

Maximising the potential of mass participatory sporting events for tourism destination development.

Author: *Marcus Howlett (IT Tralee).*

Over the last decade sports tourism has seen rapid changes, one such growth area has been in the area of mass participatory sporting events (MPSE). MPSE attract participants who travel to participate in events such as marathons and triathlons. MPSE now play a role in promoting a destination, however their potential in terms of destination development in Ireland is generally unrealised.

The research project will identify the benefits of MPSE for tourism destination development by analysing the participant's demographics and their direct economic expenditure, it will evaluate the destination and event attributes which are considered most important by the participant and it will explore the current levels of collaboration that currently exists between MPSE organisers and destination marketing organisations. The research design will use a mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative methods, it will include surveys and interviews. Five purposive handpicked MPSE have been chosen for the research project. A pilot study has been conducted on the 2015 Tralee International Marathon. The next stage of the research project is to develop the qualitative research methodology with quantitative data collection to commence in May with the Killarney Marathon.

Due to the lack of in depth research in Ireland the potential economic and tourism benefits of mass participatory sporting events to destinations may not be fully understood by tourism planners/providers and event organisers. This research project will assist in filling this research gap. The research project will assist all stakeholders in identifying the factors necessary to maximise the potential of MPSE for tourism destination development and assist in the best use of state funding. The research project will allow tourism planners and event organisers develop a coherent marketing strategy and help them identify future trends.

Keywords: Sports Tourism, Mass Participation Sporting Events, Economic Impacts, Leverage, Tourism Destination Development.

Background

Sports tourism is emerging as a very significant segment of the global tourism market (Tourist Review 2010). Of particular interest are mass participatory sporting events (MPSE) (Miller and Washington 2012; Coleman and Ramchandani 2010; Kotze 2006). MPSE attract participants to events such as marathons and triathlons (Weed & Bull 2004; Getz 2008). MPSE are now being classified as "serious leisure" (Smith et al 2010). Shipway and Jones (2008) propose MPSE such as marathons can be classified as "serious sport tourism", where participants now incorporate their enthusiasm for physical exercise into their holiday plans.

Applying the 2006 Events Tasmania Events Hierarchical Model (cited in Bowdin et al 2011), MPSE can be grouped into three main areas, MPSE of state significance, MPSE of regional significance and MPSE of local community interest. MPSE of state and regional significance generate the most

tourism potential (Weed and Bull 2004). MPSE now play a role in promoting a destination (Reese 2008), however their potential in terms of destination development is generally unrealised (Koo et al 2014; Hallman and Breuer 2010; Kim et al 2010).

MPSE participants are desirable targets for tourism planners and advertisers due to their demographic profiles (Georgiadas 2010) and as a result MPSE have received increased attention from researchers over the last decade (Wicker et al 2012; Getz and McConnell 2011; Phelps and Dickson 2010). The Federation of Irish Sport (2014) proposes that participatory sporting events have an important and vital role to play in the development of any future tourism policy in Ireland.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research project is to identify the factors necessary to maximise the potential of mass participatory sporting events for tourism destination development.

The research project will:

- Evaluate the destination and event attributes which are considered most important by the participant.
- Explore the levels of collaboration that currently exists between MPSE organisers and destination marketing organisations (DMO'S)
- Analyse the participants' demographics and their direct economic expenditure.

Method

This research uses a mixed method approach including surveys and interviews. A purposive (Denscombe 2007) handpicked sample of five mass participatory sporting events has been chosen for this research project. They include three road running events, an adventure race and a triathlon. Purposive sampling allows researchers to pick subjects that represent features that they are interested in as part of their research to produce the most valuable data (Getz and Fairley 2004; Silverman 2000).

The survey which will be carried out on participants of the above events largely consists of two main elements, an economic impact assessment and an evaluation of destination attributes. For the purpose of the economic impact assessments (EIA), only the direct economic impacts will be measured using methods outlined by Event Impacts (2015) and Leisure Industries Research Centre (2001). UK Sport (2004) recommends measuring direct economic impacts rather than indirect economic impacts when comparing sporting events. Event Impacts (2015b) a consortium of UK-based sporting organisations and DMO's caution that economic multipliers should only to be used by professional research bodies that are skilled in working with complex economic data.

For the purpose of the EIA in this pilot study the population was defined as any participant from outside the county of the host destination, as they represent new money into the local economy (Sports Marketing Surveys 2011; Turco et al 2002). A Likert scale is being used to assess the perceived importance of 19 host destination and event attributes as outlined by Kaplanidou et al (2012) and Smith et al (2010). The 2015 Tralee International Marathon has been used to pilot the questionnaire.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the five race directors and representatives of local DMO's. The interview process will explore the level of interaction between DMO's and event organisers as regards to destination marketing, MPSE marketing, media management strategies and the use of website links. The interview structure and topics have been based on similar previous research (Devine et al 2010; Sun 2007; Getz and Fairley 2004).

Results

The data from the pilot study showed that The 2015 Tralee International Marathon attracted just over 950 race participants. 36% were non-local participants. 88% of respondents surveyed said the marathon was their primary reason for visiting Tralee.

Economic Impact

The event generated a direct economic impact of €78,000. Accommodation and Food was the largest expenditure. Tourism attractions and entertainment were the lowest (See table one).

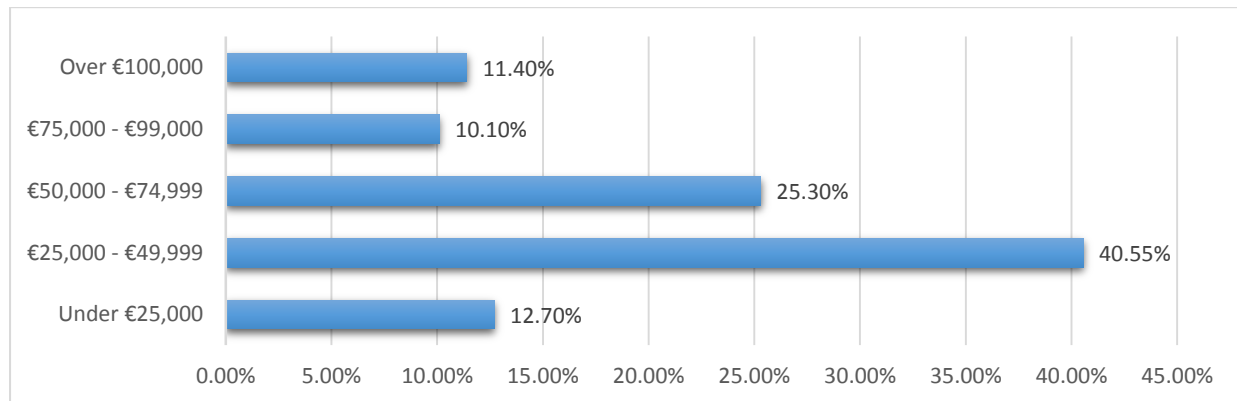
Table 1: Direct spending activity

Category	Expenditure per bed-night (€)	Average number of bed nights	Expenditure per-trip (€)	Number of non-local participants	Total Expenditure (€)
Accommodation	58	1.50	82.50	331	27,307.50
Food & Drinks	48	1.50	72	331	23,832
Retail Shopping	20	1.50	30	331	9,930
Local Transportation	21	1.50	31.50	331	10,426.50
Tourist Attractions	2	1.50	3	331	993
Entertainment	11	1.50	16.50	331	5,461
Total Direct Spending Activity	€160	1.50	€235.5	331	€77,953.00

Demographics

The average age group of non-local participants was between 34 and 44 years, with 59% holding a degree, 47% of non-local participants earned over €50,000 (see figure one)

Figure 1: Yearly gross income



Level of Importance of destination and event attributes

The level of event organisation, accommodation availability and the destination of the event were ranked the highest attributes, while the level of competition and retail shopping were ranked amongst the lowest attributes (See table two).

Table 2: Level of importance of destination and event attributes

Rank	Attribute	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Level of Organisation	4.21	0.901
2	Destination of the event	4	0.816
3	Accommodation availability	3.8	1.009
4	Level of support on the route	3.74	1.093
5	Accommodation standard	3.61	1.036
6	Quality of the medal & t-shirt	3.58	1.331
7	Registration fee	3.52	1.042
8	Scenic attractions on the route	3.48	1.221
9	Dining/Food	3.46	0.958
10	Infrastructure & transportation	3.27	1.169
11	Likelihood of good weather	3.25	1.272
12	Status of the event	3.12	1.179
13	Sightseeing opportunities	2.81	1.2
14	Local sports facilities & activities	2.64	1.243
15	Level of competition	2.62	1.205

16	Availability of tourist information	2.61	1.216
17	Retail Shopping	2.15	1.075
16	Entertainment (cinema, theatre)	2.15	1.129
19	Nightlife	2.09	1.14

Note: 1 = not at all important and 5 = been extremely important

Conclusion

The findings of the pilot confirm the findings of (Coleman and Ramchandani 2010; Smith et al 2010) that MPSE could be potentially used as a method of attracting attention to a particular geographic location. The majority of non-local participants said the marathon was their primary reason for visiting Tralee.

The high educational levels of participants illustrates that the majority of respondents come from the high socio-economic sector. This combined with the high level of income earned by respondents demonstrates that MPSE participants are a desired demographic sector of the tourist market.

The data shows that most visitors failed to visit tourist attractions at the event as only 3% of visitor expenditure was attributed to tourist attractions. This could indicate that tourism providers are not obtaining the maximum leverage from the marathon. The next stage of the research project is to start the quantitative data collection and develop the qualitative element of methodology.

References

- Alexandris, K., and Kaplanidou, K. (2014) Marketing Sport Event Tourism: Sport Tourist Behaviours and Destination Provisions. *Sports marketing Quarterly*, (23) 125-126.
- Bowdwin, B., Allen, J., O'Toole, W., Harris, R. and McDonnell, I. (2011) *Events Management*: Oxford: Elsevier.
- Chalip, L and Mc Guirty, J (2004) "Bundling sports events with the host destination", *Journal of Sport Tourism*, 9 (3), 267-282
- Cohen, G. E. and Stebbins, R. (2013) *Serious Leisure and Individuality*. Montreal: QC, Can.
- Coleman, R. and Ramchandani, G. (2010) "The hidden benefits of non-elite mass participation sports events: an economic perspective", *International Journal of Sports marketing & Sponsorship*, 12 (1) 24-36.
- Creswell, W.J (2003) *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd ed., London: Sage.
- Denscombe, M. (2007) *The Good Research Guide*, McGraw-Hill: Maidenhead.
- Devine, A., Bolan, P., and Devine, F. (2010) Online destination marketing: maximising the tourism potential of a sports event, *International Journal of Sport Management & Marketing* 7 (1/2) 5.
- Event Impacts (2015a) *Overview of the Economic Impact Calculation* [online], available: http://www.eventimpacts.com/project/resources/economic/intermediate_resource/economic_impact_calculation/ [accessed 20th Jan 2015].

Event Impacts (2015b) Economic Advanced Impacts [online], available: <http://www.eventimpacts.com/economic/advanced/> [accessed 20th Jan 2015].

Georgiadis, A. (2010) "Why marathons are hot spot to chase consumers", *Advertising Page*, 81 (39) 6-10.

Getz, D. (2008) Sport event tourism, planning & development, In: Hudson, S ed., *Sport and Adventure Tourism*, Oxon: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 49-85.

Getz, D. and Fairley, S. (2004) Media Management at Sport Events for Destination Promotion: Case Studies and Concepts, *Event Management*, (8) 127-139.

Getz, D., and McConnell A. (2011) Serious Sport Tourism and Event Travel Careers, *Journal of Sport Management*, 25 326-338

Hall, M. (1992) "Adventure, Sport and Health Tourism" In: Weiler, B. and Hall, M., eds. *Special Interest Tourism*, London: Belhaven Press, 141-158.

Hallman, K and Breuer, C. (2010) "Image Fit between Sports Events and their Hosting Destinations from an Active Sport Tourist Perspective and its Impact on Future Behaviour", *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 15 (3) 215-237.

Hallmann, K., Kaplanidou, K and Breuer, C. (2010) "Event image perceptions among active and passive sports tourists at marathon races", *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 12 (1) 37-52.

Kaplanidou, K., Jordan, J.S., Funk, D. and Ridinger, L.L. (2012) "Recurring Sport Events and Destination Image Perceptions: Impact on Active Sport Tourist Behavioural Intentions and Place Attachment", *Journal of Sport Management*, 26, 237-248.

Kim, Y.K., Smith, R. and Jeffrey D.J. (2010) "The role of gratitude in sponsorship: the case of participant sports", *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 12 (1) 53-75.

Koo, K.S., Byon, K.K., and Baker III, T.A. (2014) Integrating Event Image, Satisfaction, and Behavioural Intention: Small-Scale Marathon Event. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, (23) 127-137.

Lee, S. (2008) *A Review of Economic Impact Studies on Sporting Events* [online], The Sport Journal, United States Sports Academy, available: <http://thesportjournal.org/article/a-review-of-economic-impact-studies-on-sporting-events/> [accessed 22nd Oct 2014].

Leisure Industries Research Centre (2001) *The 2001 IAAF World Half Marathon Championships & BUPA Bristol Half Marathon, An evaluation of the economic impact, place marketing effects and peoples' perceptions of Bristol Final Report* [online] available: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090428085635/http://uksport.gov.uk/assets/File/Generic_Template_Documents/Events_Funding/Research/World_Half_Marathon_Ec_Imp_Study_Nov2002.pdf [accessed 5th Feb 2015].

Phelps, S. and Dickson, G. (2010) "Research opportunity beyond the elite, editorial", *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 12 (1) 5.

Miles M.B. and Huberman A. M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis, An Expanded Sourcebook* 2nd ed., London: Sage.

Miller, R.K. and Washington, K. (2012) Chapter 63: Marathons. In, *Sports Marketing*, 420-424.

Reese, R. (2008) "An Examination of Direct Spending Patterns and Economic Impact Figures Associated with the 2007 XTERRA World Championship", *Virginia Journal*, 29 (4) 2-4.

Ritchie, B. (2005) Sports Tourism, Small-scale event tourism: the changing dynamics of the New Zealand Masters Games, In: Novelli, M. ed. *Niche Tourism, contemporary issues, trends and case*, Oxford: Elsevier-Heinemann, 157-170.

- Shipway, R and Jones, I. (2008) "The Great Suburban Everest: An 'Insiders' Perspective on Experiences at the 2007 Flora London Marathon", *Journal of Sport & Tourism* 13, (1) 61–77.
- Silverman, D. (2000) *Doing Qualitative Research, A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage Publications.
- Smith, S., Costello, C., Kyungmi, K. and Warren, J. (2010) Marathons as serious leisure tourism In: Chen, J.S. ed. *Advances in Hospitality and Leisure*, Bingley: Emerald Group, 43-58.
- Sports Marketing Surveys. (2011) *The 2010 Ryder Cup. The Celtic Manor Resort, Newport, Wales: Economic Impact Assessment* March 2011.
- Stebbins, R. (1997) "Casual Leisure: A conceptual statement", *Leisure Studies*, 16, 17-25.
- Sun, H. (2007) *Destination and Event Marketing, A Case Study in the 2007 C&D Xiamen International Marathon, Xiamen, China*, unpublished thesis (M.A), University of Waterloo.
- Tassey, G. (2003) Methods for Assessing the Economic Impacts of Government R&D [online] U.S Department of Commerce Technology and Administration, available, <http://www.nist.gov/director/planning/upload/report03-1.pdf> [accessed 6th Feb 2015].
- The Federation of Irish Sport (2014) *Submission on developing a tourism policy statement*. [online], available: <http://irishsport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Request-for-submissions-on-developing-a-Tourism-Policy-Statement-Federation-of-Irish-Sport.pdf> [Accessed 25th Oct 2014].
- Turco, D.M., Riley, R. and Swart, K. (2002) *Sport Tourism*. Morgantown: Fitness Information Technology.
- Tourist Review (2010) *Sports Tourism Is Multi-million Dollar Industry* [online], available: <http://m.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-sports-tourism-worldwide-phenomenon-article1330> [accessed 20 Dec 2014].
- Weed, M. and Bull, C. (2004) *Sports Tourism, Participants, policy and providers*, Oxford: Elsevier-Heinemann.
- Weed, M. (2009) "Progress in sports tourism research? A meta-review and exploration of futures", *Tourism Management*, 30, 615-628.
- Wicker, P., Hallmann, K. and Zhang, J.J. (2012) *What is influencing consumer expenditure and intention to revisit? An investigation of marathon events*", *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 17, (3) 165–182.
- UK Sport (2004) *Measuring Success 2 – The Economic Impact of Major Sporting Events* [online] available: www.uk sport.gov.uk/docLib/Publications/Measuring-Success-2.pdf [accessed 5th Nov 2014].