (Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society). However, they are very successful sport tourism events, in contrast to the walk. Instead of using time, energy and money to increase recruitment, the organizers of these events have to limit the number of participants for different reasons, such as lack of accommodation facilities and possible negative environmental effects. In both places, the organizers sell out all the 1000 available race tickets in less than 24 hours after they are released. The secret behind the success seems to lay in the way the ski marathon and mountain race are promoted and organized, especially in relation to local partners and volunteers in public, private and voluntary sector. Voluntarism seems to be the key to their success.

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## **Estimating Patterns of Golf Tourism Development in Continental Part of Croatia**

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### **Abstract**

*Although Croatia is widely known for its sports achievements and a very long tradition in tourism development, golf in Croatia is still not recognized as an attractive means of leisure activity or as a valuable option for tourism product diversification, particularly when it comes to the continental part of the country. The purpose of this research was to assess the potentials of golf tourism development around traditional spa tourism destinations that have adequate natural resources and sufficient tourism infrastructure that could meet the high standards of contemporary golf tourism development. Two traditional spa tourism destinations with hot springs, namely Varaždinske Toplice in the north-western part and Bizovac in the eastern part of continental Croatia, have been selected as case studies for promoting the idea of integrating spa and golf tourism products among other spa tourism destinations in continental Croatia. In selection process, a special attention has been paid to the applicability of golf tourism offer to the existing spa tourism product in these destinations as well as the improvements that need to be done in order to provide high-end golf tourism experience. The methodology used in this research includes a conceptual modelling as well as secondary data and SWOT analyses. The majority of findings in this research go in favour of golf tourism development in these areas, especially when it comes to measuring economic benefits that outweigh the social and environmental concerns. The main limitation of this research lies with lack of reliable data and references to the literature. In spite of the fact that the*



*concept of spa & golf tourism product is proven to be successful in the practice, from the body of available literature it is clearly evident that this area of research is still in the initial stage of development.*

**Keywords:** *golf tourism, spa destination, tourism product diversification, continental Croatia*

Track: *Red strategies – Sport Tourism policies and Development*

Word count: 10,000

## **1. Introduction**

The popularity of golf as an outdoor leisure activity has grown substantially over the past two decades. According to the International Golf Federation (IGF), the number of registered golf players in total has exceeded 60 million, while golf is played in more than 140 countries on all inhabited continents (IGF, 2016). At the beginning of the third millennium Readman (in Hudson ed., 2003: 165) claimed that golf represents "the largest sports-related travel market", while Hudson and Hudson (2010: 3) estimated that the global golf tourism market worth over \$20 billion annually (or approx. €15 billion according to European Central Bank statistical database), based on primary or secondary motivation of travellers. On account of these figures, golf can be considered as one of the World's most widespread and developed individual sport activities, which transformative impact on economies and societies has particularly flourished during the past three decades. The expansion of the golf market was followed by growing attention and activities of tourism developers and managers who recognized a huge market potential for investors and service providers. From demand-side perspective, both playing golf and taking golf-motivated travel are increasingly popular leisure activities that attract attention not only of active golf players, but also recreational players and those who would like to start practicing golf and be involved in related activities, clubs and events.

During the 20th century, along with development of tourism offer and the increase of global tourist movements, many golf courses were constructed and transformed into important attractions for visitors. In this regard, to date two ways of designing and constructing golf courses have been profiled: 1) traditional golf courses designed for active golfers and golf tournaments, and 2) custom-designed golf courses as an integral part of

tourism destination product. Due to the intensive construction of golf courses and their successful integration into tourism supply of many destinations, along with the emergence of specialized tour operators in this field, golf tourism has become a sought-after tourist product not only for golfers and golf managers, but also for tourism destinations looking for competitive advantage and market specialization.

In terms of European golf market statistics, Croatia can be considered as unknown country for the vast majority of international golf demand. One of the main reasons for such status is the lack of modern designed golf courses associated with special interest tourism products that would attract a wider range of visitors, not only the impassioned golf players, tournament organizers and fans. So far, there are only five officially rated golf courses and about ten driving ranges in the country, which in total cannot be considered sufficient for inducing Croatia's image as a golfing country. In order to meet growing demand in this field, in its "Tourism development strategy until 2020" (2013: 41) Croatia has highlighted and adopted ten operative strategies for tourism offer improvement, among which golf tourism product is one of the top priorities for development. Accordingly, this research aimed to evaluate the potentials of golf tourism development in relatively small but well-known tourism destinations in continental Croatia with attractive tourism products that attract significant number of visitors. In the selection process of destinations suitable for golf tourism development, a special attention is given to two traditional spa tourism destinations in continental Croatia, namely Varaždinske Toplice (in the north-western part) and Bizovac (in the eastern part), which are recognized as potential areas for creating so called spa & golf tourism product. Although the amalgam of spa & golf tourism products is already well-known, profitable and sustainable concept in practice, there is evident lack of empirical studies that would serve as references for further scientific research on related impacts and effectiveness.

## **2. Golf tourism market overview**

Taking into account the total number of registered players worldwide, golf can be considered as one of the biggest sports (Markwick, 2000: 515) and also one of the largest sport-related businesses. Apart from the official IGF statistics, there are some estimates that the total number of golfers in developed countries has recently reached 80 million players (Garau-Vadell, de Borja-Solé, 2008: 17). Beside active golfers it is further estimated that

there are another 20 million recreational golfers (Bartoluci, Čavlek, 2000: 106) in the world who occasionally play golf and participate in golf events. Therefore, the global golf playing demand of nowadays can be estimated to over 100 million participants whose number tend to grow over time at the same growth rate as global tourism movements.

When it comes to the tour packaging that includes golf-related activities, golf is even more lucrative product due to the fact that golfers rarely travel alone. Instead, they often travel with their family members, partners and friends. Assuming that each golfer travels with at least one accompanying person, it can be estimated that about 200 million people travel to destinations worldwide to play golf or to participate in other golf-related activities. In 2015, according to the UNWTO (2016: 4), there were in total between 6 and 7 billion tourist arrivals (travels) worldwide, which means that previously assessed size of the overall golf demand has a significant share of 3% in the global travel market.

Statistical data on organized golf tours also support the previous statement. As reported by the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO), taken as a leading organization of tour operators specialists for organized golf tours, there were about 1.6 million organized golf tours which have generated revenues of €1.5 billion in 2012 (KPMG, 2013: 1). The sale of organized golf tours shows tremendously high growth rates, whereby the IAGTO states that the global travels associated with golf have increased by 20% in the period from 2011 to 2013 (KPMG, 2015: 7).

According to R&A (2015: 4) statistics, in 2014, golf was played on more than 34,000 golf courses worldwide, of which 71% are open to the public. The vast majority of these golf courses are located in the western hemisphere. Namely, the North and South America are home to 55% of all golf courses, while Europe holds the second largest share of 22%, followed by Asia with 14% and Oceania with 6%. The same source reports that about 79% of the global golf courses are located in the top 10 golfing countries including the USA, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Sweden, South Africa, Japan, Australia and China. Besides these golf courses, Bartoluci (2013: 399) has estimated that there are about 10,000 small golf centres around the globe, mostly used for the recreational purposes. By the end of 2014, R&A (2015: 7) has collected data for almost 700 new golf courses worldwide that were under construction or in advance planning. At the same time, only in Europe, along with existing 7,400 golf facilities, there were 40 golf courses under construction and 119 in planning process.

In spite of the growing number of golf courses worldwide, it should be noted that there are no two golf courses or golf resorts of the same architecture because each was built in specific scenery determined by the landscape and size of the land, with different hazards (e.g. lakes), order of greens (holes) and arrangement of fields, to be more attractive for golf tourists. For that reason, golfers seem to have a constant need to travel more and play on as many different golf courses as possible. In that sense, Ecoina's (2012: 177) experts have concluded that, as the popularity of golf grew during the 20th century, golfers began to look for more and more interesting golf destinations, which goes in favour of creating new golf courses and resorts. Along with the increase in number of golf courses around the world, it is evident that such growth has been followed by growing competition among golf resorts and golf tourism destinations. According to the IAGTO, ten most popular tourism destinations for golf tour packages in 2012 were located in Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Turkey, Scotland, USA, Thailand, Italy, Morocco and England (IAGTO, 2013: 11). In the same year, the typical duration of golf tour packages were between 4 and 7 nights for the vast majority of organized tours, while only 22% of tour packages last 8 nights or longer. According to the KPMG, the most frequent golf travellers are still the Brits, Americans and Canadians, although often choosing domestic trips. The Scandinavians (mainly Swedish), Germans and Austrians are also near the top of the list, with strong interest to travel abroad for golf (KPMG, 2013: 2-4). Conducted research also shows that there is a growing number of Asian golfers visiting Europe (Ecoina, 2012:177), which represents one of the most important emerging golf generating markets.

As expected by the IAGTO, the leading tour operator in this market segment, the forecasts of the growth in demand for organized golf tours is about to remain positive (KPMG, 2015: 7). Another interesting research conducted by the US National Golf Foundation (NGF), showed that in the US there is about 41 million people who would like to become golfers. Of this number, one in four has expressed his/her willingness to immediately start practicing this sport (Ecoina, 2012: 177).

Finally, it should be mentioned that the golf tourism product is not related only to the construction of golf courses and on-site service providing to the golfers, but also includes a wide range of supporting products and services. In that sense, Hudson and Hudson (2010: 11) have developed a matrix of golf supply which is supported by complex golf industry cluster that consists of golf facilities and other core industries that produce goods and services used to operate these facilities and to play the game, such as, golf

equipment and golf apparel manufacturers, etc. Due to a wide variety of goods and services included in it, golf tourism can be considered as a complex product which generates among the highest multiplier effects of all sport-related tourism products. In that context, the growing number of golfers (professional and recreational), golf courses and golf-related events makes golf equipment and services more affordable to a wider demand, which recurrently boosts golf-related tourism products and services.

### **3. Literature review**

According to Hudson and Hudson (2009: 4), golf tourism has gained strong academic and public interest during the last two decades. So far, there are many textbooks written on sport and tourism development in which golf tourism has been often analysed and from various aspects (e.g. Gimmy and Benson, 1992; Standeven and De Knopp, 1999; Hudson, 2003; Ritchie and Adair, 2004; Higham, 2005; Gibson, 2006; Weed and Bull, 2009; Hudson and Hudson, 2010; Hinch and Higham, 2011; Moufakkir and Burns, 2012; Saayman, 2012; Hudson and Hudson, 2014). Beside these highly valuable contributions, there is much of research done on the impacts of golf tourism development on particular regions, such as Markwick (2000) for Malta; Warnken, Thompson and Zakus (2001) for Gold Coast in Australia; Briassoulis (2007) for Coastal Mediterranean Europe; Garau-Vadell and de Borja-Solé (2008) for Mallorca, Spain; Tassiopoulos and Haydam (2008) for South Africa; Barros, Butler and Correia (2010) for Algarve, Portugal; Eberts and Ramsey (2010) for Manitoba province in Canada; Boukas, Boustras and Sinka (2012) for Cyprus; Completo and Gustavo (2014) for Portugal; etc. For Croatia it is worth to mention several contributions on golf tourism development provided by Bartoluci and Čavlek (2000), Jugović, Gržinić and Lončar (2009), Petar (2010), Bučar and Sobry (2011), etc. There are also professional reports on international golf market trends, provided by international organizations (e.g. IAGTO, 2013; KPMG, 2013, 2014, 2015; R&A, 2015), that were also very helpful in assessment of the possible patterns of golf tourism development in the observed area in Croatia. Since this research is focused on tourism product diversification towards higher value-added services and experiences for visitors, the concept of integrating spa and golf tourism products has been detected as a key aspect that needs to be further considered and analysed.

Among the first studies that discuss opportunities of creating spa and golf tourism packages is the article written by Monteson and Singer (1992: 38).

They were analysing a daily routine of spa resort visitors and tried to fill time gaps between their spa treatments with some golf-related activities. Several years later, Monteson and Singer (1999) have written the article on restoration of a historic spa resort (Homestead in the USA) with golf amenities that would increase the attractiveness and value of the core tourism product. Discussing the average structure of a resort, Hudson and Hudson (2010: 19) have pointed out that resort typically consists of a luxury hotel with amenities – e.g. golf, beach, skiing and/or spa – that make it a destination in itself. Therefore, a spa & golf resort is seen as a destination that aims to fulfil the needs and expectations of a wider range of visitors, not only golfers or spa customers solely. Another interesting research was conducted by Kruczek and Nowak (2014: 304) who have concluded that "the spa products should evolve in the direction of combining health tourism with recreation and relaxation (e.g. fitness & spa, ski & spa, golf & spa, bike & spa, horse & spa, business & spa, nature & spa)". Beside these articles, there are also many other studies and articles in which authors discuss and analyse various impacts of golf and/or spa tourism development on the environment, spatial planning and community, which are not relevant for this research.

#### **4. Research approach and methodology**

The authors of this research believe that the success of future tourism development in any area relies on creating amalgam of two or more compatible special interest tourism sub-products that can be promoted and enjoyed as high value-added packages. In this study, the health tourism, namely spa and wellness sub-products, is seen as a basic framework of tourism development in two observed destinations in continental Croatia, which can be upgraded with other tourism products, particularly sports tourism. On the other hand, sports tourism is seen as travel for "recreation or competition purposes, to observe sport at grassroots or elite level" (Tassiopulos and Haydam, 2008: 871), which ideally fit the concept of spa and wellness tourism. As Nuno Silva (2010: 127) has reported, "western societies are witnessing the rebirth and reinvention of health tourism founded on new ideologies, concepts, spaces and services mostly dominated by the desire for wellbeing expressed by the spa ideal". In this sense, spa centres, particularly those with long tradition of providing a variety of health care treatments, are recognized as primary tourist attractions for modern

visitors whose attention can be regained or intensified by introduction of composite attraction, i.e. designed golf courses and related services.

Having in mind that proposed new concept of tourism development for Varaždinske Toplice and Bizovac is based on scarce data and the 'vision' of authors rather than on thorough analysis of facts and figures, this research can be considered as a typical grounded theory research. According to Mehmetoglu and Altinay (2006), grounded theory is "appropriate for creating a theoretical model, give conceptual labels to the data, and place interpretations on the data in fields of hospitality and tourism". So, the methodology adopted in this research includes a conceptual modelling approach as well as secondary data and SWOT analyses that allow the identification of potentials and limitations of creating spa & golf tourism product in the observed area. The data used for modelling and estimating patterns of golf tourism development in continental Croatia were extracted from available case studies and statistical records on spa tourism development in continental Croatia.

## **5. Discussion: Golf tourism in continental Croatia**

Despite its high popularity among predominantly European leisure tourists, in terms of golf tourism statistics Croatia still lags far behind competitor countries in the Europe. According to Bučar and Sobry (2011: 633), the first golf course in Croatia was constructed in 1922 on the Brijuni Islands (today's national park), while three other courses were constructed in the following 10 years. Between 1930s and 1980s there was no evidence of any golf development activity, essentially for political reasons. The same source reports that in 2010, Croatia has adopted a new Strategy of golf tourism development, which contained a plan for construction of 89 golf courses in total, of which 34 supposed to be constructed in the continental part. Nowadays, there are only five officially rated golf courses in the country, of which three are situated in continental Croatia (CGA, 2016). There are also about ten driving ranges available, of which five are located in continental Croatia. All these golf facilities are mostly used by approx. 1,500 registered golf players in Croatia, in total (EGA, 2016), gathered around 20 golf sport clubs (CGA, 2016). Since the golf is not popular sport activity in Croatia, there is still no open-source data available on the size of total (domestic and international) golf tourism demand in Croatia, which would enable a more in-depth analysis of the market potentials.

When considering continental Croatia only, golf is played on two officially rated golf courses in the central region (in the capital City of Zagreb and in

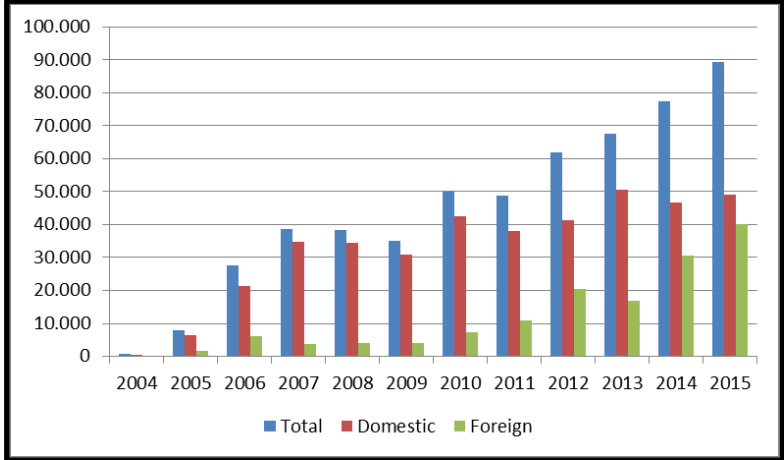
the nearby town of Zaprešić) and on one officially rated golf course in the northern region of Međimurje (in the spa and sport resort LifeClass Terme Sveti Martin). Beside each of these golf courses there is a driving range accompanied with other golf-related facilities and services. Unlike these three most developed golf destinations, there are also two driving ranges in the very eastern part of Croatia (Zmajevac and Principovac) that operate without accompanied golf courses, but are intended to serve as an initial stage of the golf course development project. According to CGA (2016) data, in 2015 there were 11 golf sport clubs in continental Croatia that bring together more than 600 registered players (approx. 40% of the total number of registered players in Croatia). All these facts and figures lead to the conclusion that golf development in Croatia generally lacks of the initial support from domestic golfers.

It is worth to note that there is one officially rated 9- and 18-hole golf course with driving range in the central region (in the municipality of Krašić), which was closed in 2010 due to bankruptcy of the owner. That golf course was permanently closed at the height of the global financial crisis due to several reasons among which the absence of complementary tourism offer and the lack of destination's image seem to be major causes of the project failure. For these and other reasons it seems that this golf course will remain closed. The idea of upgrading traditional spa centres (a group of spa and health care facilities attached to hot springs and long tradition in providing a variety of health care services) located in continental Croatia into multifunctional destinations with value-added experience for mixed groups of visitors has its roots in the first successful case of integrating spa centre and diverse offer of sport activities, embodied in today's spa and sport resort LifeClass Terme Sveti Martin. This resort has been taken as a benchmark case study to validate the proposed idea among other spa centres in continental Croatia in order to reach a critical number of golf courses according to the international golf standards and to create an image of golf tourism region with attractive and diverse offer. According to resort's official web site (LifeClass Terme Sv. Martin, 2016), the history of resort goes back to 1911 when trial drilling for crude oil was carried out on site, but a spring of hot water was found, which later turned to be a thermo-mineral water with high healing properties. The first thermal bathing facilities were built in 1936, under the name Toplice Vučkovec, and as such were serving mostly the local population. After the change of the ownership in 2003, a spa centre with modest facilities moved into a new development era of high-class spa and sport resort striving for international visitors. Bartoluci and Hendija (2011:



77) reported that the total amount of €50 million has been invested in this resort between 2003 and 2010, and represents one of the best investment case studies in continental Croatia. The majority of financial resources were invested into the 4-star hotel, a wellness centre, a sports hall and the golf course, while the whole project has ensured employment for more than 200 people. According to the CBS (2004-2016) statistical data records, the upgrade of domestically (mostly locally) oriented spa centre into the internationally oriented spa and sport resort, has brought a substantial growth of the attractiveness and strong tourist inflow, not only to the resort itself, but to the whole micro-region (Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Tourist overnight stays in the municipality of Sv. Martin na Muri, 2004-2015



Source: According to CBS (2005-2016)

The continuously growing number of tourist overnight stays in the municipality with no other strong tourist attractions (other than the spa and sport resort), might serve as a textbook example of the power of tourism in transformation of predominantly rural settings from a merely agricultural to a service providing areas. As can be seen from Figure 1, the number of overnight stays in the municipality began to rise significantly since the grand opening of the spa and sport resort in 2005. While the number of domestic overnight stays has been growing for 14% a year during the last 10 observed years, the international demand for accommodation services has been growing by 23.4% a year.

### 5.1 Potential demand and available resources in the area for golf tourism product

In the context of tourism development, the main strengths of the continental part of Croatia are the abundance of tourism resources available in this region and relatively strong image of corresponding tourism destinations. Although the observed region is rich in highly attractive natural and social resources for development of various tourism products, the analysis of tourism performance reveals that the continental part of Croatia lags far behind its coastal part and needs a special approach in product designing. Available data on tourism development, presented in Table 1, reveal significant progress of the region concerning most of the key indicators for the period of last 10 years.

<b>Table 1: Tourism development indicators for continental Croatia in 2006 and 2015</b>			
Tourism performance indicator	Year		Change 2015/06
	2006	2015	
Total number of tourist arrivals	1,104,343	1,834,418	166.1
Total number of overnight stays	2,183,858	3,306,148	151.4
Average length of stay (nights per arrival)	2.0	1.8	90.0
Domestic overnight stays	1,023,167	1,083,690	105.9
- share in region's total	46.9%	32.8%	-14.1%
International overnight stays	1,160,701	2,222,458	191.5
- share in region's total	53.1%	67.2%	+14.1%
Share of region's overnight stays in the total number of overnight stays in Croatia	4.1%	4.6%	+0.5%
Total number of region's beds in all tourism accommodation facilities (on August 31st)	26,459	44,079	166.6
Share of region's beds in the total beds in Croatia	2.9%	4.2%	+1.3%

Source: Compiled according to CBS (2007; 2016)

The evident progress in tourism development suggests that the observed region's tourism performance is far below its actual potentials, especially if tourism data for the City of Zagreb are excluded from the analysis. Taking into account that the City of Zagreb (situated in the central part of the continental Croatia) has two officially rated golf courses, which is important fact for this study, the absence of spa centres provokes some further considerations of tourism performance for the rest of the continental Croatia. Some key indicators of tourism performance separately shown for

the City of Zagreb and for the rest of the continental Croatia are summarized in Table 2.

<b>Table 2: Tourism development indicators for the City of Zagreb and the rest of continental Croatia in 2015</b>					
Tourism performance indicator	City of Zagreb		The rest of continental Croatia		Total continental Croatia
	Number	Share	Number	Share	
Tourist arrivals	1,077,778	58.8%	756,640	41.2%	1,834,418
Tourist overnight stays	1,804,290	54.6%	1,501,858	45.4%	3,306,148
Domestic overnight stays	375,739	34.7%	707,951	65.3%	1,083,690
International overnight stays	1,428,551	64.3%	793,907	35.7%	2,222,458
Average length of stay (nights per arrival)	1.7	-	2.0	-	1.8
Number of beds in all tourism accommodation facilities (on August 31st)	19,868	45.1%	24,211	54.9%	44,079

Source: Compiled according to CBS (2016)

The second data analysis reveals that the majority of tourism development in continental Croatia is centralized around the City of Zagreb. Due to its strong image as an internationally recognized tourism destination for both business and leisure visitors, Zagreb should be considered as a central point (i.e. hub) of the continental part of Croatia for attracting international golfers and investors in golf-related facilities. The remaining share of the regional tourism market performance reveals that the entire area (outside of the capital city) hides substantial potentials for tourism development, particularly in the renowned tourism destinations, such as spa centres, natural parks and historical towns. Although the spa centres in this study were taken as a platform for diversification of traditional spa destinations into spa & golf tourism resorts, the integration of golf tourism offer with eco-, heritage or some other tourism product is also possible (and worth thinking about).

Besides promising tourism statistics trends, it is important to emphasize that the observed region is rich in relatively low-cost resources for golf tourism development. Generally, the resources for developing golf-related offer can

be classified into four main groups: 1) *physical resources* (climate, land, water supply, spatial planning, facility construction, international travel accessibility, etc.), 2) *human resources* (know-how, special skills, labour surplus, recruiting system, etc.), 3) *financial resources* (equity, ownership, capital investments, loans, grants, etc.), and 4) *organizational resources* (international licenses and ratings, national and international golf organizations, sport clubs, events, marketing communication, strategy of tourism development, etc.). Having in mind that the continental Croatia is predominantly rural area with strong emphasis on agricultural production, all key natural conditions, as part of physical resources, seem to be favourable for golf-related activities throughout most of the year. Apart from abundant natural resources, there are also some other resources in the region available for golf tourism development (such as facility construction capacities, international airports, efficient ground transportation network, available workforce, technical government support, golf sport clubs, marketing infrastructure, etc.) that need more detailed analysis and assessment.

## **5.2 Golf market trends that affect the area**

There are several key trends that affect the international golf market, which directly support the idea of diversifying spa tourism product towards internationally oriented spa & golf resorts. Based on the research results provided by Hudson and Hudson (2010: 18), over the last several years there has been a noticeable stagnation and even decline in the number of 'core' golfers, but the overall golf demand is still increasing at surprisingly steady growth rate. The growing share of recreational and occasional golfers' market represents a significant opportunity for many destinations and resorts to offer golf as an add-on feature to holidays, especially in terms of specialized tour packaging.

Another key trend is the changing role of golf in the global society, which has been transformed from sport and leisure activity into a big business. Today, golf is primarily governed by the motives of providing sport experience to millions of players around the world, which represents a huge market for selling golf-related services and equipment. Related to previous, the next key trend is that golf is becoming less corporate and more sport for all due to decreasing green fees and other costs, which make golf more affordable to a wider range of consumers.

Unlike the historical status of the golf as sport for the upper classes of society, the modern golf is more like trendy sport with an appeal across

generations, genders and cultures regardless of their backgrounds and occupations. Additionally, golf is also seen as a family sport with a great entertainment value that put an emphasis on preserved environment and specially designed facilities for family stay. According to the KPMG (2016: 4), junior golfers hold a significant share of 9% in total golf demand in Europe, which is important fact for the spa destinations in this research because younger golfers represent a strong potential for the growth in demand (for both golf & spa) in the future. For all these reasons, golf is seen as a useful tool for tourism destinations' market (re)positioning, differentiation from other destinations, as well as creating competitive advantage and opportunities for starting a new business.

In the context of golf tourism development in continental Croatia, all previously mentioned trends go in favour of promoting idea of upgrading existing domestically oriented spa centres into internationally oriented spa & golf resorts that should generate a series of multiplying effects for local and regional economies.

### **5.3 Selection of tourism destinations suitable for golf tourism development**

Development of golf courses and golf tourism is predominantly attached to the rural settings. According to Butler's early observation of significant growth in leisure activities in rural settings, "golf is one of the best examples, both in demand for space and in proportional growth. Many golf courses were historically located within urban areas, or in the rural-urban fringe, but increasing numbers are now being located in rural areas, reflecting the lack of suitable land within urban areas and the fringe, and land use planning policies" (Butler, 1998: 215). Therefore, a contemporary golf tourism planning usually takes into consideration such rural settings for golf course development which does not cause any major collision with other economic activities or local community's needs regarding the land use. In this regard, the vision of future tourism development in continental Croatia should be basically focused on already established tourism destinations with developed tourism infrastructure and market recognition, particularly those that have sufficient resources (primarily land area) for the expansion and diversification of basic tourism product. As already mentioned, golf-related facilities and activities can be successfully integrated into tourism products of spa resorts, natural (or national) parks

and historical towns, which all might serve as ideal platforms for tourism product diversification towards golf development.

The selection of tourism destinations in continental Croatia suitable for golf tourism development is primarily based on Croatia's "*Tourism development strategy until 2020*" (Croatian Parliament, 2013) where ten operative strategies for tourism offer improvement have been adopted, among which golf tourism product is one of the top priorities for further development. Specifically for continental Croatia, golf tourism is recognized as a secondary tourism product, which means that it needs to be attached to existing tourism settings or integrated with some other attractive tourism product in order to make it profitable. In this context, Croatia in its strategic planning has highlighted the construction of golf courses predominantly for recreational purposes, which should be clustered within about an hour of driving distance (from airport and between golf courses), carefully designed, environmentally responsible in its operations, and integrated with "gastronomy, wellness and thalassotherapy" tourism products. Based on that formulation, it can be concluded that spa & golf tourism product has its conceptual framework in strategic documents, which affirms that the government at all levels is willing to provide strategic and financial support to such projects (e.g. public infrastructure, paperwork, land consolidation, public-private partnership, etc.).

Having in mind that golf course planning and construction primarily takes into consideration the basic preconditions of an area, such as land, water, energy and facilities, a brief overview of the ownership structure of these components seems to be critical for realization of the vision. In spite of the fact that Croatia has passed through the economic transition (from socialism to capitalism), the ownership of the land is in many cases still retained by the public sector (state, county, city or municipality). From the perspective of development projects that require large land surfaces, public ownership of the land appears to be more likely to convert than the private one. Moreover, physical (and urban) plans in Croatia usually allocate publicly owned land to the zones of sport-recreational activities, which can be the subject of long-term concession contract or sale. According to the Water Act (Croatian Parliament, 2009), all water sources (including thermal, mineral and thermo-mineral) in Croatia are categorized as common good and cannot be objects of ownership rights, but at the same time they are under full protection of the government. So, all companies that want to economically exploit water sources in Croatia must enter into a concession contract with the state government. From the energy demand and supply point of view,

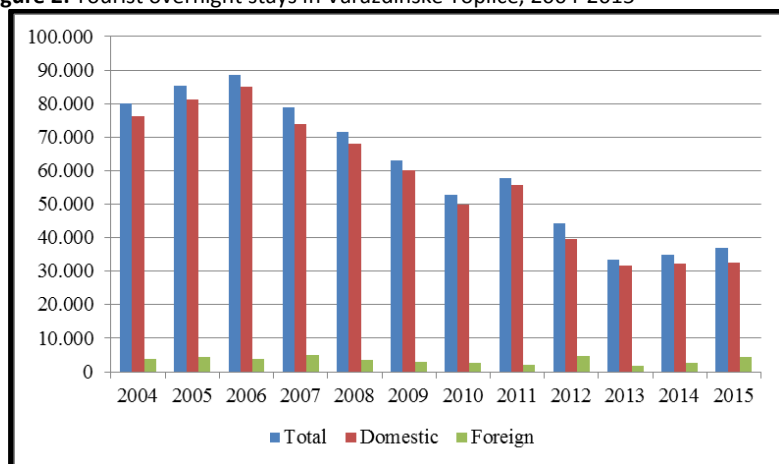
all consumers in Croatia have sufficient amount of energy for all purposes. Shortages in supply of any sort of energy are negligible. In its 2014 Annual Energy Report (Ministry of Economy, 2015: 7) it is highlighted that Croatia's energy self-supply covers more than 60 per cent of total demand for energy, which classifies Croatia in a group of relatively energy independent countries. Apart from the large state-owned energy production capacities, there are also many small privately-owned energy production units that use renewable sources such as wind and solar energy, biogas, liquid biofuels and geothermal energy. The use of geothermal energy is regulated by the special Act (Croatian Parliament, 2015). Considering the ownership of the spa facilities, among 14 large spa centres that operate in this region, five of them are privately owned, two of them have mixed ownership (with joint use of hot springs), while the rest of seven spa centres are publicly owned. At last, it can be concluded that the basic preconditions for golf tourism development in continental Croatia are fulfilled in principle, but the variations depend on the local peculiarities.

Apart from already mentioned spa and sport resort LifeClass Terme Sveti Martin, which has integrated spa and golf tourism products, in continental Croatia there is no other attempts of creating spa & golf resorts, even though many physical plans of towns and municipalities support that idea. After the completion of the initial stage in which LifeClass Terme Sveti Martin has become and proved to be a true spa and golf (sport) resort, the second stage of integrating spa and golf tourism products is focused on Varaždinske Toplice and Bizovac. The selection process of these two tourism destinations (micro-regions) has taken into consideration several key aspects, of which some of them might serve also as an image creating factors.

Firstly selected spa tourism destination is Varaždinske Toplice where state-owned spa centre plays a key role in the local economy and community activities. According to Ivanišević (2015: 154), the history of Varaždinske Toplice dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. when the Illyrian tribe Jasi founded their settlement in this area. The historical records of the spa centre (Varaždinske Toplice, 2016) reveal that during the Antique period, there was a well-known thermal spa called *Aquae lasae* whose importance was well described by the fact that they were renovated by Roman Emperor Constantine in the 4th century. Such historical fact proves that Varaždinske Toplice is among the oldest spa centres not only in Croatia, but also in Europe, which gives to the image of the future spa & golf resort a historical value worth of emphasizing. Another important historical fact about this

location is that the health care treatments are provided continuously ever since the foundation of the hot springs. In order to quantify overall tourism demand for this destination, trend of tourist overnight stays for the past 12 years is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:** Tourist overnight stays in Varaždinske Toplice, 2004-2015



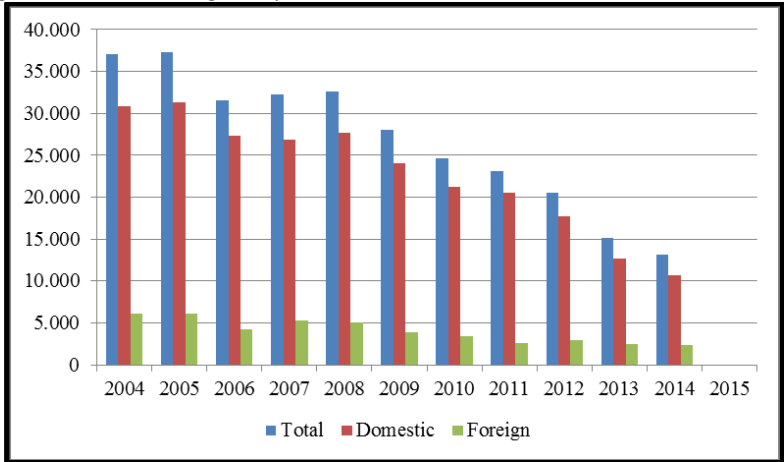
Source: According to CBS (2005-2016)

From the Figure 2 is clearly visible that during the past decade tourism demand for Varaždinske Toplice, as a destination with nearly 1,000 beds in all accommodation facilities, was cut down by almost 60%. Such tremendous decrease in number of tourists clearly signifies that the destination needs to redefine its tourism product in order to become competitive and more visible on the market. In its Development strategy for the period 2014-2020, Varaždinske Toplice has highlighted the possibility of golf course construction, with clear emphasis on its integration with dominant spa tourism product and other sport recreational activities in this micro-region (Varaždin County, 2015: 484). Although it is 70km away from the Zagreb international airport, the destination is literally situated beside the highway A4 (Zagreb-Budapest), which takes about 45 minutes of driving for visitors to reach the site. The last but not least important fact is that spa centre of Varaždinske Toplice is still a state-owned property looking for investors or partners who will rejuvenate the spa offer according to the international standards and add some new value to overall tourism destination product (e.g. golf offer).



Secondly selected spa tourism destination is Bizovac, namely privately-owned spa centre Bizovačke toplice, which serves as the largest spa centre in the eastern part of Croatia. According to the official web site of the spa centre, the history of using thermal water dates back from 1970 when state-owned oil company was undertaking test drillings in the area searching for sources of oil, but instead of oil they have found the hot springs as the remains of the Pannonian Sea (Bizovačke toplice, 2016). The uniqueness of thermal water that supplies this spa centre is in its salinity, while the temperature of the water at source reaches up to 97 degrees Celsius (Hećimović, 2008: 39). Beside the healing properties, such hyperthermal water might also serve as a geothermal source of energy, useful for heating the green of the golf courses and other related facilities. Very similar to the previously selected spa destination in this study, Bizovac is also facing with a long-term decrease of tourism demand, shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3:** Tourist overnight stays in Bizovac, 2004-2015



Source: According to CBS (2005-2016)

A trend of tourist overnight stays shown in the Figure 3 reveals that during the period of 2005-2014 (before the privatization of the complex) the municipality of Bizovac has lost over 65% of the overall tourism demand, in which international visitors held a relatively small share of 15%. In the mid-2014, the spa centre was taken over by a private company, which has invested in the expansion of swimming pool complex and the construction of a modern health care centre. When the announced 3-phase project of the

spa resort will be completed, at its full capacity the spa complex will employ more than 150 people. From that standpoint, Bizovačke toplice spa centre can be considered as one of the key drivers of the micro-region's sustainable socio-economic development. The privatization process and recent upgrade of spa centre have created a strong platform for further development projects and ideas, among which golf is imposed as a logical extension and one of the key components of upgrading the overall tourism supply of this micro-region. In that sense, it is important to mention that the municipality of Bizovac has anticipated the possibility of golf course construction in its Physical Plan, adopted in 2005, which proves that the vision of integrating spa and golf tourism products already exists (Municipality of Bizovac, 2005: 87). The closest air transport access point for this micro-region is the Osijek international airport, which is 35km away or 45 minutes of driving by car from the site.

Based on all previously mentioned facts and available data, a SWOT analysis of creating integrated spa & golf tourism product for two selected tourism destinations has been performed. The SWOT analysis, shown in Table 3, includes assessment of internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external environments (opportunities and threats) that should justify the main idea of this study.

<b>Table 3: SWOT analysis of creating spa &amp; golf tourism product in Varaždinske Toplice and Bizovac</b>	
Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available land and water sources;</li> <li>• Ecologically and physically preserved environment;</li> <li>• Proximity to the main golf tourism generating markets;</li> <li>• Spa tourism destinations with a long tradition (especially Varaždinske Toplice);</li> <li>• Historical value and rich cultural heritage (especially Varaždinske Toplice);</li> <li>• Proximity to Zagreb and Osijek international airports (within one hour of driving);</li> <li>• Easily accessible by road (especially for Varaždinske Toplice);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spa and golf are compatible and high value-added products;</li> <li>• Image of 'new market incomers' (as golf tourism destinations) in Croatia;</li> <li>• Golf can be easily integrated with other sport, cultural, wine and food tourism products and activities;</li> <li>• Spa &amp; golf is an increasingly desirable integrated tourism product;</li> <li>• Demand for family tour packages that include spa &amp; golf shows significant increase;</li> <li>• Relatively cheap and accessible non-built land (greenfield investment opportunities);</li> <li>• Opportunity of expanding international demand for other</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Golf tourism development is supported by national tourism development strategy;</li> <li>• Physical plans have anticipated sport-recreational zones for the construction of golf courses;</li> <li>• Existing golf course (LifeClass Terme Sveti Martin for Varaždinske Toplice) and driving ranges (Zmajevac and Principovac for Bizovac) on a distance of one hour of driving;</li> </ul>	<p>tourist attractions and services within each destination;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing additional jobs, particularly for young and educated residents;</li> <li>• Use of information technology in marketing and distribution of services;</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low market value of regional tourism image;</li> <li>• Decreasing overall tourism demand in these destinations;</li> <li>• Low-income micro-regions (lack of local demand for upscale tourism offer);</li> <li>• Limited number of accommodation facilities (approx.1,000 beds in Varaždinske Toplice and 300 beds in Bizovac) and a lack of high class hotels;</li> <li>• Insufficient local or regional investment funds for supporting tourism infrastructure;</li> <li>• Lack of economies of scale;</li> <li>• Lack of golf tourism management and marketing know-how;</li> <li>• Lack of qualified personnel (for golf);</li> <li>• Absence of sponsors for golf-related events;</li> <li>• Status of relatively unknown country to international golf players;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underestimated value of golf tourism in Croatia;</li> <li>• Competition among golf tourism destinations in SE Europe;</li> <li>• Political instability in Europe;</li> <li>• Possible political intervention;</li> <li>• Possible environmental organizations' overreaction (complaints on land use for golf facilities);</li> <li>• Possible indifference of the local population towards golf tourism development;</li> <li>• Increasing pressure on local resources (especially water, electricity, and roads);</li> <li>• Environmental degradation;</li> <li>• Climatic changes (e.g. strong wind, rainy days, persistent fog, etc.).</li> </ul>

Source: by the authors, 2016.

Based on elements shown in Table 3, it can be concluded that there is no doubt that two selected tourism destinations fulfil all basic preconditions for integrated spa and golf tourism development. Such expansion and upgrade

of traditional tourism offer in these areas would improve socio-economic conditions of local population and provide a variety of opportunities for small entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and make stronger contribution to the local and regional economic performance.

#### **5.4 Assessment of some expected economic outcomes**

Development of golf tourism brings along many positive as well as negative outcomes that needs to be observed and assessed. From the economic standpoint, golf is considered as one of the most profitable businesses in tourism. Profitability is not achieved only by revenues from the use of the golf course (green fee), but also from the production of golf related equipment, clothing, footwear, golf travel arrangements, amateur and professional tours, and additional tourist consumption in tourism destinations. It is proved that golfers' consumption in tourism destinations is significantly higher than any other category of visitors, including those dealing with some other sport activities or events. The IAGTO estimates that golfers spend 120% more than other traditional tourists on their travels (KPMG, 2013: 1). On average, weekend tour package that include a round of golf costs between €300 and €600 (without transport costs) per person, weekly arrangement between €600 and €900 per person, while the luxury travel package can cost more than €5,000 per person (KPMG, 2013: 5). In the most developed golf tourism regions in Europe, the average daily consumption of a golfer is between €200 and €250 (Ecoina, 2012: 177). According to Barros, Butler and Correia (2010:14) research on golf tourism in Algarve region (Portugal), only 26% is related to golf playing activities while the rest of 74% of the consumption is related to the cost of travel, accommodation, visiting bars and restaurants, entertainment and of other services in the area. In the case of Austria (Petar, 2010: 8), the revenues from golf playing activities is only 10% of total revenues, while the rest of 90% are generated from other services in the area, e.g. accommodation, food, shops, entertainment, etc.

When discussing revenues from golf playing activities it is worth to cite Jugović, Gržinić and Lončar (2009: 70) findings on golf tourism development in Croatia's coastal region of Istria, who have estimated the direct golf course revenues at €60 per round of golf, while total average daily consumption of a golfer is estimated at €120. The same authors argue that 15,000 golf rounds a year per one golf course is the minimum at which the whole investment project becomes profitable. In spite of the fact that the revenues from golf-related activities and average golfer's consumption are

not the same for the continental and the coastal region of Croatia, a rough calculation, based on the Istria's case study cited above, shows that the one 18-hole golf course can generate annual revenues of min. €900,000, while the total consumption of golf players, related to one golf course, would increase up to €1.8 million euros a year.

According to the KPMG (2014: 18), an average cost of golf course hole (construction) in 2014 in Central Europe was estimated at €233,000. When this average cost of a golf course hole is multiplied by 18 (holes), it leads us to conclusion that in both observed tourism destinations in Croatia the total investment in a single golf course would be between 4 and 5 million euros, depending on the location and, of course, the quality of the golf course (rated as high-end, top quality or signature golf course). If we assume that each selected tourism destinations in continental Croatia would have a cluster of five golf courses, a total amount of investment in golf course construction in each destination would be between €20 million and €25 million.

Apart from the positive economic outcomes, there are also some negative aspects of golf tourism development in rural areas that might have reflections on the economic sustainability of golf development projects. In that sense, Palmer (2004: 125) indicates four key issues around which opposition to the development of golf courses have been organized: 1) the irrelevance of golf courses to local needs; 2) environmental impacts; 3) sustainable use of resources; and 4) political interference in and control over planning process. Having in mind that both tourism destinations observed in this study are rich in resources, but facing long-term difficulties in economic, social and demographic senses, intensifying tourism development in the context of product diversification from traditional spa towards high-end spa & golf would increase the opportunities of employment, income generation, infrastructure development and other benefits.

## **5.5 Discussion and perspectives of golf tourism development in the area**

From the initial standpoint in which two spa tourism destinations in continental Croatia are looking for some new subset of economic activities that would better utilize the existing resources, current trends in golf tourism development have encouraged a new vision of tourism development in these areas. Although the idea of integrating spa and golf tourism products is not new, the growing market for added value tour packages, containing various attractions and activities for families and other structured groups, is a relatively new trend that is going to be intensified in

the upcoming years. In order to meet this trend, two analysed spa centres need a significant improvement of their traditional spa offer towards an integrated tourism product that would attract the attention of upscale visitors.

Even though these two predominantly rural settings have some differences between each other (e.g. historical value, thermal water composition, facilities ownership, etc.), the findings in this research reveal that they have many similar characteristics, such as geographical position, climate conditions, landscape, available resources as well as current image and market position, share of international demand and proximity to international airports. A variety of characteristics can be used to create different images of future resorts, while similarities can be used to cut costs in development and operational phases of the project. So, the perspective of golf tourism development in the observed area depends on many variables among which the overall consensus of all regional stakeholders towards golf tourism development seems to be the critical one.

If the spa and sport resort LifeClass Terme Sveti Martin is considered as the initial stage and the realization of ideas presented in this research would be the second stage, all further stages in development of spa and golf tourism in continental Croatia will depend on several following factors:

- 1) Introduction of regional and destination management organizations (e.g. to increase the efficiency of development planning, management, and marketing, etc.);
- 2) Proactive participation of public sector (e.g. providing public infrastructure, concession or privatization of state-owned property, environment protection, proper information dissemination, pro-golf education, involvement of the local population in decision making process, etc.);
- 3) Creation of favourable investment climate (e.g. stabilization of the tax system in the long-run, introduction of the real exchange rate, to lessen the regulatory burden and extent of red tape in general, etc.);
- 4) Willingness of the local communities to support the idea of intensifying tourism development (e.g. involvement in physical planning and decision-making processes, local entrepreneurship, etc.);
- 5) Continuation of current trends in tourism demand (e.g. visitors looking for diverse and integrated tourism products, increase in

demand for family package tours and short-stay tours with sport amenities, etc.),

- 6) Increase of the interest of domestic golfers to play golf in Croatia (e.g. more favourable green fees for domestic golfers, more local players, more young players, more sport clubs, golf training sessions, registration and memberships, more golf events, more intensive promotion, etc.), and other factors.

## **6. Conclusion**

Based on the results of previously published studies and reports, as well as on the identification of current trends in golf tourism development, this research can be considered as a visionary attempt to rejuvenate traditional spa centres whose market competitiveness has been gradually weakened during the time. Since the vast majority of golf courses in the Northern and Eastern Europe are closed during the winter time, destinations with hot springs seems to have significant advantages on the golf market not only because of the possibility of integration of playing golf with spa, wellness or medical treatments, but also because of the geothermal power that can be used for heating the greens and other golf facilities during the winter time. For that and other reasons, spa tourism destinations with available resources for tourism product diversification have become, by all means, hot spots for both golfers and investors looking for something new on the market and potentially highly beneficial for all involved stakeholders.

Based on the first successful integration of spa and sport tourism products in continental Croatia, authors of this research have continued to promote the idea of expanding golf offer in the region focusing on those destinations that are able to support such a concept. Two traditional spa centres, namely Varaždinske Toplice and Bizovac, were taken into analysis as the most suitable destinations in continental Croatia for integrating spa and golf tourism products. In order to determine a strategic position of the selected destinations in the context of tourism product diversification, a constructed SWOT analysis has proved that internal and external environments are favourable for pushing these two destinations into the new phase of destination's life cycle. The expected positive economic outcomes that would arise from such development scenario should increase opportunities for local residents and entrepreneurs to participate in more diverse economic activities at local and regional levels. Given the possible negative side effects of such projects, this visionary attempt should be vetted by a

wider interdisciplinary team of experts who will make a final assessment on its validity and applicability in the observed region.

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# **Social and Economic Potential of Sporting Events in the Czech Republic**

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## **Abstract**

This contribution deals with the economic significance of sporting events. It examines the issue of how to evaluate economic benefits, as well as other noneconomic factors which are of benefit to the state or region involved. The paper presents the "RunCzech" series of races, as an example of the most popular sporting events taking place regularly in many Czech cities and the results of research conducted at one of the regional Half Marathon races in order to demonstrate their economic and social potential. The methodology used in our research was quantitative research in the form of online polling through a web interface on a sample of 110 respondents. The results have confirmed a growing interest in sporting events and their benefits for a region. Furthermore, the research considers the willingness of participants to travel to participate in these events repeatedly, as well as the connection between the athlete's participation and involvement in sporting activities connected with preparation for the events.

**Key words:** *Sporting Event, Sport Tourism, Social, Economic, Impact, Running Race.*

## **Introduction**

In contemporary society, sport represents activity, which contributes significantly to the development of society and the economy. Sport offers suitable conditions for organizing a large number of events. "Special events are that phenomenon arising from those non-routine occasions which have leisure, cultural, personal or organizational objectives set apart from the normal activity of daily life, and whose purpose is to enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge the experience of a group of people" (Shone and Parry 2004, p. 4). In terms of the large number of branches of sport and the

various sizes of sports competitions, sports events are very diverse. Sporting events reflect local culture and traditions, helping to build the brand or image of the given place. Some events have significance only for locals and they have no noticeable influence on the number of visitors coming to the destination. The organization of such events is often dependent on public support. Thus, in terms of financing events, it is possible to speak about a society-wide impact. Allen divided the effects of sporting events to these four areas: socio - cultural, physical - environmental, touristic and economic (Allen et al, 2010).

### **Literature review**

Sporting events like championships, world cups, races, grand prix, tournaments have a multiplier effect on the social and economic development of the region, where they take place. Recurring sports events and numerous smaller events and sports matches, generate income for local and regional economies through an increase in spending at and near event sites, thanks to the increasing number visitors coming for the event who also use the occasion to participate in an array of tourist activities (Nauright, Giampiccoli and Lee 2013). The topic of sporting events and their relationship to the tourism has been addressed by, for example, Getz and McConnell (2014) or Shipway (2012). Staging an event in a particular location clearly contributes to building the image of the destination. The long-term benefits to tourism which can result from visitor's increased awareness and positive perceptions of the destination are much more significant than the short-term effects of the events themselves. The issue of the economic impact of sustainable events has been discussed by many other authors such as Dwyer, Forsyth and Spurr (2005) and Roj and Musgrave (2009). The main aspect of an event evaluated is attendance, which provides the basis for measuring other impacts (expenditures, consumption and employment, as well as gross and net benefit). The others aspects are: Total economic production (turnover), Gross domestic product, Value added, Income from taxes and fees, Balance of payments (in the case of foreign tourism) and Employment. The most used method, which measures the economic impact of sporting events and calculates the multiplier effect of sporting events on individual sectors of the economy is so called Input - Output Analysis. It is also used for the evaluation of other social impacts that must be taken into account. This includes an assessment of the environmental, social and media impact of an event. The CBA (Cost

Benefit Analysis) method is focused on the evaluation of the direct and indirect impacts and seeks to examine the influence of certain sporting events on the economy of the state or regional economy. This method tries to estimate the economic importance of sports events and analyze the activity and revenue related to them.

The social impact is defined as “any impacts which potentially influence the quality of life for local residents” (Fredline, Jago and Deery, 2003). The social impacts of events can be difficult to measure objectively as many of them cannot be quantified and they often have different effects on different members of the community. Social impact is clearly subjective and therefore gives no verifiable indication of the quantification of cost and benefits. But we can use the resident perceptions approach to provide additional data about social impacts. Fredline, Jago and Deery (2003) in their study entitled “Developing a Generic Scale to Measure Social Impacts of Events: Methodological Issue” proposed a methodology for assessing the social impact of events which they demonstrated on three different events held in Australia. Also Delamere and his colleagues have proposed a scale for assessing social consisting of 47 evaluative criteria (Delamere, Wankel and Hinch, 2001). The issue of running races as sporting events, has been described in articles about the Gold Coast Marathon in Australia (Funk, Toohey and Braun, 2007; Chalip and McGuirty, 2004), about the London Marathon (Shipway and Jones, 2008) and about marathons in Germany (Hallmann, Kaplanidou and Breuer, 2010).

### **RunCzech and its potential**

The organization of running races has been a trend in the Czech Republic in the last few years. Small recurring sports events such as local running races require relatively low investment in terms of organization and attract a relatively big number of participants and spectators. They can generate more sustainable benefits for the destination because they make use of existing infrastructure. Running events also generate a diverse group of participants, not only runners, but also fans – viewers (tourists or domestic spectators). There are 31 million runners in the world who travel abroad for races at least twice a year (Uhl 2011). Races throughout Europe, including the marathon and half marathon in Prague, rank among the most attractive and well-attended events in the world, but they have not yet achieved the level of popularity that running events have in the running superpowers such as Japan (37 races in 2016) or the United States (New York, Boston).

RunCzech is a running league, which consists three races (the Marathon, the half Marathon and the Grand Prix) in Prague as well as four half marathons in other Czech cities (České Budějovice, Olomouc, Ústí nad Labem and Karlovy Vary). RunCzech is an example of a sports event which is designed for a broad spectrum of athletes, competitive runners as well as for recreational runners. The races differ in terms of their venue, route, and number of participants, but the registration procedure, rules and programs are the same for all the races. In addition to the races there is always a rich accompanying program including a sports exhibition. The most famous and the biggest running event in the Czech Republic, the Prague International Marathon, has been held since 1995 and was even ranked among the top 10 marathons in the world. In 2014, RunCzech events drew a total of 58 256 runners from all over the world. Thanks to money spent by runners themselves as well as the people who accompany them and other visitors, the races organized by RunCzech, have a significant economic and social impact, as well as an impact on the economy and the development of tourism in the towns in which they are held. In the year 2014 all running races in the Run Czech series together attracted 172 849 persons, 58 256 of whom were active participants – runners and 114 593 were passive participants – spectators. Divided according to place of residence, 42,3 % of participants were local, 39,1 % were from other parts of the Czech Republic and 18,6 % were foreigners. The typical length of stay was 2 days for visitors from other Czech regions and 4 days for visitors from abroad. All visitors together spent 376 million CZK on accommodation, transport, food, shopping and other services. Of this, CZK 193 million were spent by foreign visitors which represents a net benefit for the domestic economy. 376 full-time - permanent jobs were created thanks to visitor spending. A total of 115 million CZK went into public budgets in the form of increased collection of Value Added Tax, personal and corporate taxes, municipal fees and social security and health insurance. The popularity of the events and positive reaction from the public as well as the high level of participation by both runners and spectators is a mark of quality and a guarantee of good publicity for the Czech Republic.(Economic Impact, 2015).

**Table1:** Structure of visitor of Olomouc Half Marathon and RunCzech all events

Group of	Olomouc		Czech Republic		Length of stay
	Number	%	Number	%	
Residents	10 816	49,1	73 164	42,3	1



<b>From other regions of CzR</b>	9 473	43	67 561	39,1	2
<b>From abroad</b>	1 745	7,9	32 124	18,6	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>22 034</b>		<b>172 849</b>		

Source: Author

The social impact of these RunCzech events can be identified in the number of activities and projects which the organizer has prepared for runners, volunteers (who help with the organization of races) and the general public. These include: "*Run for Trees*" a project to support the planting of trees. "*Run for a good cause*" is an activity through which runners can make a significant charitable impact. A jogging buddy meet-up service, which helps users match up with jogging partners they can train or participate in a race with. „Fee Gift Card” the possibility to pay an entry fee for another runner as a gift. The project "*What's your running story?*" offers the possibility for participants to share their stories from the race or training with other people in the community. A running center "*Running Mall*" offers training with a professional trainer for free. The "PIM Running Club" organizes group runs. Throughout the whole year there are activities open to all runners, including running workshops with volunteers and other public events.

## Methods

This research is based survey, created by the researchers and conducted after the one of the local events, the Mattoni Half Marathon in June 2014. The sample of our research consisted of *110 respondents - domestic adult participant*. All participants in the race received an invitation to participate in the online survey as a part of the packet of materials distributed by the event organizers. The survey consisted of questions which were divided into three main areas: socioeconomic characteristics, social/tourism aspects of participation and the aspect of sport activity. Secondary analysis of data about the number of participants, selected economic benefits and other official information about the half marathon was taken from documents, published by the organizers, the Czech Statistical Office and the regional destination agency.

## Results

The "Mattoni Half Marathon" in Olomouc ranks as the second biggest race in the RunCzech series. Thanks to the Gold Label of the IAAF (a mark of quality for the race), this event can be said to rank among the most prestigious athletic competitions in the world. The consistently increasing number of participants confirms the growing interest in this event. While in its first year, 2010, 1 788 active runners participated, in 2014 it was 5 005. In total, 3 525 men (70 %) and 1 480 women (30 %) entered the race. With both sexes, the largest age group represented was that between 18 - 35 years. Most, 84,0 %, runners participated in the main event - i.e. the half marathon - another 8,0 % ran in stages as 2-member teams (2 run race) and 8,0 % in 4-member relays (Prague International Marathon 2015b). Of this total amount of runners, 4 568 were Czech and 437 were foreign. The majority of the foreign participants came from neighboring countries, mainly from Slovakia, Poland and other European Union states. Among the participants, however, there were also runners from Russia and the USA. There were, of course, also professional participants from Africa.

Our survey found that **54,0 %** of the respondents were **women** and **46,0 %** were **men**. The age distribution of respondents is as follows: young people aged **18 - 40 years** accounted for **72, 3 %** of the sample, middle-aged people aged 41 - 60 represented 25,3 % of the total number and people over 61 years old represented 2,4 %. Most participants 26,4 % (from the 15 Czech administrative regions) were **local residents** – meaning that they came from the Olomouc Region. In addition to locals, the majority of participants were from the neighboring region (21,3 % from North Moravia and 9,2 % from South Moravia). Together the other four regions of the Czech Republic made up approximately 8,1 % of respondents. Other questions in our survey were aimed to determine whether and how, or rather to what extent, participation in the race influences tourism in the city. We examined how long the participants stayed in the city, that is, whether they spent the night in the city or its surroundings and in what type of accommodation. Whether they made use of local food services, and, if they did, how they evaluated those services. Whether they were or were not satisfied with the supply and quality of such services. From this part of the research the following conclusions emerged: **83,0 %** of respondents came to Olomouc not only to participate in the race, but also in order to **get to know the city**. Only 17,0 % were runners who came exclusively to participate in the race. In terms of accommodation, considering that the vast majority of participants were people from the Olomouc Region it is not surprising that 69,0 % of them did

not use any accommodation. Another **15,0 %** said they were accommodated in public **accommodation facilities** and 16,0 % of the participants were accommodated in private residences. Given that the Olomouc half marathon itself is a daylong event, it can be assumed that food services were used by participants to a significant extent. This was also confirmed by the results which show that **77,5 %** of respondents made use of **food services** and just under a quarter, precisely **22,5 %** of the respondents did not eat in town. The findings about the sport's aspect of respondent's participation were revealed: **71,5 %** of respondents participated in this run for the **first time**. 28,5 % of respondents had already participated in races several times before (regardless of whether it was also a family run or another type of the race). Most respondents **84,8 %** identified themselves as **recreational** runners and 15,2 % considered themselves to be competitive runners. This is related to the results of further investigation into how much time participants devoted to preparing for this race. 53,6 % of surveyed participants spent an extended period of time preparing for the race, while 46,4 % spent only a small period of time preparing. The fact that **46,0 %** of respondents **had already participated in** other RunCzech events this year sometime or in the past, while the remaining 54,0 % of respondents did not attend any other race in this series.

## Discussion

Hosting the half marathon contributes significantly not only to increasing the visibility of the city of Olomouc, but also to the economy of the entire region. Although the capacity of the main race was 5 500 runners along with another 2 000 runners in the family fun run, the event as a whole was attended by a total of 22 034 people, 9 473 came from other regions of the Czech Republic and 1 745 from abroad in 2014. The expenditures of attendees of the Olomouc half marathon was 33,5 million CZK and resulted in an increase in income for local businesses of at least 16.9 million CZK and a local increase of the GDP of 4.8 million CZK. The income for the municipal budget through municipal fees was about 280 thousand CZK. In addition to offering opportunities for students to gain volunteer experience, this event also contributed to the creation of 16 seasonal jobs (Štědrá, 2015). The positive contribution of this race to tourism can be documented with statistics tracking tourism in the Olomouc region from 2010, when the Half Marathon was organised for the first time, to 2014.

**Table 2:** Number of visitors in Olomouc city in the 2010-2014

Year	Group	Visitors	Overnight	Length of stay
2010	domestic	47 031	73 384	1,6
	foreign	46 795	83 234	1,8
2011	domestic	54 421	105 214	1,9
	foreign	44 463	78 545	1,8
2012	domestic	47 611	91 542	1,9
	foreign	47 757	83 558	1,2
2013	domestic	51 508	93 390	1,8
	foreign	52 508	92 138	1,7
2014	domestic	58 303	101 811	1,75
	foreign	57 521	102 553	1,8

Source: Author

The direct contribution of Travel and Tourism in the Czech Republic in 2014 was 111,4 billion CZK, which is 2,6 % of GDP. For both locals and tourists alike, the Olomouc Half Marathon is one of the most popular and best attended events the town has to offer. It has come to be recognized as a sporting event which is a symbol of the city and contributes to its image as a sports tourism destination. As our research was conceived as pilot study for research on the whole RunCzech series, it has many limitations: there was the relatively small sample of respondents relative to the total number of runners, there were no foreign respondents (the questionnaire was only in Czech), respondents were not asked about their spending as sports tourists. We also did not make an effort to involve passive participants.

## Conclusion

Running races have become very popular sporting events and can be a key element in economic development for the Czech Republic. These running events can be considered to be of international importance with significant economic and social potential, including an impact on tourism. One significant result of our survey is the finding that, despite the large number of people attending the race, the average number of over - night stays in

Olomouc is relatively small. While race participants come along with the people who accompany them, only a minimum number of them stay overnight because they are either locals or residents of neighboring regions. Our contribution presents results documenting interest in the race itself, preparation for it, participation in multiple races in the RunCzech series and general interest in sports among the participants. The positive social impact of this race is seen first of all in tourism and the image of the city, as well as the involvement of many citizens and other people in running and sports. It can be said that for us this group of runners - participants in running events - represent a potential group of persons participating in tourism - active sports tourists, as well as passive tourists in the case of their family escort. Our research has confirmed a growing interest in sporting events and their benefits for a region. Furthermore, the results of the survey considered the willingness of participants to travel to participate in these events repeatedly, as well as the connection between the athlete's participation and their involvement in sporting activities connected with preparation for the events.

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## **MEGA SPORT EVENTS FACING THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

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Analysis of a mega sport event's sustainability is often based on the performance of its economic criteria, i.e. economic efficiency. Such understanding of this concept can mislead stakeholders involved in its organization and their conclusions about the success of an event might be based on wrong assumptions. Each event should ensure additional earnings for the local community, but not at any cost, since the overall sustainability has to be achieved. In this paper the authors examine social responsibility of a mega sport event – World Football Championship in Brazil. Its role in tourism development of host cities was unommittable, but the exact consequences can only be evaluated in the long run. Most of the existing research in this field is focused on identifying potential social benefits for the local community, but a very modest number of research has been focused on determining the actual social benefits to the local community. Therefore, the focus of the research is put on determining the indicators which would provide accurate information about the social responsibility of this event. The research was conducted by using secondary data available in the official databases and data was analyzed by using the methods of comparison and desk research. Based on the existing theoretical background the authors relate the current socio-cultural environment in host destination with available indicators to determine the level of social responsibility of this event. The expected contribution of the paper is the evaluation of performance of World Football Championship in Brazil in terms of social responsibility. The main objective of the paper is to critically analyze the

available data related to Brazil after the mega sport event has been held and relating them to the issue of social responsibility.

**Keywords:** mega sport events, social responsibility, indicators, Brazil, World Football Championship

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays it would be hardly possible to develop any tourism product within a destination without framing it into the concept of social responsibility. The care about the benefits of both local community and tourists seems crucial in the process of destination development. In terms of tourism, responsibility has occurred as an answer to the problems related to mass tourism development, with less developed countries introducing tourism products as a means of attracting foreign currencies. "People privileged enough to travel, especially to countries in the Third World, have a responsibility to those who cannot go away yet must bear the costs of tourism" (Holden in Jafari, 2000:507). It is precisely the difference between these two groups of stakeholders involved in the process of tourism exchange that has initiated the need for creating a more responsible and sensible environment that would enable the exchange of tourism experiences in a more sustainable manner.

The issue of responsible travelling was initiated in the inequalities between hosts and guests, mostly in terms of their economic potentials. However, the term has been faced with numerous challenges in the contemporary society and therefore today it means that "people and organizations must behave ethically and with sensitivity toward social, cultural, economic and environmental issues"<sup>1</sup>. Contemporary changes have initiated the need for rethinking the role of tourism in destination development, especially in terms of increasing the quality of life of the local community.

One of the means of developing tourism destinations can be the organization of mega sport events. "The appeal of hosting a mega-event, or more specifically a mega-sporting event, has grown significantly over the last two decades" (Fourie and Santana-Gallego, 2011:1364-5). Hosting such an event assumes time and resource-consuming process, with the need for high involvement and support by local community. "It is important for local governments, policymakers and organizers to appreciate the level of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.imasocialentrepreneur.com>



community support toward the proposed event, and to understand the basis of both support and opposition” (Gursoy and Kendall, 2006:606). Silvestre (2008/2009:2) claims that the planning complexity and great urban intervention associated with the preparations for a mega-event is correspondent with equally substantial costs for the local community.

Organizing mega sport events can seem as an opportunity for a local community to raise awareness about its tourism potentials and uniqueness on tourism market, to gain additional economic benefits, to increase the number of jobs, to increase the quality of local infrastructure, etc. “A variety of reasons explain the quest to host these events, but no reason appears more compelling than the promise of an economic windfall” (Matheson and Baade, 2004:1085). For that reason it might seem reasonable to the organizers of those events to overlook their environmental and social impacts on the local communities. Even though one of the main reasons for organizing such events is to generate additional positive economic impacts on the local community, either directly or indirectly, the other two aspects of sustainable development should in no case be neglected. Moreover, in the long run the social responsibility of mega sport events could have significant influence on the community development. Therefore it is important to determine the impact of such event by taking into account their overall influence on local community’s life quality during the organization cycle and after the event has been held. Additionally, it is important to analyze whether there was any increase in the performance of crucial indicators and to evaluate to impact on the local community. This stands for the main objective of this paper.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

In contemporary society sport has come in the research focus by many scientists, not only within the field of kinesiology, but is also researched in the field of sociology, psychology, medicine, economy, etc. (Stančin, 2015:3). This is why the research approach in the field of sport tourism is highly interdisciplinary, as is the case with tourism as a system as a whole. Since sport tourism provides the environment for sport tourists to fulfill their needs for sport activities during their travel, it seems rationale to argue that it is a special interest tourism within which sport motives for travel and stay in certain tourism destinations prevail (Vukonić and Čavlek, 2001:365). Since “both the participants and spectators might well be sports tourists” (Kurtzman and Zauhar in Jafari, 2000:553), the size of sport tourism market

has been increasing during the last few decades. The most attractive product of sport tourism can be recognized in mega sport events, as they are globally recognizable and attract large number of sport tourists to different destinations worldwide. Those events represent a magnet for many tourists that spend significant sums of money in relatively short time period (Bartoluci and Čavlek, 2007:119). "In recent years cities have competed vigorously for the right to host what can be labeled as mega-events, namely the quadrennial Olympic Games and FIFA Football World Cup" (Barclay, 2009:62). According to Bowdin *et al.* (2011:19-25), those sport events can be classified as mega events, as they influence the national economy and are broadcasted globally; they should be visited by no less than million tourists and should bring a certain prestige to the host destination. If all presumptions of organizing such sport event are met, there is little doubt that they bring significant benefits for any destination. It is no surprise that many developed tourism destinations, especially the ones already established on the market, with strong tourism image, compete in order to become host of such mega event. In case that they already have most of the infrastructure needed for hosting such an event, it seems reasonable that they want to bring additional earnings to the destination and ensure long-term recognition on global tourism market.

"Sport event is actually a perfect blend of sport competition and entertainment, where visitors have the opportunity to admire sport achievements, cheer their representatives, meet new people, cultures, have fun, explore new destinations and have the feeling that they are a part of something new and powerful" (Stančin, 2015:12). In terms of mega sport events, one has to consider not only athletes who travel to a certain destination with the motive of achieving great sport results – rather, tourists also have to be considered as they bring in the most of additional earnings into a destination, even though they do not visit it with the primary motive of being involved into sport events. To them, motivation arises from the need to be a part of such an event, experiencing different events in a destination and visiting new places. Additionally, local community must not be neglected from the equation as they take potentially the biggest burden of organizing such event – they are supposed to prepare the infrastructure for organizing the event, have to host large number of athletes and tourists, and have to maintain the infrastructure after the event has been held and to find meaningful purpose for that infrastructure, the one that would enable its self-financing in the future.

"Mega sport events are believed to positively and significantly impact the host country's destination image (from the tourism perspective) and country image (from the international marketing perspective) (Kim, Kang and Kim, 2014:161). Each host's goal is to outperform the previous one and in such way create and maintain positive image on the international tourism market. The success of the event has, of course, direct influence on that image. In order to estimate the potential impacts of organizing mega sport events, it is crucial to undertake certain measurements in this context. "Community developers, sport event planners, and tourism professionals can benefit from economic modeling results that reveal the impact of tourist spending on host residents' income as specified by occupation and wage" (Daniels, Norman and Henry, 2004:182). Since tourism is rather complex system, the calculations assume comprehensive modeling, but the results guarantee possibility to determine whether the event has fulfilled its primary goal – bringing benefits to a destination. "The tourism and hospitality industries have the potential to both contribute to a degradation of natural and cultural assets as well as to an unequal distribution of benefits and wealth" (Cherapanukorn and Focken, 2014:198). Any business involved into tourism has a privilege to use destination's resources, but at the same time it has responsibility to preserve those resources. Such behavior is rather reasonable and straightforward, but occasionally businesses neglect their obligations towards the local resources and decide to put their own interest before anything else, which in the end affects the level of sustainability within a destination and puts social responsibility of an event into question.

There is no argue that mega sport events can bring many benefits to the host community, but the question remains whether all impacts are positive or the main focus is put on the economic impacts, regardless of the other aspects of community's development. Numerous authors (Matheson and Baade, 2004; Dodouras and James, 2004; Matheson, 2006; Silvestre, 2008/2009; Barclay, 2009; Fourie and Santana-Gallego, 2011; etc.) argue that forecasts of potential economic benefits are often exaggerated and that local community in the end does not yield as much benefits as desired. "Direct expenditures estimated to be a result of the event are used to deduce indirect effects, which are more often than not prone to exaggeration" (Barclay, 2009:63). Therefore it seems rationale to take a step back from the estimations in terms of economic benefits and to compare the whole community's quality of life before the organization and to provide the predictions about its quality after the event in order to be able to give

exact evaluations of the destination's performance. "Stories of less than reliable economic benefit calculations cast a dark shadow on the return on investment claims made by both sport event organizers and government backers" (Lee and Taylor, 2005:596). "Hosting a mega-event requires strategists to look deeply into the future of a country or city in order to create the event vision and then to contrast this vision against current realities" (van Lill and Thomas, 2012:3670). Not only are potential benefits often exaggerated, but also the value of needed investments is often underestimated. Such situation is very unfavorable for the local community as they do not experience the desired benefits and positive consequences and can feel like they were in a way deceived and will not be agreeable on paying potential debts in the long-run, which might lead to protests and other ways of demonstrating public disappointment.

It is rather difficult to isolate organization of mega sport events from the concept of sustainable tourism development. Having such large number of visitors at the same place in such a short time framework can be rather challenging for any destination, even developed one. "Sustainable development is not an isolated problem related to business sectors alone; it is strongly interconnected with the society in general as it reflects all accumulated issues with pollution, environmental degradation and changes in social interactions within local communities" (Krajinović, 2015:66). Mega events depend on the quality of their organization as they seek for involvement of all stakeholders within a destination, but the emphasis should be put on the local community. "Local support and involvement are likely to increase the longevity of positive impacts on the local community" (Gursoy and Kendall, 2006:617). In order to be completely precise in determining sustainability of any mega sport event, it would be necessary to include its environmental impacts as well. "Sustainable development requires an integration of the ecological imperative to stay within the carrying capacity of the planet, the economic imperative to provide an adequate standard of living for all, and the social imperative to develop forms of governance that promote the values people want to live by" (Doduras and James, 2004:1). This standpoint seems rationale and easily reachable. However, the number of subjects involved in the organization of mega sport events makes this hard to be accomplished and even more difficult for sustainability to be reached. Not all members of local community are even aware that they take active part in organization of a mega sport event; therefore it is crucial for organizers to transfer knowledge

onto all stakeholders so that the products and services provided to tourists could be of the highest quality.

Even though the emphasis of this paper is put on social responsibility of mega sport events, the authors do not underestimate the importance of their environmental impacts. "Despite event sponsors often flagging the importance of environmental as well as socio-economic legacy components, the environmental impacts of events are difficult to assess quantitatively, being complex and often occurring over extended periods" (Collins, Jones and Munday, 2009:828). Other authors, however, point out even greater importance of environmental impacts, arguing that "whilst it is important from an ethical perspective to understand the impact that sport and tourism have on the external environment so that these impacts can be more effectively managed, it is also important that the impact of changes in the external environment on the sustainability of sport and tourism are understood in order to ensure the long term viability of the sector" (Fyall and Jago, 2009:77). If natural resources are destroyed, that could bring irreparable damage to a destination and could lead to decrease of its competitiveness.

As previously emphasized, mega sport events include Olympic Games and World Football Championships, so it would be possible to partially make comparisons between their specifics. For instance, Malfas, Theodoraki and Houlihan argue that local leaders perceive the securing of Olympic Games as an opportunity to improve economic and social aspects of a city or region through the accumulated investment triggered by staging the Games (2004:209). More now than before it becomes clear that mega sport events can be an important tool for increasing the level of development of the host city dominantly, but of the surrounding region specifically. For that reason it became crucial for host destinations to perceive the importance of social responsibility concept and organize the events accordingly. Hence, due to the global impact of tourism development it might even lead to leakages out of the economy and to undesired consequences. "Other commercial organizations will be attracted by the scale of the potential market for a wide range of foodstuffs, beverages, gifts and souvenirs" (Dinan and Sargeant, 2000:2). Mega sport events are great opportunity for local producers to introduce and sell their product to the global audience, and to raise awareness about their quality and competitiveness. Destinations that have already established image of their product perceive hosting as an opportunity to sell larger quantities of those products, while those who still struggle with creating positive image on the market have a chance to market

it in the context of both a sport event and a major tourism event. The access to global audience is extremely great as today's opportunities of exchanging information allow people to transfer knowledge and experience quickly and quite efficiently.

"Social responsibility means that individuals and companies have a duty to act in the best interests of their environments and society as a whole"<sup>1</sup>. This rather straightforward concept has become a major issue in contemporary society. The progresses in modern cultures have initiated the need for introducing a new approach to problem solving, not only in business world, but also within society as a whole. "The concept of social responsibility tries to reach balance between maximizing the economic, social, cultural, and natural resources of the target area in front of the visitor satisfaction, plus the negative impacts that can be caused in the community or environment" (Perusquia *et al.*, 2014:318). According to Štrukelj and Šuligoj (2014), recently it became more evident that tourism development assumes highly competitive environment and therefore tourism enterprises have to embrace the concept of sustainable development in general, but even more importantly, it is crucial to implement the concept of social responsibility to ensure long term benefits for local community. "In recent years, the tourism industry has been challenged by media and governments to provide fast, socially responsible responses to emerging problems resulting from the dissolution of borders and workforce migration" (Tepelus, 2008:98). Simultaneously, according to Matev and Assenova (2012:1065), the tourism industry might suffer from many social problems: lack of staff, shortage of qualified staff especially in the high-star hotels, flow of staff abroad, etc. Social responsibility has multifold positive impacts in a destination, namely "besides its contribution to the quality of life of stakeholders, social responsibility also contributes to sustainable economical development, and, transferred into tourism, also to sustainable tourism" (Tomić, 2012:455). When applying this concept, "businesses have a chance to be in control and come up with more favorable programs benefiting the company in the long run as well as benefiting society" (Mandimika *et al.*, 2013:4).

When discussing social responsibility of mega sport events, one has to be especially careful as those events are held in a different destination each time and even though one of their primary objectives is to provide benefits for the local community, that objectives must be dominantly achieved by

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.investopedia.com>

the local organization committee. The reasons for that can be found in the fact that international committee delegated management function to national and local committees, while businesses that are involved in the infrastructure development do not necessarily have to be local. To be more precise, the question of social responsibility towards the local community is of greater importance for local committees, as international ones have put more emphasis on the quality of organization, global promotion and similar tasks. Social responsibility is of great importance for each stakeholder involved in the process, but national and local committees have bigger responsibility towards local communities and have to ensure their long-term sustainability.

“Since their inception more than a hundred years ago, both the Olympics and FIFA World Cup have frequently played a symbolic part in promoting human rights” (Institute for Human Rights and Business, 2013:11). Therefore the main purpose of those events must never be simply achieving only short-term benefits for destination, in terms of increased number of visitors or tourism receipts in the year of hosting. The main emphasis has to be put on long-term positive environment for local community, where the infrastructure would be given socially responsible purpose and the cost of its maintenance would be less dependent on the public sector. Additionally, increase in the number of jobs should not be only short-term, but businesses should be rather given the chance to expand their market segment in a positive environment. Furthermore, local community should become even more proud of their own legacy and resources and in such way their overall satisfaction with promotion of destination and strengthening its image should have a positive effect on their quality of life. Socially responsible events must be planned beyond given time frameworks and must include many more indicators than only physical and financial tourism indicators. Such environment would yield positive results and could even encourage destination to apply as candidate for new mega sport events, or any other type of event.

United Nations has listed the key indicators that can be used for calculating social responsibility in general:

**Table 1:** Selected indicators of social responsibility

GROUP	INDICATOR
Trade, Investments and Linkages	Total revenues
	Value of imports vs. exports
	Total new investments
	Local purchasing

Employment Creation and Labor Practices	Total workforce with breakdown by employment type, employment contract and gender
	Employee wages and benefits with breakdown by employment type and gender
	Total number and rate of employee turnover broken down by gender
	Percentage of employees covered by collective agreements
Technology and Human Resource Development	Expenditure on research and development
	Average hours of training per year per employee broken down by employee category
	Expenditure on employee training per year per employee broken down by employee category
Health and Safety	Cost of employee health and safety
	Work days lost due to occupational accidents, injuries and illness
Government and Community Contributions	Payments to Government
	Voluntary contributions to civil society
Corruption	Number of convictions for violations of corruption related laws or regulations and amount of fines paid/payable

Source: United Nations, 2008:17-18

The problem with analyzing social responsibility of a mega sport event in this paper arises from the fact that certain values cannot be related directly to the event in question. Namely, it would be rather difficult to evaluate the group *technology and human resource development* without previously planned and conducted primary research. Other groups of indicators will either be evaluated based on available data or their results could be estimated because not all data for 2014 is yet available. This can be emphasized as the main limitation of the conducted research. The available, published data do not reflect the accurate state of the social responsibility nor do they allow making more thorough conclusions. Furthermore, it is not possible to make decision about each particular host city, but rather the decisions are made at state level. This could mislead the research to a certain extent as not all host cities were equally successful or had the same investments. However, since the objective of the paper is to examine the relationship between mega sport events and the issue of social responsibility, and the host country of the 2014 FIFA World Cup was Brazil, it was necessary to take the country as a whole into consideration. Moreover,



the analysis had to be made on available secondary data and not all was published during the time the paper was written.

### **3. EXAMINING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEGA SPORT EVENT - THE CASE OF BRAZIL**

Based on the available data, the authors base their analysis on the registered impacts of the 2014 FIFA World Cup held in Brazil. It was the 20<sup>th</sup> edition of this sport event and was held from June 12 to July 13, 2014 in 12 host cities: Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia, Sao Paolo, Fortaleza, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, Salvador, Recife, Cuiaba, Manaus, Natal and Curitiba. It was organized by FIFA and the World Cup Organizing Committee (Stančin, 2015:27).

According to Matsouka, hosting mega events has traditionally been a privilege of developed nations, but since 2008 developing countries have obtained the right to host those international competitions. For example, China hosted the 2008 Summer Olympics, South Africa the 2010 World Cup, Russia the 2014 Winter Olympics and Brazil the 2014 World Cup. Although this seems to be a positive step for the developing nations, there are speculations concerning the real benefits and expenses those games generate (Matsuoka, 2015:3). There is little doubt that Beijing was extremely successful in organizing an event that added to its image on tourism destination and brought many positive impacts for local community, especially in terms of reduced air pollution, one of the biggest problems that Beijing is facing (for example, Huang *et al.*, 2010; Li *et al.*, 2010; Zhou *et al.*, 2010). There have been, however, some examples of destinations that have not been as successful in achieving the planned economic and other long-term positive effects for the local community.

“Sporting competitions can be utilized to improve transport infrastructure, adapt buildings, upgrading health care, construct cultural spaces and modernize sports facilities, revitalizing spaces occupied or valuing new areas” (Valente and Noguera, 4). To host the Fifa World Cup, Brazil needed a lot of infrastructure improvements and investments, especially in the transportation sector. Many airports, highways and railways have been reconstructed in order to facilitate the predicted number of athletes and tourists during the World Cup. Brazil’s main problem was related to the quality of airports and the fact that in some host cities they had to be built from the scratch. The same situation was with the football stadiums - in all

12 host cities they needed huge reconstructions to meet Fifa's requirements (Stančin, 2015:34). "When Brazil was confirmed as a host in 2007, the economy was performing satisfactorily. The real GDP growth was 6.1% and inflation averaged about 3.6%, according to the International Monetary Fund" (Matsuoka, 2015:10). In 2008 the country's economy was affected by the global financial crisis. The government expenditures continued to rise, followed by the inflation. In 2014 the Brazilians became furious with the costs generated by the World Cup (Matsuoka, 2015:10).

Since one of the major objectives of organizing mega sport event is the growth of tourist arrivals and tourism receipts in the year of hosting dominantly, but in consecutive years as well, available data should indicate (in table 2) whether this objective was reached in the short run.

**Table 2:** International tourist arrivals and tourism receipts in Brazil (2010-2014)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>International Tourism Arrivals (mil)</b>	5,161	5,433	5,677	5,813	NA
<b>International Tourism Receipts (US \$ million)</b>	5,702	6,555	6,645	6,704	6,843

Source: UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2011-2015

The reasons for hosting such mega sport events seemed reasonable, as well as in other cities hosting mega events. According to the indicators listed in table 2, Brazil has registered growth of international tourism receipts, even though the growth was probably below the expected values (1.4% in 2012, 0.9% in 2013 and 2.1% in 2014). On the other side, data related to international tourism arrivals is still not available, which significantly disables comprehensive analysis of tourism turnover in the year of hosting the games. There is some skepticism about the influence of mega sporting events on the number of tourist arrivals into host destinations. For instance, "in late 2004, Athens tourism officials estimated a 10 percent drop in summer tourism due to the Olympics. The Utah Skier Survey found that nearly 50 percent of nonresidents planned to stay away from Utah in 2002 due to the expectation of more crowds and higher prices" (Zimbalist, 2011). Thus, in order to provide a complete and objective analysis of the mega sport event's influence on the number of tourist arrivals, it is necessary to compare results of several years after hosting the games.

However, the available economic data related to Brazilian tourism is reporting positive results, as presented in table 3.

**Table 3:** Economic impact of tourism in Brazil in 2014

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015 (forecast)</b>
Direct contribution to GDP	3.5%	4.2%
Total contribution to GDP	9.6%	11.5%
Direct contribution to employment	3.1%	5.6%
Total contribution to employment	8.8%	11.6%
Visitor exports (of total exports)	2.7%	8%
Investments (of total investments)	6.8%	12.4%

Source: WTTC (2015:1)

Basic economic impacts have been reporting positive results during 2014 with respect to 2013 (WTTC, 2015:3-4), which means that the short term reaction on the sport event held in 2014 has met the expectations. However, these results have to be put in the perspective of the forthcoming Olympic Games, an event that will be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 and will also assume high investments in the infrastructure, employment of large number of people and rise in the direct and total contribution of tourism to the Brazilian GDP. Economic indicators related to tourism turnover have been performing rather positively and in that sense it would seem justified to argue that the event has been successful. Nevertheless, an objective and comprehensive analysis of this event's responsibility has to include the overview of all other available indicators related to this issue, as presented further in the paper.

As compared to the indicators related to economic impact of tourism in Brazil in 2014, the performance of economic indicators was rather poor, and the results are shown in table 4.

**Table 4:** Overview of economic indicators

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>GDP per capita (USD)</b>	11,306	13,240	12,104	11,878	11,567
<b>GDP (USD bn)</b>	2,210	2,614	2,412	2,388	2,345
<b>Economic growth (GDP, annual variation in %)</b>	7.6	3.9	1.8	2.7	0.1
<b>Investment (annual variation in %)</b>	17.8	6.6	-0.6	6.1	-4.4
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	6.7	6.0	5.5	5.4	4.8
<b>Money (annual variation in %)</b>	16.7	18.7	9.1	10.9	9.9
<b>Exchange Rate (vs USD)</b>	1.66	1.86	2.05	2.36	2.66
<b>External Debt (% of GDP)</b>	11.6	11.4	13.0	12.9	14.8
<b>Inflation (PPI, annual variation in %)</b>	13.9	4.1	9.1	5.1	2.2

Source: Focus Economics

After the financial crisis, the Brazilian economy went down and has not been fully recovered yet. Except for inflation, unemployment and exchange rate, all other indicators indicate unfavorable growth rates for Brazil's recovery. Even though Brazil registered growth in international tourism receipts, it wasn't enough to improve the economic growth, GDP or reduce the external debt. Economic growth decreased significantly in 2014, but the reasons for that could probably be found in extremely high investments needed for infrastructural renovations and constructions. On the other hand, even though there was decrease of the unemployment rate, that indicator will provide much more relevant data when the results for 2015 will be published, as the drop in 2014 might be the result of short-term employment of construction workers. However, with the end of the constructions the workers were left without contracts and the annual average might have reported positive results, but the trend is still not evident. The same could be applied to tourism businesses that registered higher number of visitations in that year, but after the event was held, the need for workers decreased and the unemployment rate might have increased again. The growth of the external debt is highly negative consequence of the games and Brazilians will probably pay the debts of the infrastructural investments long after the event has been held.

One of the biggest problems with this event was related to satisfaction of Brazilians with the corruption problems and neglecting the ongoing problems in the society. For instance, one of the reasons for protests against the World Football Championship was the low level of government expenditure on health.

**Table 5:** General government expenditure on health as a percentage of total government expenditure

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
10.7	9.3	7.9	6.9	NA

Source: <http://apps.who.int>

The other problem was related to education system, with Brazilians expressing their turbulent feelings towards the level of government expenditure on education as % of GDP. According to the World Bank's data, those expenditures amounted 6.1% in 2011 and 6.3% in 2012 (World Bank, 2016). Even though data for 2014 is still not available, based on all other indicators it could be expected that there was a decrease of this value as well, which additionally raised disappointment of Brazilians with hosting the event. Since most of the infrastructural investment is placed before the

national and local governments, it is quite difficult to manage public opinion when the economic atmosphere in the country is unfavorable. With that respect the negative attitude of public towards the upcoming event was even to some extent expected and the public needed to be persuaded that the long-term effects will be positive. Unfortunately, up to now those effects did not occur. Nevertheless, Brazil has one more important test to pass – organization of Summer Olympic Games 2016.

Few days before the 2014 Fifa World Cup's kick-off international press was reporting on Fifa's scandals and social tensions. In order to raise the public awareness about positive effect of this event on the local community, Fifa decided to enhance promotion of their involvement in improving the quality of life for children in host communities. However, the impact of the Cup on poor children was not properly documented or reported. To change that, Terre des Hommes (network of ten national organizations working for the rights of children and to promote equitable development without racial, religious, political, cultural or gender-based discrimination<sup>1</sup>) launched Children WIN! – a campaign about the social impact on children of mega sport events. Terre des Hommes was documenting and telling stories of children on the positive and negative effects of mega sport events such as the Fifa World Cup. Children WIN was releasing news, social investigative journalism, analysis, expertise and ready-to use awareness material on those impacts. To prevent further negative effects and to enhance opportunities for children, Terre des Hommes proposes to include child rights criteria into the bidding process and contracts with countries hosting future mega sport events<sup>2</sup>.

Even though in the short run not all economic indicators have performed positively, this might improve in the future. One of the challenges Brazil was facing is the relatively short period (2 years) for organizing another mega sport event in the country, in Rio de Janeiro. Even though some of the facilities built for the Mundial could be reused for this purpose, most of the infrastructure for Summer Olympic Games needed to be rebuilt or built from the scratch. For a country facing such deep and difficult economic situation the organization of those two mega events in such short time period is extremely difficult task. Even though prior to applying and winning the hosting of these events Brazil did not face economic challenges yet, they had added to the seriousness of their problems and prolonged the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.terredeshommes.org>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.goal.com>

possibilities to recover in the short term, due to the amount of investments needed for building the infrastructure for the events. It was the time when Brazil was a country with unbelievable economic progress<sup>1</sup>. Oil was one of the main factors of the “Brazilian miracle”. By discovering a range of rich oil fields along the coast, Brazil became among the biggest oil producers. This was the basis for the country’s boost to apply for hosting both of the events in question, which was for sure supported by good economic climate prior and during the period of application.

As a consequence of organizing these events, Brazil will most likely be facing both positive and negative consequences of the Mundial 2014 for many years on, but in the time prior to the Olympic Games the country has to do everything possible to make sure that the Olympic Games will yield positive results for the local community. Number of facilities will be needed for hosting the Olympic Games – out of 36 in total, 16 of them already exist, but half of them need some reconstructions, while 9 temporary and 11 new facilities will be constructed from the ground up (Stančin, 2015:37).

Brazil is challenged by certain problems with the Games at the door, followed by the scandals related to FIFA and FBI accusations for corruption<sup>2</sup>. Another problem is a high percentage of the pollution in the Guanbara bay where the rowing and sailing competitions will be held<sup>3</sup>. Brazil is also the epicenter of the epidemic Zika virus which is characterized as a global threat. “The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) has informed the U.S. sports federations that athletes worried about their health amid the ongoing Zika virus outbreak should consider not attending the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio”<sup>4</sup>. According to the WHO, Brazil will not stand down from hosting the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio. The risk of contracting the Zika virus is minimal in August, the height of winter in the region and a time of year when mosquitoes are least active<sup>5</sup>. The Brazilian sports minister announced that the Brazilian government is fully committed to provide the conditions for the Games to take place in an atmosphere of security and tranquility.

“In general, one can say that the World Cup can bring benefits to a developing country, especially in terms of speeding investments and project management know-how for the government. On the other hand, the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.economist.com>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/football>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/sport>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.travelandleisure.com>

<sup>5</sup> <http://apps.who.int>

benefits can easily disappear because of the corrupted and inefficient governments most developing countries have" (Matsuoka, 2015:18). Usually those end up spending much more resources than predicted, which is what happened to Brazil. There is a number of reasons for Brazil's problems with reporting positive results at all levels after the World Cup – namely, poor economic climate, corruption problems not only at national, but also international level, low level of government investments in education and health system, pollution issues, etc. All these reasons added to the low performance of this event's social responsibility in the short run, which could be potentially solved in the middle run, if all stakeholders involved in the organization of the Olympic Games will have the vision to learn from the mistakes done with the previous event and to include the best practice examples into the elimination of potentially negative consequences of the Olympics, with the aim to increase the performance of the economic indicators and, consequently, improving the life quality of the local community.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study was to examine the available data related to the indicators of social responsibility of the mega sport event held in 2014 in Brazil, the World Football Championship. The results indicated that this event has been successful in achieving positive economic results in terms of tourism, namely increasing the number of employees, direct influence of tourism to the GDP and increasing the investments in tourism, with results for 2015 to continue to grow. These results are in accordance with increased investments needed for improving the quality of infrastructure, growing number of tourists visiting the country, and consequently inducing the need for growing number of employees, while the registered growth of tourist receipts was reflected in the growth of tourism's contribution to Brazil's GDP.

However, the country was facing serious problems with rebellion of local community at both local and national level because of high investments in the infrastructure on the one hand and decreased government investments into health and education systems at national level. Additionally, the performance of basic economic indicators was rather poor at the end of 2014 and even the growing number of employees in tourism system did not

generate significant growth in employment at national level. Moreover, corruption was one of the biggest issues in the period during the organization of the games and afterwards, with international scandals raising the problems and question of the organization of the event itself. Therefore it seems rationale to conclude that social responsibility of this event was not at highest level and local community did not benefit from the event as much as it could have, at least not if their quality of life is examined.

Apart from all the problems already listed, another important limitation in achieving the best outcome for the local community can be found in the organization of another mega event in the country in only 2 years' time from the last event. This put another burden on all stakeholders involved in the process of the organization as it was necessary to continue with the infrastructural and all other projects needed for the Olympic Games. Even though the organizing committees of these events differed, the national budget was dominantly involved in financing their organization and as such could not recover the economy more quickly, due to new round of much needed investments. Nevertheless, the global importance and recognition of those events will potentially enable Brazilian economy to provide its populace the economic recovery, increase of job opportunities, positive investment climate, better usage of the built infrastructure, and consequently better life quality for local communities.

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