

WPT2: SUSTOURISMO PILOTS

DELIVERABLE T2.4.1: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ATHLETIC TOURISM BOOST IN SUSTOURISMO AREAS

T.2.4.1 Opportunities for athletic tourism boost in SUSTOURISMO areas	Prefinal version Jan. 2023
Authors	CERTH
Contributions	ALL



This report has been produced as part of SUSTOURISMO project (<https://sustourismo.adrioninterreg.eu>).

SUSTOURISMO project is funded under the Interreg V-B Adriatic-Ionian programme and the S.O. Promote the sustainable valorisation and preservation of natural and cultural heritage as growth assets in the Adriatic-Ionian area.

This deliverable has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The content of the deliverable is the sole responsibility of SUSTOURISMO Partnership and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and/or ADRION programme authorities



Contents

1. Sport tourism introduction	4
1.1 Sport tourism definition	4
1.2 Types of sport tourism.....	5
1.3 Sport tourism market	7
1.4 Sport tourism participants	15
2. Case studies in sport tourism	18
3. Sport tourism in SUSTOURISMO area and ADRION Region	25
3.1 Questionnaire survey to SUSTOURISMO cases	25
3.2 Policy Recommendations for sport tourism sector	30
3.2.1 Sport tourism products	30
3.2.2 Target groups & service tender	31
3.2.3 Sport tourism management.....	31
3.2.4 Sport tourism impact	32
3.2.5 Sport tourism marketing	33
3.2.6 Sport tourism sustainability and support	34
4. Conclusion	35
Reference list.....	36
ANNEX.....	39

1. Sport tourism introduction

1.1 Sport tourism definition

Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing segments in tourism industry. Millions of tourists are interested in sport and leisure activities during their travel whether sports are the main objective of the trip or not (Alexandris, 2018). Sport tourism is at the crossroads of tourism and sport sectors. Today, the interrelationships between those phenomena have a powerful economic and social impact on societies globally. Therefore, sport tourism has been recognized as a field of interests by both academic and commerce sectors. Higham and Hinch (2018) set four criteria to describe the sport tourism existence:

- a) Travel: refers to a trip, beyond the hometown, to a tourism destination.
- b) Accommodation: includes an accommodation, at least one day, into hosting destination.
- c) Motivation factors: existence of internal or/and external motivations (drivers) to actively engage individuals within a sport product.
- d) Nature of Sport product: describe the formation of sport products which a consumer may involve. Such types of sports products might be a recreational outdoor activity (e.g. hiking in Plitvice national park), a sport event (e.g. Athens Marathon- The Authentic) or/and a sport heritage (e.g. visiting Camp Nou stadium).

The sport tourism context consisted of human experiences which are focusing on a set of services during a trip towards specific destinations to involve in a sport product. The trip holds a professional (business related to sports) (e.g. professional teams and players) or recreational (e.g. trail runners in outdoor small scale sport events) purpose. Standevan and De Knop (1999) defined sport tourism sector as 'all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organized way for non-commercial or business/commercial reasons that necessitate travel away from home and work locality'.

There are two main categories of sport tourism: passive and active sport participation. Passive sport tourism is related to spectatorship i.e., travel to watch sports. Several spectators decide whether to travel for watching sports or not before even considering the event's hosting destination. Their major drivers deal with socializing and hedonic outcomes. Passive sport participants considered those who follow mega events (e.g. Olympic Games), major events (e.g. World Athletics Championship) or local events (e.g. a football match of their favourite team or city marathons). On the other hand, active sport tourism participants are defined as those who actively engaged in professional sports or recreational activities. Active participants might be professional athletes (e.g. basketball players), elite/serious leisure participants (e.g. trail runners in ITRA series small scale mountain events) or recreational individuals (e.g. hikers and mountaineers who climb up a mountain). For the latter category, their primary motivation is the sense of belongingness in a niche sport subculture.



1.2 Types of sport tourism

Today, sports tourism holds a large share market among tourism segments. Sport tourism involves different sports and leisure sectors among several tourism services and products. According to Kurtzman (2005) and Higham and Hinch (2018) sport tourism could be categorized within five sports tourism categories by activity where each segment describes the formation of sports tourism with examples and draw the knowledge boundaries of the profession. Overall categories refer to both active (i.e. recreational and professional participants) and passive sport participation (i.e. spectators, stakeholders, local community):



Figure 1: A graphical representation of sport tourism categories by activity.



A. Sports Tourism Events:

- Olympic Games: Summer and Winter Olympic Games (i.e. Rio 2016, Salt Lake City 2002, Paris 2024, Tokyo 2022)
- Regional/National/International Sport Events: US Open tennis event, National football championship 'Serie A' Italy.
- World Cup/ Championship: FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Wrestling World Cup Baku 2022.
- International Meetings: IAAF World Athletics Meetings.
- International Marathons: Athens Marathon- The Authentic, Boston Marathon.
- League Games (Professional and Amateur): International Basketball Meeting for senior athletes 2019.
- Sports Specific World Cups/Trophies: Rally Dakar 2022, Red Bull X-diving race 2021.
- Races/Regattas: Oceanman open-water swimming events, Spetses Classic Yacht Regatta 2022, GWN Sports Regatta Toronto.
- Sports Festivals: Ontario Open-water Rowing Championship 2022.

B. Sports Tourism Attractions

- Sports Museums/Halls of Fame: Olympic Museum, Thessaloniki, Greece, National Soccer Hall of Fame - International Gymnastics Hall of Fame - NASCAR Hall of Fame, USA.
- Sports Conferences: Sport Congress UNWTO 2022, European Sport Management Conference 2023.
- Sports Shows: Rocket Power, Podcasts.
- Sports Theme Parks: The adventure park, Austria, Barcelona sport theme park.
- Stadiums/Arenas: Santiago Bernabeu - Real Madrid, Old-Traffort - Manchester United.

C. Sports Tourism Tours

- Sports Study Tours
- Adventure Tours (e.g. hiking, canyoning, rafting)
- Training Camps
- Cycling/Walking Tours
- Bird watching Tours
- Outdoor Expedition (e.g. mountaineering)

D. Sports Tourism Resorts

- Golf Resorts: Constance Belle Mare Plage, Mauritius.
- Ski Resorts: Val Gardena, Italy - Zermatt, Switzerland.



- Snorkeling/Scuba diving Resorts: Camel Dive Club and Hotel, Sharm El Sheikh - Egypt, Anthony's Key Resort, Roatan, Honduras.
- Fitness & Spa Resorts: Las Vegas fitness resort.
- Tennis Resorts: Wild Dunes resort, South Caroline.
- Multiple Sports Resorts: Playtas sport center resort, Canarias Island.
- Sports Hotels: Frosh sport hotel, Halkidiki, Greece.

E. Sports Tourism Cruises

- Sailing Cruises: Mediterranean Sea.
- Scuba\Snorkel Cruises: Singapore cruises master.
- Sports Fishing: California fishing tours.
- Jet Boating
- Yacht Charters/Catamaran Cruises: Caribbean cruises.
- Sea kayaking tours across coastal.

1.3 Sport tourism market

Sport tourism industry was valued at USD 323,420 million in 2020 and accounts for 12% of the overall global tourism market (Kadam & Deshmukh, 2021). In 2020, the European sport tourism market estimated for 57% of market share (VMR, 2021), accounting for USD 119 million, and it is projected to reach USD 624 million by 2030 (Kadam & Deshmukh 2021). In Verified Market Research (2021) Europe region considered the leader player, followed by North America, Asia Pacific, and Rest of the world regions, respectively (see Figure 2). Overall, sport tourism industry has a significant growth potentially and it is forecasted by 2030 at USD 1.804 trillion. These heighten drawn upon four major factors. First, the increasing number of sport events globally. There are hundreds of regional/ outdoor small scale/ specific theme sport events across continents. Second, the rising popularity of sports due to their benefits on individuals and national wealth. Third, the growing sports participation due to its contribution on health and wellbeing of societies. Fourth, nowadays several governments promote sports tourism through hosting sport events and bidding sport services to develop their brand destination and social welfare (VMR, 2021).

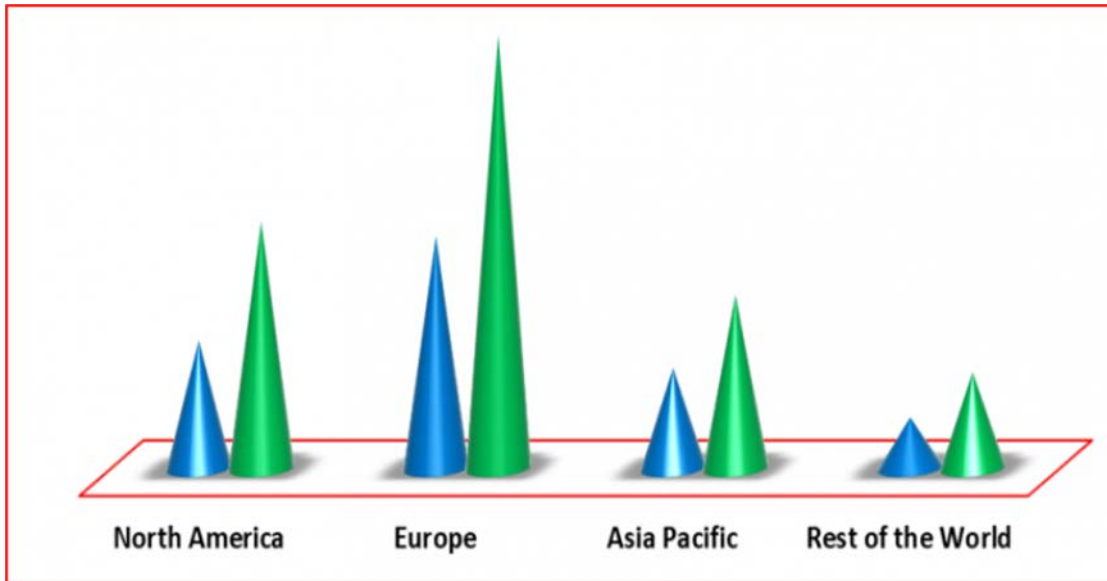


Figure 2: Adopted by Verified Market Research report of sport tourism market.

In another industry report indicated that 180 million people travelled to a sports event in the U.S. in 2019 either as a participant or spectator, which generated 69 million room nights (Sport ETA, 2019). Sports travellers, event organizers, and venues spending increased by USD 2.2 billion to USD 45.1 billion in 2019 which generated \$103.3 billion in business sales. These revenues refer to transportation, lodging, food and beverages, entertainment, retail, and tournament operations (see Figure 3). Furthermore, a total of 739,386 jobs were sustained by sports tourism in 2019; and included 410,762 direct and 328,624 indirect jobs (Sports ETA, 2019).



Figure 3: Adopted by Sport ETA industry report in 2019.

Tracking the impact of sport tourism, it is valuable to determine the direct, indirect and included spending of the industry. Direct spending refers to accommodation, food and beverage, retail, entertainment, and transportation. Indirect spending considered the sales, GDP, jobs, wages, and taxes. Last, included spending refers to income effect and household consumption. Figure 4 shows the business sales impact by industry for 2019. Most expenditures attributed on lodging, air transportation and leisure services. On the other hand, the less spending was about local transportation and gasoline stations.



Business sales impacts by industry (\$ millions) – 2019

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Total, all industries	\$45,114	\$25,393	\$32,822	\$103,329
By industry				
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	\$412	\$5,008	\$8,387	\$13,807
Food & Beverage	\$8,764	\$433	\$1,673	\$10,871
Manufacturing	\$0	\$5,230	\$5,107	\$10,337
Business Services	\$2,052	\$4,943	\$2,975	\$9,970
Lodging	\$9,244	\$94	\$268	\$9,606
Air Transport	\$8,486	\$131	\$220	\$8,838
Recreation and Entertainment	\$7,423	\$603	\$522	\$8,548
Retail Trade	\$5,124	\$222	\$1,881	\$7,227
Other Transport	\$1,298	\$2,011	\$876	\$4,184
Education and Health Care	\$0	\$34	\$4,007	\$4,041
Communications	\$0	\$1,796	\$1,818	\$3,614
Construction and Utilities	\$0	\$1,502	\$1,146	\$2,648
Wholesale Trade	\$0	\$1,050	\$1,420	\$2,470
Gasoline Stations	\$2,312	\$17	\$100	\$2,429
Agriculture, Fishing, Mining	\$0	\$1,186	\$705	\$1,891
Personal Services	\$0	\$438	\$1,146	\$1,584
Government	\$0	\$692	\$572	\$1,264

Source: Tourism Economics

Figure 4: Business sales impact (adopted by Sports ETA, 2019).

The following lines describe the three pillars of sport tourism market in recent years, namely running events, adventure tourism and wellness and fitness services.

Sport running events are the first major contributor in sport tourism participation. Andersen and Nikolova (2021) reported the importance of such events in their analysis among 70.000 running events globally from 1986 to 2019. Its popularity grown approximately 57% from 2010-2020 (Andersen & Nikolova, 2021). The participation in running races has peaked in 2016 with a total of 9.1 million runners and then it slightly decreased to 7.9 million (a decline of 13%) in 2018. However, the actual change in participation in the last 10 years shows an increase proportion in participation of 57.8% (from 5 to 7.9 million participants). In 5K races (fun races), 10K races and half marathons there are 2.9 million, 1.8 million and 2.1 million participants in 2018, respectively. As it is clear, the majority of participants engaged in recreational distances (i.e. 5K, 10K, half marathon) events. This is consisted with other reports from the running industry (Alexandris, et al., 2021). The proportions of participants in 5K and 10K have a slight growth (5K participants have increased by 3% on average, and 10K participants by 5%). Figure 5 shows a graphical representation of the runners' distribution among distances from 2001 to 2018.

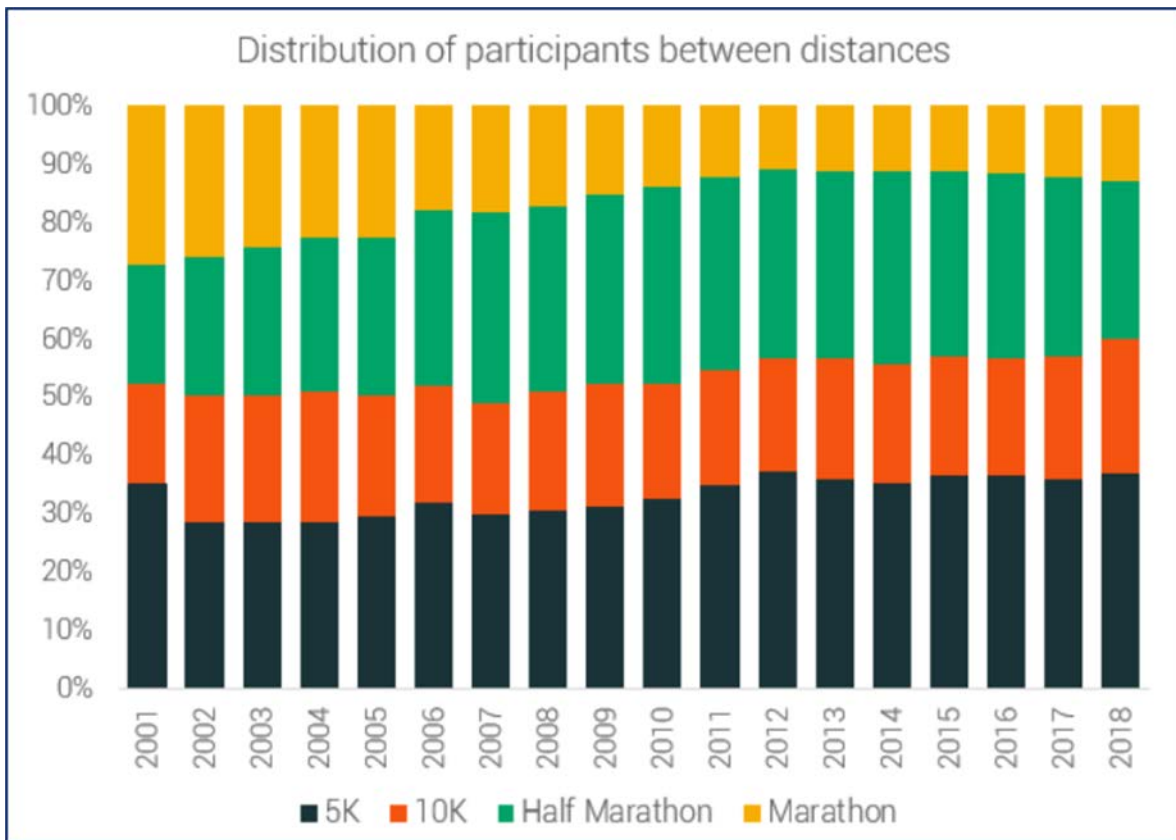


Figure 5: Adopted by Andersen and Nikolova (2021).

With respect to age, Andersen and Nikolova (2021) noticed that the runners are getting older since the average age of participants in 1986 was 35.2 and in 2018 it is 39.3. They suggested that this result could be since runners have longer racing careers and they start racing at an older age (see Figure 6).

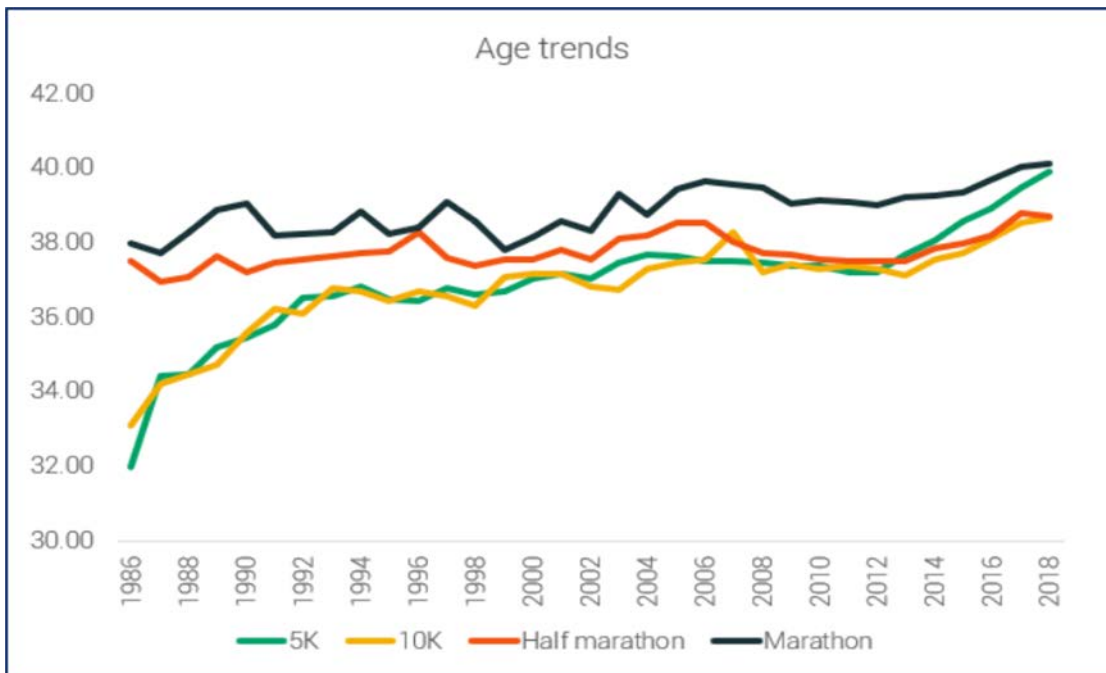


Figure 6: Adopted by Andersen and Nikolova (2021).

Regarding the second major pillar of sport tourism, new data shows a highly increment of participation in adventure tourism activities. Adventure tourists considered those who be engaged in an outdoor activity, visit a natural environment, and be involved within the local culture and community of the host destination. Into a recent report, Sumesh and Roshan (2022) noted that the adventure tourism market was valued at USD 112 billion in 2020. Their analysis revealed that the market is projected to reach the USD 1.169 trillion by 2028. The adventure tourism involves the individual's participation in hiking, trekking, kayaking, climbing, mountain biking, rafting and other similar services. Adventure Travel and Trade Association (ATTA, 2016) classified the adventure outdoor activities in two categories according to source of challenge (i.e. terrain, risk-taking, commitment). Table 1 shows the two categories of adventure activities by the source of challenge. Adventure travellers are passionate and experience-enthusiasts. They are highly educated and work as managers, senior managers, or entrepreneurs. They are willing to pay a premium price for authentic tourism experiences. Adventure tour operators have reported an average cost per trip in USD 3,000 spent per person. Therefore, this market considered as an attractive target group in sport tourism industry.

Table 1: Hard and soft tourism activities

Hard activities	Soft activities
-----------------	-----------------



- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| • Caving | • Hiking |
| • Climbing | • Mountain biking |
| • Trekking | • Bird watching |
| • Canyoning | • Sea kayak |
| • White-water kayaking | • Canoeing |
| • Mountaineering expeditions | • Rafting |
| • Surfing | • Eco-tourism |
| • Para-gliding | • Horse riding |
| • Wind surfing | • Scuba diving |
| • Kite surfing | • Sailing |
| • Skiing/ snowboarding | • Visiting archaeological destinations |

Most adventure travellers are involved in soft type of activities. This segment dominated the market with 65% share in 2021 (Grand View Research, 2022). More and more travellers seek for low-risk activities with an emphasis on authentic experiences. On the other hand, hard adventure activities represent a lower market share due to their nature of challenge. It is worth noted that European market hold the largest share of 40%, followed by Asia and Middle East, North and South America, respectively (Grand View Research, 2022). Regarding the group segments, the couples have the largest share market with more than 40%, followed by solo travellers, groups, and family (Grand View Research, 2022).

Regarding the third pillar of sport tourism industry, the wellness tourism is on a rise. Wellness tourism is about travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal wellbeing (McGroarty, 2021). The wellness tourism consisted of trips driven by participation in fitness activities, healthy eating, personal care, spas and springs, mental health activities, wellness workshops and rehabilitation. The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) (2021) reported that in the pre-pandemic year of 2019, wellness tourism reached a milestone of USD 720 billion. The GWI projected that the market will reach USD 817 billion in 2022 and close to USD 1.3 trillion by the end of 2025. However, the covid19 pandemic gave a major hit in this market. More specific, the wellness tourism sector declined -39,5% in 2020 due to the pandemic. Figure 7 shows the negative rates on expenditures by region for the years of 2017, 2019, 2020. The results revealed that Latin America and Middle East-North Africa had the highest reduction with almost 50%, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia -Pacific regions with a close 45%. The less reduce on expenditures were on North America and Europe regions with 38% and 35%, respectively. With respect on wellness tourism trips, the wellness travellers made 936 million international and domestic trips in 2019 comparing to 2020 which made 601 million. This reduction was due to the



pandemic, as stated in the report (GWI, 2021). Particularly for 2020, the 89% of the trips were domestic and only 11% were international wellness trips. Europe remain the leader player of the share market of wellness trips, while North America lead the wellness tourism expenditures. This is because the average spending per trip of travellers is significant higher in this region. Figure 8 shows the total trips of wellness tourism by region. Middle East-North Africa and Asia-Pacific regions had a rapid growth among 2017-2019. Still, in overall regions the year of pandemic brought a high proportion of reduction in wellness trips. A last interesting finding is the growth of fitness sector with 5% from 2018-2019 (reach \$874 billion). The fitness sector (i.e. gyms, studios, in-person classes, workshops) suffered with -37% revenue decline in 2020 (GWI, 2021), due to the pandemic. On the other hand, fitness technology saves the game by becomes a \$49.5 billion market (increase 29%). Fitness technology market concludes digital apps, streaming platforms, and on-demand workout forums. The market is estimated in from USD 738 billion to reach USD 1.2 trillion on 2025. This is in line with Thompson’s (2022) report which stated that wearable technology remains on the first place, and it is estimated in US100 billion market.

	Wellness Tourism Expenditures				Average Annual Growth Rate	
	(US\$ billions)			Per Capita 2020	2017-2019	2019-2020
	2017*	2019	2020			
North America	\$238.5	\$277.4	\$170.4	\$463.79	7.8%	-38.5%
Europe	\$217.2	\$248.2	\$160.3	\$173.58	6.9%	-35.4%
Asia-Pacific	\$118.6	\$145.4	\$80.0	\$19.18	10.7%	-45.0%
Latin America-Caribbean	\$28.2	\$31.9	\$15.8	\$24.22	6.3%	-50.4%
Middle East-North Africa	\$9.6	\$12.1	\$6.2	\$12.32	12.3%	-49.1%
Sub-Saharan Africa	\$4.9	\$5.5	\$2.9	\$2.56	6.1%	-47.0%
WORLD	\$617.0	\$720.4	\$435.7	\$56.18	8.1%	-39.5%

Figure 7: Adopted by Global Wellness Tourism Economy report 2021.



	Number of Wellness Tourism Trips			Average Expenditures Per Trip
	(millions)			2020
	2017*	2019	2020	
North America	196.8	221.9	124.8	\$1,365.84
Europe	289.4	333.5	221.1	\$725.32
Asia-Pacific	243.0	309.9	209.5	\$381.63
Latin America-Caribbean	46.1	51.7	34.0	\$465.76
Middle East-North Africa	9.8	11.9	6.9	\$890.41
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.3	7.5	4.5	\$649.95
WORLD	791.4	936.4	600.8	\$725.16

Figure 8: Adopted by Global Wellness Tourism Economy report 2021.

1.4 Sport tourism participants

Sport tourists are those who travel in various destinations to involve in a sport product. This engagement formatted by active or passive behaviours, and it driven by several motives (Gibson, 2004). Some tourist prefers to engage in ski activities while at the same time they follow an International Ski Cup in Austria. Also, some tourists actively involved with a city running event and, simultaneously, they visit the Olympic Museum of the host city. So, what are they? Are they active or passive sport tourists? Therefore, a clear segmentation of 'what' and 'why' of sport tourist is needed. Sport tourism literature highlights the important role of segmentation of the sport tourism market to improve promotional actions, create clear patterns of group behaviour and personalize their communication strategies according to consumers' behaviour.

To better understand sport tourists, we might be able to explain why tourists choose a product instead of others. For example, an individual may take a surf course vacation in Portugal in a luxury resort, and another chooses the same tourism product in camp lodge. Further, others prefer more mainstream sport tourism products such as sport hotels from a tour operator while other engages in outdoor activities within direct bookings. In the existing sport tourism literature, there are already reported several motives related to sport tourism behaviours. Gibson (1998) indicated that as individuals differ in their levels of arousal this might be handful in understanding sport behaviours and attitudes. Additionally, she postulated that some participants prefer highly stimulating situations that match their levels of optimal stimulation, whereas others avoid over



stimulation; therefore, they prefer much lower levels of arousal. These ideas based on Iso-Ahola (1984) suggestions who noticed that the optimal level of stimulation could be understood as a balance between the need for stability and the need for variety (p.104). Hence, he suggested that seeking and escaping are the two forces which drive the sport and tourism choices. Escape has been associated with travel and is likely to be an important tourism motive for most individuals. On the other hand, seeking for experiences that are not available at home or in daily life remain a powerful motive in sport tourism sector. Consequently, people might choose sport tourism experiences that match their optimal levels of arousal. For example, someone may be seeking activities such as canyoning in white water while others choose a tennis vacation at a luxury resort. Table 2 shows the major motives of sport tourists:

Table 2: Sport Tourism Motivations.

Sport Tourism Motivations	
• Competition	• Competency
• Enjoyment	• Mastery
• Socializing	• Stimulus
• Challenge	• Feel close to nature
• Autonomy	• Accomplishment
• Relaxation	• Educational
• Exercise	• Rush-fear
• Novelty	• Risk taking
• New experiences	• Rewards
• Knowledge	• Thrill
• Escape	• Safety
• Seeking experiences	• Feeling

Gibson (2013) suggested three main domains to classify sport tourists (see Figure 9). According to literature, the fundamental profile of a sport tourists is more likely to be male, university educated, willing to travel long distances to participate in his/her favourite sport, tend to engage in repeat activity, average age 40 years old, wealthy, financial autonomous and openness to new experiences.

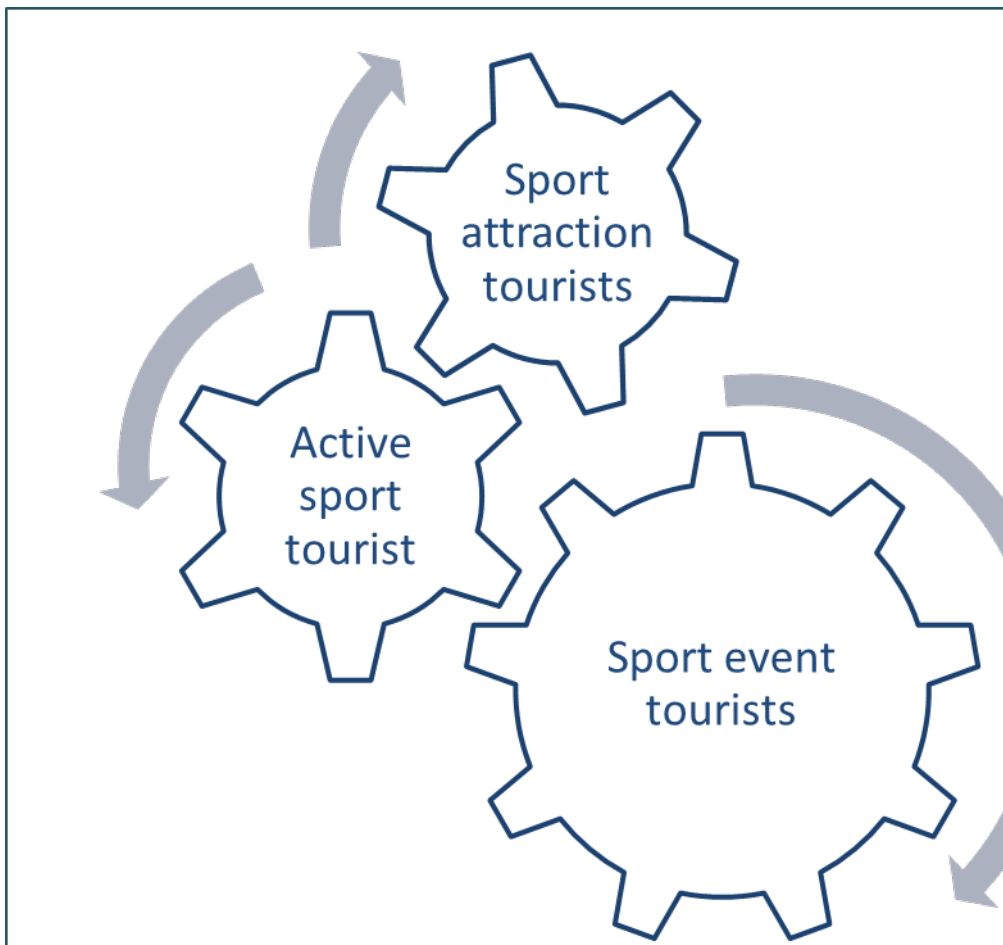


Figure 9: The classification of sport tourists.

a) Sport event tourists: refers to active or/and passive participants' engagement in mega events, major events, small scale events, amateur tournaments, sports meetings, etc. Such tourists could be:

- People follows city marathons
- Individuals watching Olympic Games
- Spectators in FIFA World Cup
- Sponsors
- Sport Journalists
- Family/ Friend who accompanied the participants

b) Active Sport Tourism - Sport / Leisure tours and facilities: refers to active participants' engagement who travel in order to take part in adventure activities, training camps, ski resorts, fitness and wellness resorts, sports hotels, sport theme parks, etc. Such tourists could be:



- Golf participants in resorts
- Skiers in the Alps
- Amateur athletes/ seniors in tournaments and meetings Trail runners in Ultra trail du Mont Blanc marathon
- Outdoor activities enthusiast (i.e. hikers, canyoners, rafters, etc.)
- Professional athletes
- Tourists in sport hotels

c) Sport Nostalgia - Attractions: refers to passive participants who travel to visit sport museums, sport conferences, sport trades, stadiums/ arena, etc. Such tourists could be:

- Visitors of Hall of Fames
- Stadium visitors
- Sport heritage visitors
- Olympic Museum visitors

2. Case studies in sport tourism

These chapter corporates indicative international and regional sport tourism case studies for the Adriatic-Ionian region:

Case study 1 - Athens Marathon: The Authentic, Athens, Greece

Today, Athens Marathon: the Authentic considered the largest running event in Greece and one of the most popular events internationally. It is established by the Greek Athletics Association (SEGAS). The 42,195m route starts at town of Marathonas. Runners follow the route that was mapped for the 1896 Olympic Games, and it is supposed to be close to the route that Pheidippides run in bearing feet to convey the news of victory in Ancient Greece. His accomplishment inspired the modern sport event of Marathon Races. The event had a rapid growth the last decade. The number of runners increased from 5.250 in 2016 to 50.000 (850% increase) in 2019, which was the year just before the Covid19 lockdown. It is worth noted that this growth has happened during the years of economic crisis in Greece. The socio-demographic profile of runners shows their dynamic nature and perspective. As shown in Figure 10, runners are almost balanced in terms of gender in the 5km distance (51.4% males and 48.6% females), while males are the vast majority in the 10km and 42km races (67.1%, and 81.5%, respectively). In terms of the age profile, the average age in all the races is just above the 40 years (41.2 in the 5km, 41.6 in the 10km, and 43.4 in the 42 km years old, Figure 11). Finally, most runners in all the races are highly educated. University Graduates are the majority (76% in the 5km, 81% in the 10km and 78% in the 42km).

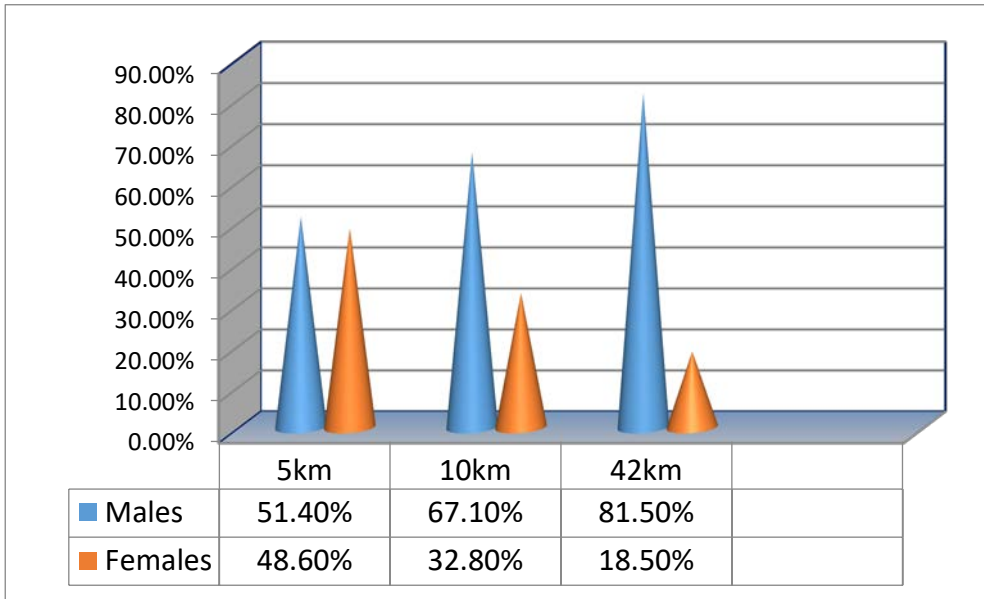


Figure 10: Gender distribution in Athens Marathon events.

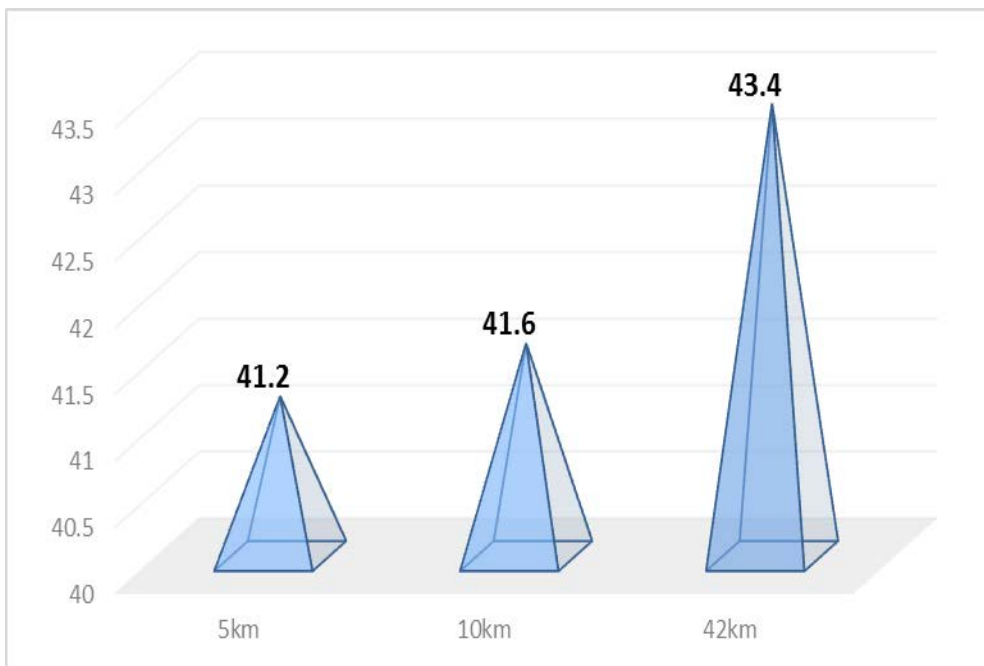


Figure 11: Average Age of the Runners by Race.



The growth of the marathon can also be seen based on other figures. The budget of the marathon was close to 2 million euro (from 300.000 euro in 2006) in 2019. The sponsors' investments (fees, supporting teams / runners, communication actions, activation etc.) were more than 2 million euro. Also, it is estimated that the direct economic impact on the city of Athens was more than 15 million. This economic development comes from international and domestic runners. The event has a strong focus on fundraising several social responsibility actions. More than 800.000 euro are collected and used for social purposes. Furthermore, the event has an environmental program, such as plastic bottles, garbage, clothes etc., are collected and recycled, promoting the eco-friendliness and environmental values. Additionally, Athens Marathon event attract more than 26.000 volunteers who participate in a structured volunteering training program before the event. Taking all these into account, the event has a strong social, economic and tourism impact on the city and its residents. The Greek Athletics Association has been following a strong promotional strategy to develop running culture in Greece. Back in 2006, there were 60 running events with 15.000 participants. Today, there are more than 936 races and close to 250.000 registrations. SEGAS' strategy can be summarized on the following points:

- Taking advantage of the international reputation of Greece because of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games and at the same time using the legacy of the games.
- Applying the principles of sport marketing and sport management in all the stages of the event management.
- Cooperating with public bodies, private organizations, and non-profit associations in order to maximize the impact of the event.
- Involving local associations and communities within the event organization, on trying to build positive attitudes towards the event.
- Promoting the history of the event.
- Giving an international image to the event with the establishment of the International Symposium of Marathon.
- Changing the name of the event to "Athens Marathon: The Authentic". This was an important rebranding and positioning strategy.
- Investing on the upgrade services and changing it from a one-day event to a four day festival, with the inclusion of associative shorter running events for leisure runners.
- Promoting of the values of social solidarity, by cooperating with 16 non-governmental organisations in order to promote social and environmental values, volunteerism, charity and fundraising.

Case study 2- Windsurf Club Vassiliki, Lefkada, Greece

Windsurf Club Vassiliki considered an international sport brand which is in the island of Lefkada, Greece. The company has become a spot of reference for windsurf market internationally. The Windsurf Club Vassiliki is placed in the forefront of the coastal area, combining ideal conditions for water sporting activities (e.g. kitesurfing and windsurfing) but not limited to and unique experience of staying in sport hotel, named Grand Nefeli, within local culinary tastes. The



operation of the company is divided into two sectors a) accommodation and culinary and b) leisure water-based activities.

Tourists are accommodated in 4-star sport hotel which is harmonized within a specially designed tree-planted area in front of the windsurf spot. All rooms are equipped with eco-friendly materials, such as queen size beds, sofas, balcony with sea view hammocks and poufs for the personal relaxation of the guests. The recreational activities are water-based mostly. Such activities might be windsurfed, kitesurf and surf courses and SUP. There are courses for beginners, advanced or independent participants who aim to learn or improve their techniques. All courses are held individually or in group form with the support of international instructors. Another area which the company focuses is family holidays. There are kids camps from 8 to 16 years old and provide all the necessary facilities to develop motor and psychological needs. There is structured program for each day and their purposes is enhancing knowledge, develop cognitive skills, learn water safety and has fun with a variety of activities on land or sea. Overall, Windsurf Club Vassiliki considered an innovative sports tourism company which attracts tourists mainly from Balkan region and internationally.

Case study 3 - "Alexandre the Great" city marathon event, Thessaloniki, Greece

The "Alexander the Great" marathon is an international venue which attracts people all over the world. Its history lies back on 2006 and it holds a symbolic meaning for Greece. The brand "Alexander the Great" refers to the Great Commander of Ancient Greece who born in Pella region which is the starting point of the marathon event. Hence, the vision of the organize committee is to promote the Greek culture and a healthier lifestyle which positively impact participants' wellbeing. The organizer is the "Triton" track and field sport club of Thessaloniki. Several government bodies and local authorities support the facilitation of such event. The Track & Field Greek Federation is the main supporter of the sport marathon. The "Alexander the Great" international marathon is considered as a major sport event with mass participation and remains the second biggest marathon in Greece according to registrations. It takes place the second weekend of April in order to extent the tourism season. The recent venue of 2022 had more than 20.000 runners in three categories of a) Marathon, b) 10 km and c) 5 km. Also, it offers a fun race for kids (1.000m). The marathon itinerary starts from Pella region and finishes in the downtown of Thessaloniki. Also, both races (10km and 5 km) are offered into Thessaloniki city centre. To further extend its services, "Alexander the Great" rendered a sport fair, a marathon flame ceremony, and several cultural amenities into two days of the marathon's weekend. The venue is considered as international major sport event and thus, it holds a national and international media coverage. Specifically, the national television broadcast covers the race at a live time and many international articles from sports media were written in news. In terms of sport sponsorships, several national and worldwide companies such as banks, sport goodies, sport nutrition and others sponsor the event. Overall, this event remains at the front line of sport products in Balkan region.

Case study 4 - Albania water sports, Albania



'Albania water sport' is a sport professional hub for active tourists and professionals who want to involve and promote the water-based outdoor activities across the coastline of Albania. They provide free membership access to all training sessions, events, and activities throughout the year. Also, they offer equipment rentals. Additional benefits of membership include long term equipment rental packages, discounts for purchasing equipment, special prices for club activities, equipment exchange and storage etc. These amenities are offered to individuals, families and groups, or corporate users to join their regular activities. In the coastline of Albania an individual could experience windsurfing, kitesurfing, sailing, stand up paddle, sup-yoga, water-based tours and inclusive sport holidays. To name a few water spots bays, are Sektori Rinia, Agip, Porto Romano, and Saranda. The spots have been assessed for their wind direction, wind speed, seashore conditions, accessibility and potential risks and hazards; and they selected as appropriate areas for sport tourism. An additional product into their portfolio is the SUP Ride sport event in Tirana Lake. This event is held in the capital of Albania and is considered as regional sport event which attracts domestic and international participants. To empower the registration process, organizers provide free registration to experiences SUPers. This policy is in line with the major goal of local authorities to make the Albania a water-based sport tourism destination. Finally, the event is organized under the Tirana European Youth Capital 2022 program with the support of the National Youth Congress in cooperation with the Municipality of Tirana and the Agency for Parks and Recreation. This is the first sport event under the framework of the Tirana: European City of Sports 2023. More sport events will follow for the 2023.

Case study 5 - Adriatrek, Petrovac, Montenegro

Adriatrek is an outdoor activities company specializing in. Since 2015, the company has been an affiliated member of the International Canyoning Organization for professionals. Canyoning in Petrovac is one of the most amazing parts that a tourist might experience. The aim of the excursion is to cross a natural geomorphological canyon from the highest access point to the lowest possible. The techniques that used in a canyon are walking, scrambling between rocks, trees and bushes, swimming, jumping from low or high rocks, and abseiling with rope. The company's services are divided into two sections: i) daily trips for canyoning and ii) training and certification of autonomous canyoning or canyoning instructors through the international canyoning organization for professionals: i) Day trips for canyoning -

Adriatrek has equipped three canyons in the surrounding area with permanent belays on the rocks. These gorges consist of: a) Rikavac gorge, b) Medjurecki gorge, and c) Skurda canyon. Each canyon has a different degree of difficulty depending on the season, the amount of water, the place and height where the abseiling process takes place (inside or outside the waterfall) and the distance of the canyon. ii) Training of autonomous canyoning or canyoning instructors - Regarding the training of autonomous canyoning or instructors, the company posts on its website scheduled schools every year. These schools run for several days and hold a high level of physical and psychological demand. Regarding the field of education, they are divided into schools of a) autonomous canyoning, b) assistant instructors and c) instructors. The first school lasts 8 days and aims to train and enhance the mixing of those involved to the level of making an autonomous



descent with a group of a similar level in a canyon of moderate difficulty. The individual receives all the necessary technical and theoretical knowledge to operate autonomously during the expedition. The remaining two schools last 10 days as the training becomes more demanding on rope techniques, rescue, pedagogical training, psychology, and team management so that each instructor can in his/her turn teach/train new canyoneers for the first time according to the standards.

Case study 6 - The adventure tourism capital of Slovenia: Bovec destination, Bovec, Slovenia

Bovec is considered the Meka of adventure tourism of Slovenia. Any tourist who wants to involve in outdoor activities, Bovec is his/her place. Bovec is placed in the River Soca Valley. There is numerous of travel agents, adventure operators and entrepreneurs who provide land and water-based activities. Bovec attracts nature enthusiasts and those who seek for adventure and relaxation at the same time. The destination is in the heart of Slovenian Alps and it is surrounded by high mountains, rivers and gorges. During the summer season an individual could experience rafting, kayaking, hiking, mountaineering, mountain biking, canyoning, and caving. On the other hand, in winter he/she might do some skiing in Kanin Mountain. One of the highlights of the destination remains the Soca River in western Slovenia. There are several rafting, hydro-speed and river kayaking sessions. Nowadays, Bovec has been structured and promote as a sport tourism destination globally. There are many places to stay from luxury hotels, cosy guesthouses to scenery camping sites. Local authorities and tourism sector co-operated with the sub-sectors of central government to build a sport image worldwide.

Case study 7 - Croatia as a heritage and hiking destination, Croatia

Croatia holds a long history and culture in the Balkan region. It includes quaint villages, walled towns and castles, national parks, clear rivers and beautiful beaches. Also, it is famous as the land of "1,000 islands" with the longest coastline in Europe. One of the most famous sport products of Croatia is the hiking trails in Dinaric Alps. Thousands of thru-hikers, trekkers and daily hikers experience unique trails which bridges the mountains with the sea.

Several companies offer heritage and sightseeing combining with a hiking route services among the Croatia mainland. Istria and Zadar are two famous destinations for heritage visits and hike around the city in a rural area. Croatia has eight national parks which provide various hiking routes with different difficulties. The national parks named Plitvicka jezero, Paklenica, Risnjak, Mljet, Kornati, Brijuni, Krka and Sjeverni Velebit. Into those areas one could experience several outdoor activities such as hiking, horse riding, rock climbing, cycling, caving, canyoning, boat trips, birdwatching, and kayaking. However, the most challenging activity is the thru-hike passage. This activity allows a hiker to cross the Dinaric Alps from inside the mountain with high passages, scenic routes, and uphill approaches. Overall, Croatia is considered a classic sport and adventure destination in the Balkan region.



Case study 8 - A.NI.M.US. - Adriatic Ionian Games for Social Inclusion, Ancona, Italy

The main objective of A.NI.M.US event was to strengthen the role of sports in social inclusion and cohesion within the Adriatic Ionian. The games took place in 2019 and had a great success story for the Ionian region. The event was structured on two main pillars: a) Adriatic Ionian Youth Games in Ancona (Italy) and socio-cultural collateral activities that aim to encourage participation in sport for the intrinsic benefits of socialisation, for the promotion of voluntary activities, for the sharing of equal opportunities values and for the improvement of health conditions. Participants were teens, coaches, voluntary associations, local authorities, journalists, schools' personnel and students. Different sport disciplines from Cities and Organisations of 12 EU countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia) plus 4 EU candidate/potential candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia) took place in four days, and b) Info-Edu activities from May till October 2019 aiming to improve skills and knowledge of target groups that include: Seminars on equality between women and men; on social inclusion of persons with disabilities; on health-enhancing sport activities and eating behaviours; Cities for Sport and Inclusion Conference; Seminar on inclusive sport in AI Region and beyond and volunteering opportunities; Local ANIMUS events throughout all the involved area. The participants of this event were more than 500 hundred people. During the venue there were sport activities and several side activities. The post event assessment showed that the event had a large impact on media, reaching more than 300.000 people.

Case study 9 - Beogradski Marathon, Belgrade, Serbia

The Belgrade Marathon (Beogradski Maraton) is one of the biggest sporting events in Serbia. This event has a long history as it bided for the first time back in 1910. However, the first modern marathon in Belgrade took place on May 8, 1988. Initially, the route's length of the 1989 marathon was 46.7 km, with the start and finish being in front of the Federal Parliament Building. Since 1990 the Belgrade Marathon has a standard 42.195 km length. The City of Belgrade and its departments supported the event. Also, several other bodies of authorities are involved such as the government, the army, the police, volunteers, and several sponsors. Today, Beogradski marathon series is an annual sport event which is hosted in the capital of Serbia. Beogradski event bids six running amateur races. It is a prestigious and popular city event for the Balkan region which attracts more than 6.000 participants each year. The routes of each marathon cross heritage areas, the old town, rivers, and the Belgrade's main square. The event offers 5KM, 10KM, 21Km, 42KM and themed races. It is sponsored by large international companies and is supported by local authorities and central government.



3. Sport tourism in SUSTOURISMO area and ADRION Region

3.1 Questionnaire survey to SUSTOURISMO cases

This study aims to identify the sport tourism sector and to draw policy recommendations among ADRION countries with the use of qualitative approach. It explores the nature of sport tourism sector, the various sport services, the strengths, and challenges in the field, and as well as the impact on the hosting destinations.

Qualitative method aims to provide an in-depth overview of the collected data and detailed clarification of the research topic. The present report used the theme analysis approach as an appropriate tool for qualitative data in sports field (Braun, et al., 2016; Hall, et al., 2012; Moore, et al., 2015). Theme analysis is an easy way process for analysing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013; 2014). In the current study, we followed the six-step approach (see Table 2) as stated in Braun & Clarke (2006) and Braun, Clarke & Weate (2016). Also, Table 3 provides information of the semi-structured questions that were addressed for the investigation.

Table 3: Six step approach in theme analysis.

Familiarizing yourself with the dataset	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, take initial notes, highlight the main idea (if possible)
Generate initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic way across the entire dataset, highlight words/ phrases/ sentences which is relevant to each code
Search for themes	Write down the codes into potential themes
Review themes	Checking if the themes are relevant to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2)
Define and name themes	Analyse each theme with their codes, generate clear definitions/ names/ sub-themes to describe your data
Write the report	Produce all the results in a systematic and clear way (table, text, etc.)

In the framework of Act. 2.4 of SUSTOURISMO project, a questionnaire aiming to extract insights for sport tourism dynamic in ADRION area was developed and SUSTOURISMO partners, with the support of their stakeholders gave valuable input on it. Table 4 presents the questions circulated.

Table 4: Interview's questions.

1) Do you think that sport tourism can help economic development in your region? YES NO If YES how?
--



2) On top of economic development, in which other aspects sport tourism development can benefit your region?

3) Does your region have specific characteristics (environmental, structural, facilities, services etc.) which fit with sport tourism promotion?

YES NO

If YES what are the most important ones?

4) Can you give us examples of sport tourism services (i.e. programs/activities) promoting in your region?

4.a) Which of these are the most successful? Why?

5) Do you see sport tourism:

a) as an autonomous form of tourism to be developed,

b) as a supportive one to mainstream tourism

c) both forms?

Can you give us examples?

6) Which is the profile of sport tourists in your region? (e.g., age, country, family, socio-economic status)

7) Is your country / region investing on your tourism?

YES NO

If YES, how? If NO, why?

8) Which stakeholders are involved in your region in relation to sport tourism promotion and development?

9) Do you have the support of the a) local or b) central government or c) both on promoting sport tourism?

If YES, how? If NO, why they do not support you?

10) Which are the main challenges/ difficulties in sport tourism promotion in your region?

11) Can you tell us some good practices that are applied by your region to promote sport tourism?

11.a) How sport tourism is promoted (e.g. media, social media and internet) in your region?

12) Comparing mass tourism vs. alternative tourism (sport tourism included) which is the best tourism model for your region? Why?

13) Has COVID-19 influenced a) tourism and/or b) sport tourism in your region?

YES NO

If YES, on what way? If NO, how did you manage?

14) Do you have people (human resources) who are specialized to work on sport tourism?

YES NO

If YES, what kind of services are their expertise?

If NO, do you have any plans to develop specialized workforce?

15) Which is your future strategy for the development of sport tourism in your region?



16) Do you see other forms of tourism in your region that can be developed in line with sport tourism?

The following graph and table show the interviews' results (the case specific answers can be found at the ANNEX). The graph draws the main themes of sport tourism according to qualitative results.



Figure 12: The main themes.



Regarding the Table 5, the first column is referred to theme (main umbrella), the second column describes the sub themes which referred to the main idea and the last column addresses the phrases or sentences or summary of paragraphs which are relevant to each theme.

Table 5: Results from Theme Analysis.

Theme	Sub-theme	Content (interviewees' words)
Economic development	Economic sustainability of the country Revenues	Jobs are created and tax revenue are earned (AL) Through ST the economic capital could increase in the future (GR, SLO, IT, CRO)
	Direct economic impact in the area Tax revenues	Sports contribute significantly to regional economic development by generating employment and securing inflow of both domestic and foreign capital (SLO) There are several direct revenues in the area (AL, CRO, IT, MON)
Social Impact	Healthy lifestyle Social cohesion Social welfare	ST impact social cohesion by encouraging innovation, fostering sustainable development and urban regeneration (SLO)
	Community pride and Destination image development Employment sustainability	Also, sport tourism empowers local businesses by creating demand in areas and extent the seasonality phase of the tourism (GR) ST boost the adoption of a healthier lifestyle (GR, SLO, IT) ST products develop the destination identity as sport tourism destination and enhance its image internationally (RS) Biding ST services in a remote area could empower social cohesion, community pride and public wellbeing (GR, SLO) ST generates employee positions and support their sustainability (GR, MON, SLO, CRO, IT, AL)
Sport tourism products	National parks Outdoor activities Sport festivals Professional and amateur tournaments Running events	We are organizing sport tourism packages for runners to stay in the city (RS) Our mainland is covered by mountains. Thus, several outdoor activities are offered (SLO, AL, GR) There are trail running paths, hiking trails, cycling itineraries to offer GR, AL, SLO) Also, in Lake Pamvotida of Ioannina panhellenic and international water skiing and rowing competitions take place while, at the same time, the Lake is a destination for the preparation of sports teams (GR) The sport festival bided for two days. We link also to cultural and educational events (GR)
Stakeholders	National Tourism Organizations Sport Tourism Associations	The government's support is a fundamental aspect of our actions (SLO, GR, CRO) Several local municipalities are involved with sport events (SLO, GR, AL, MON, IT, RS, CRO)



	<p>Regional/ Local Municipalities Private clubs Tour operators Travel agents Hotels Restaurants</p>	<p>Local volunteers are our major pillar to bid the marathon (GR) The local authorities (police, first aid responders, local entrepreneurs, etc.) are a necessary part of our event (RS, GR, SLO) The main distributor of our sport products is an international tour operator (AL) Hoteliers (GR) Sport clubs and associations (AL, MON) There are some people with high expertise in ST management (GR) For 2022 and 2023, the Slovenian Tourist Board has defined sports tourism as the main communication theme (SLO) ST products are offered mainly in natural environment; thus we need to take care action to protect the nature (GR, MON) Our area is full of natural resources and exciting local areas (AL, GR, CRO, SLO)</p>
Strengths	<p>Human resources expertise Strategic marketing actions Promotional actions Natural environment</p>	<p>Digital marketing is the main communication channel of the ST products (GR, CRO, IT, SLO) We seek for funds to support our event (CRO, MON) Climate change requires new strategies for the sustainable management of tourism destinations (GR) In the period of the peak of pandemic and global Covid crisis there was less arrivals, hotels and restaurants were closed for some time. Sport object also didn't work (CRO) There are few individuals with expertise in outdoor activities (AL, SLO, GR) The main reason lies in the outdated infrastructure (SLO) The covid19 pandemic was the worst thing to our field (GR, SLO, IT, CRO, MON, AL) Our brand name gives us a strong advantage through athletes' brand (SLO) The STB strengthens the visibility and reputation of Slovenia through intensive communication and promotional activities, and cooperation with Slovenian athletes (SLO) . Also, local authorities participate in theme trades related to sport tourism sector in order to develop sport image and tourism awareness for the destination (GR) The promotional plan includes the promotion of sport tourism either as an autonomous form or as a secondary/complementary activity that visitors can do in Epirus (GR) The area has a long history on hiking trails (SLO, GR)</p>
Challenges	<p>Funds (public and private) Low government investments Outdated infrastructures Covid19 pandemic impact Training human resources Development of stakeholders' collaboration Technology Climate change</p>	
Good practices	<p>Branding destination Development of destination identity International marketing strategies Theme Trades International tour operator co-operations Using Social media channels Sustainability goals</p>	



We focus on sustainability of our jobs, employers
and destination (AL, IT, MON, SLO)

3.2 Policy Recommendations for sport tourism sector

This chapter is organised in six sections: (1) sport tourism product, (2) target groups & service tender, (3) sport tourism management, (4) sport tourism impact, (5) sport tourism marketing, (6) sport tourism sustainability and support. The following policy recommendations are based on the above qualitative analysis and target organizations and companies from public and private sector.

3.2.1 Sport tourism products

The study has indicated further evidence that sport tourism sector holds a strong popularity in ADRION region, with mutual services such as outdoor activities and sport events. This result lead onto the question “which is the sport tourism product for the ADRION region to further develop a recognised and sustained sport environment which, in its turn, supports future destinations and their society?”. By developing a unique sport identity of sport tourism takes time and is shaped by several external (i.e. social, political, and economic) factors. The most critical factor is considered the geographical location where the sport tourism services take place and the existent sport facilities in host destination. The vast majority of sport tourism services in ADRION are associated with natural environment and cities’ facilities. Today, the countries which investigated in this report bid a broad range of city and outdoor small scale sport events, adventure tours, daily outdoor activities and host senior or amateur tournaments. Despite most organizers’ well-defined recreational focus, they also seek for broader audiences and diverse groups of people including families, competitive/ elite runners, and people with disabilities. Thus, well-clarified sport tourism objectives are critical for their identity, communications, and sustainability in order to generate a unique sport product.

It is recommended that:

- Sport tourism organisers should clearly determine their sport products and provide further details for the geographic location to highlight their geographical advantage toward their competitors; and, as well as, state their facilities and services.
- Sport tourism owners and policy makers might establish co-operations with local authorities and stakeholders of the area. This will enhance the identity of the product and the greater mobilization of resources to support each service at the time.
- Sport tourism policy makers and promoters need to identify suitable elements of their services and their destination. This led to new opportunities for destination marketing and communication messages.
- It is important that the sport tourism services have tangible objectives which can be measured and assessed. This will be a beneficial strategy to further improve their products, based on participants’ feedback.
- Sport tourism promoters (i.e., partners, sponsors, media) ought to work around a main objective of the product. For example, they could develop an adventure image perception



for a specific area in their country. Another strategy might be the development of commercial associations of a sport event in the same area. Both tactics lead in one objective which is the development of a sport identity with clear sport products.

•

3.2.2 Target groups & service tender

The sport service demand is specified by the participants' willing and behavioural intentions to engage with a sport tourism product. This engagement has a twofold goal for both destination and participants; tangible benefits for the hosting destination (e.g. paying a fee at a Dinarik national park in Croatia - direct economic impact) and intangible benefits for the participants (e.g. gaining self-confidence through adventure activities). Therefore, it is important to classify customers in smaller niche markets in order to provide personalization and customized services. The attitude 'we target in all kinds of tourists' is not working any more, since sport tourism participants have their own unique needs and motivations.

It is recommended that:

- Sport tourism Entrepreneurs might offer well-specified information, support, and unique services which fit the cultural assets of the area and giving the sense of an authentic experience.
- Sport tourism organisers should offer clear incentives for different types of participants. For example, they could provide various tourism packages in a sport hotel (i.e. all inclusive services) according to the target group (i.e. families) in Lefkada island.
- Policy makers might state the benefits and the expected outcomes from participation in their activities. This strategy will empower the positive attitudes toward sport products and motivate individuals for future participation.
- Sport tourism promoters should outline the main product, the side activities and the amenities services which are offered in the area. This tactic will reveal the core and the peripheral sport product, simultaneously, the different opportunists for sport participation and active holidays.

3.2.3 Sport tourism management

Sport tourism management is the key element to further develop a destination to a sport tourism brand. Thus, local and/or regional stakeholders should generate a small sport tourism hub which in its turn will act as a communication channel for future participants (see Water Sport Albania hub). The management of a sport tourism product contains several actors, such as government, local authorities, non-profit organizations, freelancers, and entrepreneurs. It is out of most importance to create strong collaborations for planning, implementation, and evaluation of such services. Thus, sport tourism products' management could be considered as a permanent activity. A common concern which noted across the sample was the lack of human expertise in the field. This outcome entails that skilful human resources are needed.



It is recommended that:

- Owners and organisers should find and/or train human resources according to the market needs, including skills such as planning, communications, hard skills/ technical and service offer.
- Sport management teams ought to focus on delivering the product as promised to different groups. This will lead in brand trust which is the case to create positive word of mouth and loyal customers.
- Sport tourism organisers should develop a ‘participant’s journey’ map in order to manage service quality at each stage. This practical implication will support operation managers to evaluate and improve their services.
- Sport management teams should create appropriate technical manuals, operation reports and guides to ensure the smooth transfer of knowledge in their human resources department. This will ensure the success story of sport tourism services in the area.

3.2.4 Sport tourism impact

Sport tourism sector has a great economic and social impact in ADRION societies. Therefore, sport managers of adventure sports in Bovec or sport events and festivals in Thessaloniki might include tangible and intangible impacts’ characteristics in their promotional activities for both consumers and local stakeholders (i.e. tour operators, local authorities, local communities). Tangible impact characteristics might be new infrastructures for tournaments, reconstruction of outdated facilities, hiking trails’ improvements, direct revenues in remote areas of the country, and job creation. On the other hand, intangible characteristics of impact refer to social cohesion, community pride, development of sport identity, enhance destination sport image and social wellbeing. Sport policy makers usually focus on the tangible characteristics to promote their services. However, a good practice might be the promotion of intangible benefits in the domestic market and stakeholders to make society aware and create a positive attitude toward the sport tourism products. Without any doubt, all sport tourism activities have much greater intangible impacts such as healthy lifestyle benefits, which directly are associated with broader wellbeing objectives.

It is recommended that:

- Sport tourism promoters should communicate the intangible benefits to future participants and local stakeholders.
- Sport tourism promoters should provide tangible benefits to future participants and stakeholders.
- Policy makers need to ensure that the estimated impacts must be closely aligned with the destinations’ identity and sport products.
- Sport managers should report their direct economic impact to leverage authorities for further support.



- Sport marketers should communicate social impacts in their communities in order to create a favour attitude toward their brand. This will lead in positive attitudes for sport tourism products.

3.2.5 Sport tourism marketing

Sport tourism marketing is a challengeable process to growth destination's reputation as a sport brand. Marketing refers to sport products but not limited to and create opportunities for revenues, exploration of distribution channels and promotional actions. The marketing mix should contain communication messages, detailed information, and usage benefits of sport services. However, these actions must be in line from all stakeholders. Therefore, meetings should be made in order all stakeholders follow the recommendations. A striking finding of the present study is the various marketing approaches which stakeholders may apply in each country in a separate way. This finding leads in tension among them and do not follow the marketing standards within a collaboration between public and private sectors. The main character of sport tourism products, based on the sample, is the recreational form of activities. Hence, all stakeholders should understand the nature of sport tourism in order to provide services which fit the participants' needs. A last note should be made for marketing strategies. Most of the organizations and companies use local, regional, or national promotion services. With the usage of social media platforms, policy makers should adopt international marketing approaches to attract international tourists.

It is recommended that:

- Sport tourism promoters should adopt international marketing strategies to attract inbound tourists. Today, DMO should contain human resources who are experts in the applicability and operate all kind of social media channels, including search engineering optimization practices.
- Policy makers should identify participants' needs, perceptions and experiences of sport tourism and share this information with stakeholders. This will lead in better custom fitting services. For example, sport events could profile their participants and spread the word to affiliated sport events to develop unique services which are not overlap one another.
- Promoters might apply an integrated marketing communication strategy which is in line with the local authorities or government national strategy for tourism development.
- Sport managers should develop organisational culture and suitable marketing plans to ensure synergies among interesting parties. For example, adventure companies could co-operate to each other in order to provide more services (e.g. rafting companies with hiking companies).
- Sport promoters need to pay attention to the use of social media and create suitable messages in the overall marketing strategy. They could create content according to the advantages of the area of the sport products in the host destination.



3.2.6 Sport tourism sustainability and support

A common concern among the study's participants was the sustainability of sport tourism in their region. Sport tourism sustainability depends on several factors. Some of the sample reported funding constraints while others reported difficulties due to the high competition, nationally and from the nearby countries. Furthermore, a range of other important aspects could negatively impact the sustainability of the sector. These issues refer to overcrowded national parks, environmental management, waste management, industry standards, bad-shaped sport facilities and small city green areas. Another mutual constraint, as indicated in the results, is the lack of government and public support for the sector. Several stakeholders reported the necessity of government support to further develop their product. Government and local authorities often hold a logistic role in sport tourism services. These actions could be identified in making the route traffic free for a running event, providing fences and police control in a tournament or control the fee for a national park. Only few of them provide small amount of financial support. Moreover, they are responsible for the natural environment which sport tourism services offered. The stakeholders noted the lack of taking care actions in order to create an appropriate environment for their services. Based on the above lines, governments and local authorities could categorized their sport tourism products by quantitative (e.g. based on the number of companies) and qualitative (e.g. by geographical location and needs) aspects. This segmentation might help owners and entrepreneurs to improve their infrastructures and develop clear strategies. The support could be an improvement of roads for approaching a national park, reconstruction of an outdated stadium, human resources support, funding opportunities, etc.

It is recommended that:

- Local governments should develop a targeted policy of different types of companies (i.e. profit and non-profit) and areas (i.e. city and outdoors) to draw an action and support plan for them. This will help the national tourism sector to create a clear promotional strategy internationally. Also, it will report the actual market of each area; and, thus, government could decide whether or not might support.
- Local authorities might develop and construct attractive and user-friendly urban or natural environments to further support sport tourism companies.
- Local authorities, sponsors, companies and interested parties in sport tourism should be in line with tourism national authorities marketing strategies, and the reverse.
- Stakeholders should develop environmental responsibility attitudes in order to promote their destination as an eco-friendly destination.
- Public and non-profit organizations must take actions for waste management in overcrowded sensitive places such as national parks.
- Owners and companies should follow or develop the European sport standards as applied in other countries (e.g. adventure tourism in central Europe).
- Public and private organization should train their human resources with decision-making ability, individual and collective skills, and knowledge acquisition.



- Sport tourism providers might review the management practices and ensure compliance with current tourism industry sustainability standards.

4. Conclusion

Today, sport tourism sector in ADRION region still experiences some difficulties regarding understand and respond to the needs of participants. According to the study, the main barriers remain the public support from government and local authorities, the lack of human resources expertise, and the lack of collaboration between public and private stakeholders in ADRION region. This report outlines the several elements of sport tourism sector (i.e. identity, product, management, marketing, impact, sustainability). The major goal for ADRION sport tourism products is the creation of a unique sport identity for each area and its sustainability. If sport tourism wants to get impactful and sustainable, it should exert different policy strategies and attempt for strong collaborations among ADRION countries. Despite the recreational character of sport tourism, the sense of competition is present. Competition applied among organisations and/or entrepreneurs and it is more than welcome to some degree. However, the various stakeholders should find a balance between competition and cooperation to further survive. Also, the participants' profile has changes over the years and new demographic characteristics take the lead. Recent evidence from research (Higham & Hinch, 2018) showed that sport tourism participants were both men and women individuals, mostly couples, between 25 to 35 years old, highly educated and seek for new challenges. According to the new era, researchers and scholars should find new opportunities for future research. Another limitation to further develop this project was the lack of empirical statistics to estimate the sport tourism market in ADRION region. Hence, a future project which includes satellite account estimation for the market is needed. On the other hand, the results showed that ADRION region has the potential to become a sport tourism destination with a strong brand image. The geomorphological formations of the places, the natural environment, the unspoiled local culture in remote ADRION areas and the authentic communities remain strong leverages to further develop a sport tourism identity.



Reference list

- Thompson, W. (2022). Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends for 2022, *ACSM Health & Fitness Journal*, 26(1), 11-20.
- Alexandris, K. (2018). Sport Tourism Management, Ed: Kiriakidi (in Greek).
- Alexandris, K., Barkoukis, V., Karagiorgos, T., Ntovoli, A., de Brito, M., Middelkamp, E., Mitas, O., van Liere, L., Ahonen, A., Girginov, V., Di Tommaso, V., Moliterni, S., Ruggeri, A., Helsen, K., Scheerder, J., Kreivyte, R., Mejeryte-Narkeviciene, K., Valantine, I., Hover, P., van Eldert, P. (2021). Promoting health enhancing physical activity and social welfare through outdoor running events. Quantitative results, RUN for HEALTH Project Report, Vol. 2.
- Andersen, J.J. & Nikolova, V. (2021). Marathon statistics 2019 worldwide (research), available at: <https://runrepeat.com/research-marathon-performance-across-nations> (accessed 25 September 2022).
- Asimakopoulos, M. (2018). Athens Marathon: the Autentic, in Alexnadris (ed), Sport Tourism Management, Ed: Kiriakidi, Thessaloniki, ISBN 978-960-602-204-3. (in Greek)
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V., (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2014). What can “thematic analysis” offer health and wellbeing researchers?. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 9, 122-141.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Weate, P. (2016). Using thematic analysis in sport and exercise research, In Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C.(2016). *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise*. Routledge (p.76-92).
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The psychologist*, 26(2), 120-123.
- Gibson, H. (1998). Sport tourism: A critical analysis of research. *Sport Management Review*, 1, 45-76.
- Gibson, H. (2002). Sport tourism at a crossroad? Considerations for the future. In S. Gammon and J. Kurtzman (Eds.), *Sport Tourism, Principles and Practice* (pp. 123-140). East-bourne: LSA.
- Gibson, H. J. (2004). Moving beyond the “what is and who” of sport tourism to understanding “why”. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 9(3), 247-265.



- Gibson, H. J. (2013). *Sport tourism*. Routledge.
- Global Wellness Institute, (2021). The Global Wellness Tourism Economy. Available at: <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/global-wellness-institute-blog/2022/01/11/industry-research-new-data-on-wellness-tourism-projected-to-hit-817-billion-this-year-1-3-trillion-in-2025/> (accessed on 20 October 2022).
- Grand View Research, (2022). Adventure Tourism Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Activity Type (Hard, Soft), By Group (Solo, Couples, Family, Groups), By Booking Mode, By Age Group, By Region, And Segment Forecasts, 2022 - 2030. Available at: <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/adventure-tourism-market-report> (accessed on 3 November 2022).
- Hall, G., Shearer, D., Thomson, R., Roderique-Davies, G., Mayer, P., & Hall, R. (2012). Conceptualising commitment: A thematic analysis of fans of Welsh rugby. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 4(1), 138-153.
- Higham, J., & Hinch, T. (2018). *Sport tourism development*. Channel view publications.
- Iso-Ahola, S. (1984). Social psychological foundations of leisure and resultant implications for leisure counseling. In E. Dowd (Ed.), *Leisure Counseling, Concepts and Applications* (pp 97-125). Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.
- Kadam, A. & Deshmukh, R. (2021). Sports Tourism Market by Product (Football/Soccer, Cricket, Motorsport, Tennis, and Others), Type (Domestic and International), and Category (Active and Passive): Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast 2021-30, Allied Market Research. Available online: <https://www.alliedmarketresearch.com/sports-tourism-market-A130> (accessed on 28 October 2022).
- Karagiorgos, T. (2018). Surf Club Keros, in Alexnadris (ed), *Sport Tourism Management*, Ed: Kiriakidi. (in Greek)
- Kurtzman, J. (2005). Sports tourism categories. *Journal of Sport Tourism*, 10(1), 15-20.
- Moore, J., Hesson, A., & Jones, K. (2015). # NBCfail: Thematic analysis of media and public discourse surrounding editing of Russia's Olympic gymnastics fall. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 8(2), 160-173.
- Sports ETA, (2019). Sports Tourism: State of the Industry Report (2019). Available online: <https://www.sportseta.org/research/state-of-the-industry-report/> (accessed on 25 October 2022).
- Standeven, J. & De Knop, P. (1999). *Sport Tourism*. Human Kinetics.
- Sumesh, L. & Roshan, D. (2022). Adventure Tourism Market by Type (Hard, soft, and Others), Activity (Land-Based activity, Water-Based Activity, and Air-Based activity), Type of Traveler (Solo, Friends, Couple, and Family), Age Group and Sales Channel (Travel Agents, and Direct): Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast, 2021-2028, Allied



Market Research. Available at: <https://www.alliedmarketresearch.com/adventure-tourism-market> (accessed on 30 October 2022).

Verified Market Research-VMR, (2021). Global Sports Tourism Market Size By Product (Soccer Tourism, Cricket Tourism, Tennis Tourism), By Application (Passive Sports Tourism, Active Sports Tourism), By Geographic Scope And Forecast. Available online: <https://www.verifiedmarketresearch.com/product/sports-tourism-market/> (accessed on 18 October 2022).



ANNEX

In the annex are provided evidence of the semi-structured interviews for each stakeholder of the project.



Slovenia (PIL and RDA)

1) Do you think that sport tourism can help economic development in your region?

YES NO

If YES how?

Sports contributes significantly to regional economic development by generating employment and securing inflow of both domestic and foreign capital. Sports can help the local community to expand their earnings and socio-economic condition, which could lead to an improved standard of living.

2) On top of economic development, in which other aspects sport tourism development can benefit your region?

Besides its direct contribution to regional growth, it can also impact social cohesion by encouraging innovation, fostering sustainable development and urban regeneration, and enhancing the overall attractiveness of the Ljubljana urban region.

3) Does your region have specific characteristics (environmental, structural, facilities, services etc.) which fit with sport tourism promotion?

YES NO

If YES what are the most important ones?

The third most forested country in the EU has 10 thousand km of well-marked hiking trails and many biking and other trails, leading across dynamic terrain from the Alps to the Mediterranean, from the Pannonian Plain to the Karst. Slovenia is one of the European countries that are richest in water resources. On just over 20,000 km² of land, it has more than 27 thousand kilometres of watercourses, including rivers, streams, an abundance of lakes, waterfalls, water springs, and Slovenes have upgraded beautiful natural resources with an adequate infrastructure and experiences. Thus, Slovenia has been developed into an excellent sports and recreational destination for 365 days a year, suitable for the training of professional athletes and sports teams, as well as for carrying out major international sports events. No less than 87 thermal and mineral water sources. Furthermore, the Adriatic coast adds to this wealth in water resources. Slovenia is particularly known for easy access to all of its different geographical areas: following the longest diagonal route, it is less than 400 kilometres from one end of Slovenia to the other. A plethora of outdoor exercise facilities is available in natural surroundings all over the country. Many of these are connected to the modern indoor exercise facilities.

4) Can you give us examples of sport tourism services (i.e. programs/activities) promoting in your region?



4.a) Which of these are the most successful? Why?

Slovenia is a destination for excellent active experiences and sports tourism. Ljubljana urban region is a region of sports as it offers a huge variety of adrenaline-boosting adventures as well as many notable sports events. One of the most prominent one is the Ljubljana marathon, a world known running event which attracts a few thousand runners from across the globe annually. It's beginnings date to 1996 and since then it has been established as one of the more important European marathons, which has an impact on the whole region.

The Ljubljana urban region has recognized the importance of sports for its promotion as well as development. Therefore, it has been included in the regional development Programme of the Ljubljana Urban Region for the programming period 2021-2027 as a separate programme of the priority Development of a sustainable, innovative, and knowledge-based economy. The document envisages the development of sports in connection to tourism. The region will strive to achieve active recreation experiences and sports on the doorstep of the capital with elements such as cycling, hiking, water sports, horse riding, caving and adventure parks.

5) Do you see sport tourism:

- a) as an autonomous form of tourism to be developed,
- b) as a supportive one to mainstream tourism
- c) both forms?

Can you give us examples?

Example of a sport tourism as an autonomous form of tourism could be developed in connection with special sport events such as "March along Barbed Wire" (almost 35 km long route around Ljubljana, where between the Second World War the wire fence of Italian and later on the German occupiers was and is therefore called "March along barbed wire"), Marathon Franja BTC City (a recreational cycling competition that starts with the longest route of 156 km long), Ljubljana Beach Volley Challenge, 3X3 Challenger and Volkswagen Ljubljana Marathon (the largest running event held in Slovenia. Its great international recognition is largely due to its highly attractive course, running through the streets of Ljubljana). This year, Slovenia has already hosted several high-profile international sports events. Among the most notable ones are the Men's Volleyball World Championship, which was moved from Russia to Slovenia, and the EHF European Women's Handball Championship (Ljubljana, Celje, Skopje, Podgorica), which will take place in November.

An example of sport tourism as a supportive one to mainstream tourism is SUSTOURISMO touristic package from Slovenia: guided cycling tours around the Ljubljana Marshes.

6) Which is the profile of sport tourists in your region? (e.g., age, country, family, socio-economic status)



Typical sport tourist in Slovenia is coming from Austria, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands, the average age is between 35-45 years old, with a family and singles, with middle class economic status. Most of them are hikers and cyclists.

7) Is your country / region investing on your tourism?

YES NO

If YES, how?

If NO, why?

In LUR, there are many private and public institutions dealing with sports education and sports activities of the population. In 2019, the Ljubljana urban region spent the large part of its resources ((EUR 7.9 million) compared to other Slovenian regions for youth's sports education and for high-quality and top-class sports performances.

Concerning sports tourism, a quick overview shows an outdated infrastructure is the biggest issue for the development of this industry on both, regional and national level. The states and the region's main efforts and funds are therefore oriented to overcome this matter.

8) Which stakeholders are involved in your region in relation to sport tourism promotion and development?

-Ljubljana Tourism (a destination management organization established by the City of Ljubljana that fosters the development and undertakes the promotion of tourism in Ljubljana and the Ljubljana region in conjunction with tourism providers)

-Slovenian Tourist Board (the central national agency for the promotion of tourism)

-Municipalities in the Ljubljana urban region

-Municipality of Ljubljana Sports Department

-Private entities

9) Do you have the support of the a) local or b) central government or c) both on promoting sport tourism?

If YES, how?

If NO, why they do not support you?

We have the support of local municipalities and central government such as MGRT and MIZŠ in the form of EU grants and other forms of incentives such as financing investments for sustainable growth in Slovenian tourism and co-financing of investments in tourist accommodation to increase the added value of tourism.

10) Which are the main challenges/ difficulties in sport tourism promotion in your region?



Though both Slovenia as well as the Ljubljana urban region have an enormous potential for development of sports tourism, this industry is not as established as it could be. The main reason lies in the outdated infrastructure. The region detects outdated sports playgrounds and facilities, poor cycling connections, etc. The problem should approach on a regional or national level, and surpass local planning.

11) Can you tell us some good practices that are applied by your region to promote sport tourism?

11.a) How sport tourism is promoted (e.g. media, social media and internet) in your region?

Slovenia is gaining visibility as an exceptional tourism destination for preparing athletes and major sports competitions. It is also becoming extremely popular among travellers seeking a destination for active outdoor adventures. For 2022 and 2023, the Slovenian Tourist Board has defined sports tourism as the main communication theme. This includes active adventures in nature and sports events and preparations. As a result, even more attention is being given to the promotion and development of this important and, at the same time, promising tourist product of Slovenian tourism, which perfectly connects with other tourism products and at the same time upgrades them. International sports events hosted by Slovenia are extremely important for promoting the country. The STB strengthens the visibility and reputation of Slovenia through intensive communication and promotional activities, and cooperation with Slovenian athletes. For this purpose, the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand is being highlighted at sporting events at home and abroad. By doing so, the Slovenian Tourist Board reaches millions of sports enthusiasts and fans of active leisure. By connecting key stakeholders in the sport and tourism and through coordinated (co)operation, the STB strives to help set coordinated and sustainable measures and events, bringing long-term economic, social, and promotional effects to Slovenian sports and tourism. With the aim of coordinated cooperation of key stakeholders and the preparation of strategic directions and priority measures in the field of sports tourism, the STB's Expert Group on Sports Tourism was established in 2022, which is working on the Action Plan for the Development and Marketing of Sports Tourism in Slovenia 2022-2023. The STB continues and builds on cooperation with top athletes and ambassadors of Slovenian tourism, who have been helping increase Slovenia's global visibility as a tourist destination for many years.

12) Comparing mass tourism vs. alternative tourism (sport tourism included) which is the best tourism model for your region? Why?

Slovenia has placed among the top ten most sustainable and responsible destinations in the world at the World Travel Market (WTM), one of the key events in the tourism industry. The vision for the development of tourism in Slovenia as well as the Ljubljana urban region is one that will go in the direction of boutique travel destination. The boutique travelling style follows the sustainability philosophy, as it is the opposite of mass tourism and relieves tourist flows. The boutique tourism offers respects the local and brings greater value to the local environment and practices an individual approach for a more satisfied guest who returns and spends more.



The common vision of the Ljubljana region is also to become the most integrated and innovative green tourism region in Slovenia. The tourist development and promotion of localities in the region coincide with one of Ljubljana Tourism's main strategic goals: the dispersal of tourist flows from the city centre. The area of the Ljubljana region represents the green hinterland of Slovenia's capital city and offers excellent opportunities for the marketing and further development of products tied to rural holidays, discovering local culture and cuisine, and active leisure (mainly hiking and cycling).

13) Has COVID-19 influenced a) tourism and/or b) sport tourism in your region?

YES NO

If YES, on what way?

If NO, how did you manage?

Slovenia's capital Ljubljana recorded just over 415,000 tourist arrivals in 2021, an increase of almost 63% compared to the year 2020 but more than 60% below the pre-Covid 2019, show figures by Tourism Ljubljana. The statistics for nights show a similar picture: almost 867,000 stays were recorded, up 60% over the year before but 61% lower than in the record year 2019. The plans were significantly more optimistic, with 610,000 arrivals and 1.34 million nights, but they were derailed by an "unequal restrictions policy" at the national and international level, according to Tourism Ljubljana.

14) Do you have people (human resources) who are specialized to work on sport tourism?

YES NO

If YES, what kind of services are their expertise?

If NO, do you have any plans to develop specialized workforce?

We have human resources specifically involved in sports tourism, on the one hand strategic activities (such as planning sports infrastructure and equipment) and on the other hand implementation activities (such as tourism product development, promotion, implementation, etc....)

15) Which is your future strategy for the development of sport tourism in your region?

Strategy for the development of sports tourism is included in the development of the overall tourism and it's not addressed separately. Slovenian Tourist Board (SBO) is the main stakeholders, responsible for the preparation of the strategic development documents for tourism on national level. The board has defined active outdoor experiences and sports tourism as the main two components they want to develop in the short-term plans, which is why even more attention will be paid to the development of this segment. By connecting key stakeholders in the field of sports and tourism, the STB will strive to contribute to the creation of a coordinated and sustainable set of measures and events that will bring long-term economic,



social and promotional effects. For this purpose, SBO has established an Expert Group on Sports tourism, which will be responsible for the development of this specific field.

16) Do you see other forms of tourism in your region that can be developed in line with sport tourism?

In our region we see following form tourism that could be developed in line with sport tourism:

- Adventure tourism involves the exploration of remote places where travellers can expect the unexpected. It involves connecting with a new culture or new landscape and at the same time being physically active. Some of the adventure tourism activities involve day hiking, backpacking, zip lining, free fall, rafting, mountain biking, skiing and snowboarding.

- Sustainable tourism or responsible tourism involves traveling to a place in order to make a positive impact on the environment, society and economy. It benefits everyone involved and not just one half of the equation.



Croatia (Zadar)

1) Do you think that sport tourism can help economic development in your region?

YES NO

If YES how?

If there are more sport manifestations, there will be more tourist arrivals in the region. City of Zadar works very well in the field of sport promotion.

2) On top of economic development, in which other aspects sport tourism development can benefit your region?

Motivation for choosing a tourist destination, extending the tourist season, overcoming the seasonal character of tourism, increasing non-boarding consumption, and improving the variety and quality of the tourist offer.

3) Does your region have specific characteristics (environmental, structural, facilities, services etc.) which fit with sport tourism promotion?

YES NO

If YES what are the most important ones?

The benefits of Zadar region is mild climate, a lot of sunny days, its natural location (on one side on the sea and on the other side possibility for geographically spread of the territory).

4) Can you give us examples of sport tourism services (i.e. programs/activities) promoting in your region?

4.a) Which of these are the most successful? Why?

As already mentioned, the City of Zadar works on the promotion of sport tourism. There are plenty of manifestations in Zadar region. The most important are Wings for life world run with 5000 participants in 2022., Davis cup tournament, Zadar outdoor festival etc.

5) Do you see sport tourism:

a) as an autonomous form of tourism to be developed,

b) as a supportive one to mainstream tourism

c) both forms?

Can you give us examples?



Sport tourism can be the reason that someone will visit this region, but the tourist will not only participate in sport tourism, we need to give them in the same time other offer. We need to combine cultural heritage, gastronomic offer of this region, natural heritage etc.

6) Which is the profile of sport tourists in your region? (e.g., age, country, family, socio-economic status)

Now we don't have such data. But as we can see most of them are younger people.

7) Is your country / region investing on your tourism?

YES NO

If YES, how?

Zadar region constantly invests in tourism, all kind of tourism aspects. Not only from infrastructure point of view but also marketing and promotion, manifestations that represent this region.

If NO, why?

8) Which stakeholders are involved in your region in relation to sport tourism promotion and development?

City of Zadar

City of Zadar tourist Board

Zadar region tourist Board

Športski centar Višnjik Zadar

Zadar Outdoor festival

9) Do you have the support of the a) local or b) central government of c) both on promoting sport tourism?

If YES, how?

City of Zadar as public self-government unit is investing constantly in sport facilities and in sport tourism facilities by itself or with help of national funds and even through EU funds.

If NO, why they do not support you?

10) Which are the main challenges/ difficulties in sport tourism promotion in your region?

Main challenges and difficulties are mostly attached to financial issues. There are a lot of good quality ideas but difficult to assure funds.



11) Can you tell us some good practices that are applied by your region to promote sport tourism?

11.a) How sport tourism is promoted (e.g. media, social media and internet) in your region?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VILEVvc_Bel&t=115s

<https://sunsetsportsmedia.com/en/>

12) Comparing mass tourism vs. alternative tourism (sport tourism included) which is the best tourism model for your region? Why?

At the moment in Zadar region is happening mass tourism, but it would be better if we work on alternative tourism. From the economic point of view, it would be maybe even better and other aspect would also be better quality.

13) Has COVID-19 influenced a) tourism and/or b) sport tourism in your region?

YES NO

If YES, on what way?

In the period of the peak of pandemic and global Covid crisis there was less arrivals, hotels and restaurants were closed for some time. Sport object also didn't work. That was huge economic punch that kicked us. Fortunately afterwards everything is starting to get back in the normal situation so after two years we have more tourist arrivals than before Covid.

If NO, how did you manage?

14) Do you have people (human resources) who are specialized to work on sport tourism?

YES NO

If YES, what kind of services are their expertise?

If NO, do you have any plans to develop specialized workforce?

15) Which is your future strategy for the development of sport tourism in your region?

At the moment we don't have official strategy for the development of sport tourism.

16) Do you see other forms of tourism in your region that can be developed in line with sport tourism?

Yes of course, in line with sports tourism we must combine all kinds of tourism, ex. Health tourism, gastronomic tourism etc.



Greece-Epirus(PED)

1) Do you think that sport tourism can help economic development in your region?

YES NO

If YES how?

Tourism, as well as sport tourism, can help economic development in the region of Epirus. Either as an professional activity or leisure, sport involves travel to other places, to play and compete in various destinations. Further, major sporting events, such as mountain runs or bicycle events, have become powerful tourist attractions. Sports tourism promotes local businesses, creating demand in areas such as transportation, hotels and restaurants. Local population can benefit from these jobs and income opportunities. Depending on the nature of the sports and experiences, local people can also work as instructors and guides.

2) On top of economic development, in which other aspects sport tourism development can benefit your region?

3) Does your region have specific characteristics (environmental, structural, facilities, services etc.) which fit with sport tourism promotion?

YES NO

If YES what are the most important ones?

Epirus has many characteristics which fit sport tourism. Running races are organized in various places in Epirus (e.g. Zagori mountain race, Ioannina Lake Run etc) which attract many professional or amateur runners. Walking/Hiking tourism is also very developed throughout the region as well as canoe & kayak in the rivers.

In Epirus, one can also engage in water sports: sailing in Lake Pamvotida in Ioannina or in the open waters of the Ionian Sea; scuba diving at Sivota, Parga or Preveza; river trekking or windsurfing.

Also, in Lake Pamvotida of Ioannina panhellenic and international water skiing and rowing competitions take place while, at the same time, the Lake is a destination for the preparation of sports teams.

Bicycling is also a significant upcoming form of sport tourism in Epirus. Apart from a rising alternative way of urban mobility, constructing bicycle roads and promoting bicycle-sharing, a major investment by the regional authority has been approved to construct a bicycle road at the sea front national road Preveza-Parga that will connect with the EuroVelo cycling network.

4) Can you give us examples of sport tourism services (i.e. programs/activities) promoting in your region?



4.a) Which of these are the most successful? Why?

5) Do you see sport tourism:

- a) as an autonomous form of tourism to be developed,
- b) as a supportive one to mainstream tourism
- c) both forms?

Can you give us examples?

Sport tourism can be developed in both forms, either as an autonomous form or a supportive form.

As an autonomous form, it can be developed for athletic events or for tourists that seek exclusively destinations for outdoor activities.

As a supportive form, sport tourism can operate complementary to mass tourism and the “sun & beach” model at the sea front of Epirus.

6) Which is the profile of sport tourists in your region? (e.g., age, country, family, socio-economic status)

There are no studies profiling sport tourists in Epirus. Foreign tourists in Epirus are mainly from Germany, Italy, the UK and Albania and spend in average approx. 65 € per overnight (*source: INSETE*).

7) Is your country / region investing on your tourism?

YES NO

If YES, how? Sport and outdoor activities tourism is a form of tourism that plays a significant role in the tourism product of the area. The Regional Authority and Municipalities in Epirus invest in tourism, with infrastructures and with “soft” projects that promote tourism, digitalisation, the use of ICT etc.

If NO, why?

8) Which stakeholders are involved in your region in relation to sport tourism promotion and development?

The main stakeholders are: the Regional Authority, Municipalities, PED Epirus, private businesses (eg. Event organizers, hotels, tourism offices etc).

9) Do you have the support of the a) local or b) central government or c) both on promoting sport tourism?

If YES, how?



Both central and local government support sport tourism either through the funding of infrastructures and related services or through promotional campaigns.

If NO, why they do not support you?

10) Which are the main challenges/ difficulties in sport tourism promotion in your region?

The covid-19 pandemic and the energy crisis due to the Ukrainian war are difficulties not only for sport tourism in the Epirus but for all aspects of the economy and society globally.

Climate change requires new strategies for the sustainable management of tourism destinations. In addition, the increase in temperature and the intensification of extreme weather phenomena leads to a re-evaluation of the tourist season. Long-term reduction trend of the snow season which is due to Climate Change also makes it difficult to attract strategic investments for destinations that offer ski activities

Increased level of cooperation among local societies and business networking in many cases is required for a more effective development and promotion of tourism and sport tourism.

11) Can you tell us some good practices that are applied by your region to promote sport tourism?

11.a) How sport tourism is promoted (e.g. media, social media and internet) in your region?

Sport tourism is integrated in the promotional mix of the tourism product of the area. Local authorities have accounts/pages on social media for tourism promotion and participate in tourism exhibitions and fairs. The promotional plan includes the promotion of sport tourism either as an autonomous form or as a secondary/complementary activity that visitors can do in Epirus. In the occasion of sport events, a separate promotion is done by the organizers and local authorities via all available channels.

12) Comparing mass tourism vs. alternative tourism (sport tourism included) which is the best tourism model for your region? Why?

The tourism strategy of the area views alternative tourism as the best tourism model for the region. The various forms of alternative tourism contribute to sustainable tourism and the goal of tourism for all seasons.

13) Has COVID-19 influenced a) tourism and/or b) sport tourism in your region?

YES X NO

If YES, on what way? Like all over the globe, Covid-19 has also influenced Epirus. The lockdowns and the restrictive measures imposed due to the pandemic, decreased the numbers of visitors to the area.



If NO, how did you manage?

14) Do you have people (human resources) who are specialized to work on sport tourism?

YES NO

If YES, what kind of services are their expertise? Human resources specialized in the field do exist in the area, in tourism offices of local authorities and in the private sector (event organizers, activity guides, coaches, hospitality etc).

If NO, do you have any plans to develop specialized workforce?

15) Which is your future strategy for the development of sport tourism in your region?

16) Do you see other forms of tourism in your region that can be developed in line with sport tourism?

15+16. The future tourism strategy in the region also includes the development and promotion of sport tourism. Indicatively, it includes: the support of sport events, the expansion of the bicycle road from Preveza-Parga to Igoumenitsa, the maintenance of hiking routes etc. Complementary to sport & outdoor activity tourism, almost all other tourism forms can also be developed in the area, such as gastronomy, cultural tourism, ecotourism, city breaks etc.



Albania (Berat)

1) Do you think that sport tourism can help economic development in your region?

YES X NO

If YES how?

Rafting, cycling, hiking, mountain run are activities that can be further explored in the Region of Berat due to its natural landscape. There are certain mostly private initiatives that aim to promote sport tourism in the region attracting an important number of visitors and tourists.

By promoting sport tourism on a more organized level, creating synergies between important public and private institutions, the region will attract more tourists contributing to the economic development of the region, and thus fostering a sustainable way of tourism development.

2) On top of economic development, in which other aspects sport tourism development can benefit your region?

Sports tourism brings significant benefits and economic boosts, both direct and indirect. Direct spending by sports tourists at host facilities, hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues stimulates the local economy. Jobs are created, and tax revenue is earned. Indirectly, sport tourism activities may also improve the image of, and opportunities available in, the areas in which the events are held. In turn, these areas attract future visitors and the money they will spend—a desirable residual for many cities.

Sports tourism can increase the livelihood level of the local people as better public facilities and transport network will be developed.

3) Does your region have specific characteristics (environmental, structural, facilities, services etc.) which fit with sport tourism promotion?

YES X NO

If YES what are the most important ones?

The Region of Berat has unique environmental characteristics and natural landscapes that can be further explored and promote sport tourism. The mountains, the river and forests can be valorised for outdoor sport activities (*Rafting, Cycling, hiking, mountain running*).

In particular, the Tomorri Mountain reaches an elevation of 2,416 metres making it the second highest peak in Albania. Mount Tomorri is one of Albania's biggest water-collecting areas situated within the Tomorri National Park, which is noted for its diverse species of deciduous and coniferous and a great variety of flora. That creates unique landscapes that can widely be used for hiking.



In addition, the region offers several opportunities for rafting, paragliding and cycling focused mostly on the wonderful Osumy canyons, the Gorica hills right above the city centre and numerous high hills and mountains surrounding the region.

4) Can you give us examples of sport tourism services (i.e. programs/activities) promoting in your region?

4.a) Which of these are the most successful? Why?

In the region of Berat, there are at least two prominent examples of sport tourism initiatives that have achieved good results.

The Albanian Rafting Group, a private organization launched in the city of Berat provides a wide range of sporting activities related to tourism such as, canyoning, river hiking, kayaking, off road tours, hydro speed, SUP, snowshoeing, caravan mule, cave exploration and a complete tour to discover untouched beaches, all followed by the best traditional Albania food.

Located in Southern Albania, near the town of Çorovoda, the Osum Canyon is perhaps Albania's best-known canyon, popular with local and foreign visitors alike. The river Osum passes through the city of Berat, a World Heritage Site, and flows through the canyon. The canyon features many underground passages and unexplored caves that are perfect for rafting.

In addition to that, the city of Berat is experiencing a notable increase of paragliding, a sporting activity that is gaining a lot of interest from residents and tourists alike. The paragliding services are being offered by one private company which provides all-year tours from the Gorica hills offering picturesque views of the old city during the adventure.

5) Do you see sport tourism:

- a) as an autonomous form of tourism to be developed,
- b) as a supportive one to mainstream tourism
- c) both forms? X

Can you give us examples?

Tour/sports operators in collaboration with local authorities (e.g. municipalities) and tourist agencies can organise festivals, tournaments and runs in nature. Such kind of activities could be *Rafting, Cycling, hiking, mountain running*

6) Which is the profile of sport tourists in your region? (e.g., age, country, family, socio-economic status)

Considering observations and a very minor set of studies from local institutions, sport tourism is mainly pursued by individuals of age 20 to 55 years old, with middle to high income for sports



such as rafting and paragliding, but of all economic status for activities such as hiking or cycling. Tourists in Berat mainly come from the Balkan Region, Western Europe, United States and China.

7) Is your country / region investing on your tourism?

YES NO

If YES, how?

If NO, why?

The role of the Region is to support the directly involved actors such as municipalities and tourism organizations. The region is also directly contributed through few EU-funded projects focused on sustainable tourism initiatives.

The municipality is also directly investing in tourism focused on promotion, improved road network, green and sustainable tourism.

8) Which stakeholders are involved in your region in relation to sport tourism promotion and development?

Tour/sports operators in collaboration with local authorities (e.g. municipalities) and tourist agencies

9) Do you have the support of the a) local or b) central government or c) both on promoting sport tourism?

If YES, how?

If NO, why they do not support you?

Yes, the central government through its regional agencies focuses on tourism development by improving the road network, developing tourism initiatives, sustaining museums, and organizing a wide series of tourism and cultural events in collaboration with the local municipalities.

10) Which are the main challenges/ difficulties in sport tourism promotion in your region?

Major challenges are mostly focused on a greater need for funds, human resources focused on tourism development in the region and an increase of local/regional tour operators that operate mainly in sport tourism initiatives.

11) Can you tell us some good practices that are applied by your region to promote sport tourism?

11.a) How sport tourism is promoted (e.g. media, social media and internet) in your region?

Local channels (tv - radio), leaflets, social media campaigns



12) Comparing mass tourism vs. alternative tourism (sport tourism included) which is the best tourism model for your region? Why?

Alternative tourism model based on the pillars of sustainability and responsible tourism is the best tourism model for the Region of Berat. Reducing the impact of mass tourism and promote an environmentally friendly model is essential in order to be social desirable, environmental viable and economic feasible.

13) Has COVID-19 influenced a) tourism and/or b) sport tourism in your region?

YES X NO

If YES, on what way?

The period March 2020 - May 2021, covid19 and restriction measures (incl. Lock-down) has affected all types of tourism, not just sport tourism. From 2022, seems that the travellers have less fear of the virus, and a more optimistic future is foreseen.

If NO, how did you manage?

14) Do you have people (human resources) who are specialized to work on sport tourism?

YES NO

If YES, what kind of services are their expertise?

If NO, do you have any plans to develop specialized workforce?

Unfortunately, the Region of Berat has a limited number of staff (10 in total) and therefore it makes it practically difficult to have the necessary human resources that are specialized to work on sport tourism.

We tend to overcome these difficulties by closely collaborating with tourism specialists in the respective municipalities of the region.

15) Which is your future strategy for the development of sport tourism in your region?

The strategy of tourism development focuses on promoting and sustaining sustainable tourism initiatives also directed towards sport tourism. In particular, we aim to

- strengthen the collaboration with the composing municipalities of the region
- strengthen the collaboration with private tourism organizations such as Albanian rafting group, paragliding companies, and tour operators in general
- promoting sport tourism through our social media channels, promotional materials and local tv
- working with the central government for more direct support



16) Do you see other forms of tourism in your region that can be developed in line with sport tourism?

Religious tourism, agrifood tourism, archaeological tourism, eco-tourism etc.



Serbia (FTTE)

1) Do you think that sport tourism can help economic development in your region?

YES NO

If YES how? Promotion of the city as a destination for sports facilities and the possibility of organizing sports competition

2) On top of economic development, in which other aspects sport tourism development can benefit your region?

Promotion of Belgrade as a cultural tourist and business destination

3) Does your region have specific characteristics (environmental, structural, facilities, services etc.) which fit with sport tourism promotion?

YES NO

If YES what are the most important ones? Athletic hall, tennis, swimming pool, basketball

4) Can you give us examples of sport tourism services (i.e. programs/activities) promoting in your region?

Tennis, basketball, volleyball, water polo

4.a) Which of these are the most successful? Why? We have infrastructural facilities that support competitions and training of the mentioned sports

5) Do you see sport tourism:

a) as an autonomous form of tourism to be developed,

b) as a supportive one to mainstream tourism

c) *both forms?*

Can you give us examples? Final four where tourists come and schedule of competitions where they can get to know Belgrade

6) Which is the profile of sport tourists in your region? (e.g., age, country, family, socio-economic status)

A professional athlete who came to compete or prepare

7) Is your country / region investing on your tourism?

YES NO



If YES, how? Active participation in international tourism fairs, improvement of the tourist offer and creation of content

If NO, why?

8) Which stakeholders are involved in your region in relation to sport tourism promotion and development?

Sports associations, hoteliers, managers of sports facilities

9) Do you have the support of the a) local or b) central government or c) both on promoting sport tourism?

If YES, how? Through coordinated activities TOS and TOB

If NO, why they do not support you?

10) Which are the main challenges/ difficulties in sport tourism promotion in your region?

Get the organisation of sports tournaments in the fierce international competition

11) Can you tell us some good practices that are applied by your region to promote sport tourism?

Bgd arena is designed so that competitions from different sports can be held, basketball, volleyball, athletics, skating

11.a) How sport tourism is promoted (e.g. media, social media and internet) in your region?

Belgrade is promoted as a destination with the capacity to organize international sports event and a destination with a rich cultural and historical heritage and as a city of fun and entertainment

12) Comparing mass tourism vs. alternative tourism (sport tourism included) which is the best tourism model for your region? Why? Current models that in addition to promoting a sports event, also promote the capacities of Belgrade as the capacities of a tourist destination

13) Has COVID-19 influenced a) tourism and/or b) sport tourism in your region?

YES **NO**

If YES, on what way? Tourist activities reduced during the pandemic as well as travel restrictions

If NO, how did you manage?

14) Do you have people (human resources) who are specialized to work on sport tourism?

YES **NO**



If YES, what kind of services are their expertise? TOB actively supports and promotes all sports event

If NO, do you have any plans to develop specialized workforce?

15) Which is your future strategy for the development of sport tourism in your region?

Constructions and expansion of sports facilities

16) Do you see other forms of tourism in your region that can be developed in line with sport tourism?

Congress tourism



Italy (ITL)

1) Do you think that sport tourism can help economic development in your region?

YES NO

If YES how?

Tourism is a fundamental key to the economic recovery of our post-health emergency region and the quality of the sport tourism needs to be improved in order to make tourist destinations more attractive and competitive. Sport tourism is a great possibility of economic development for the Emilia-Romagna region, which is the second region in Italy for cycle tourism and it is known as the "Sport Valley". More broadly, in 2022 more than 100 sporting events throughout the region, which have very positive repercussions because they are either mass events with large numbers or niche, but international, events such as the Formula 1 GP in Imola, the Moto GP in San Marino, the Ironman triathlon race, the Paralympic games, as well as tennis, volleyball and cycling, of course. These events attract many tourists who often stay in the region beyond the duration of the sport event and can spend their money in the territory. For this reason, it is important to develop touristic packages and offers that connect sport events with cultural tourism. Investments on the formation of Sport Business Managers are also key to structure and manage the touristic offer in the region. Further, slow tourism, by bike and on foot, is a type of offer that induces people to stop for longer periods, to get to know the territory in depth and then return.

2) On top of economic development, in which other aspects sport tourism development can benefit your region?

Sport tourism helps to educate people about the importance of fitness and health in general. The fun aspect involved in sport tourism plays a catalytic effect over young and less young individuals, who, by participating to these sport events or initiatives, are more likely to adopt healthy lifestyles. Sport tourism plays an important role also in bringing people together, connecting and fostering cooperation among different cultures and territories, reinforcing a sense of belonging to a same European culture. Finally, sport tourism can benefit the Emilia-Romagna region by giving the opportunity to showcase the excellences of the territory, its rich history, arts and culture.

3) Does your region have specific characteristics (environmental, structural, facilities, services etc.) which fit with sport tourism promotion?

YES NO

If YES what are the most important ones?

4) Can you give us examples of sport tourism services (i.e. programs/activities) promoting in your region?



Formula 1 GP in Imola, the Moto GP in San Marino, the Ironman triathlon race, the Paralympic games, Davis Cup in Bologna, Giro d'Italia, European Championship 2022 Emilia-Romagna (match-race).

4.a) Which of these are the most successful? Why?

5) Do you see sport tourism:

- a) as an autonomous form of tourism to be developed,
- b) as a supportive one to mainstream tourism
- c) **both forms?**

Can you give us examples?

6) Which is the profile of sport tourists in your region? (e.g., age, country, family, socio-economic status)

Data not available.

7) Is your country / region investing on your tourism?

YES NO

If YES, how?

After the massive investment on the waterfronts, over 32 million in funds, the Region is now intervening in support of the hotels in Emilia-Romagna, putting hotel entrepreneurs in a position to be able to redevelop their structures with advantageous conditions. In particular, eco-sustainable projects will be able to obtain contributions of up to 90%: an important signal to reward companies that, by exploiting the technologies available today, contribute to Emilia-Romagna's path towards carbon neutrality. The goal is to go towards modern, comfortable, functional, but above all sustainable hotels: able to contribute to the fight against climate change, using technology to reduce energy consumption and activate circular economy processes. There are 300 million euros available to businesses: 150 million from banks and 150 million in EIB loans - the European Investment Bank - for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and for those with up to 3,000 employees (mid cap) who will be able access loans with amortization up to 15 years for amounts from 400 thousand to 5 million euros.

If NO, why?

8) Which stakeholders are involved in your region in relation to sport tourism promotion and development?

9) Do you have the support of the a) local or b) central government or c) both on promoting sport tourism?



If YES, how?

If NO, why they do not support you?

10) Which are the main challenges/ difficulties in sport tourism promotion in your region?

11) Can you tell us some good practices that are applied by your region to promote sport tourism?

Promotion of slow-tourism through mountain trekking (<https://www.appenninoslow.it/>) and cycle tourism (<https://emiliaromagnaturismo.it/it/sport/cycling>).

11.a) How sport tourism is promoted (e.g. media, social media and internet) in your region?

Sport tourism is mostly promoted through the internet and social media. Bigger sport events are promoted through also through tv ads.

12) Comparing mass tourism vs. alternative tourism (sport tourism included) which is the best tourism model for your region? Why?

Given the small-medium size of the Emilia Romagna cities, as well as the well-developed rural areas in the region, alternative tourism has probably greater margins for growth. Local traditions and cultures are very rich and diverse in Emilia-Romagna, and they represent an important asset.

13) Has COVID-19 influenced a) tourism and/or b) sport tourism in your region?

YES NO

If YES, on what way?

As in many other places, sport events have been cancelled or postponed.

If NO, how did you manage?

14) Do you have people (human resources) who are specialized to work on sport tourism?

YES NO

If YES, what kind of services are their expertise?

If NO, do you have any plans to develop specialized workforce?

Tourism is closely related and increasingly connected to transport and mobility policies, and this is reflected in the approach adopted by Emilia Romagna region. Sport tourism is a part of a bigger whole, for which some level of competence and expertise will have to be developed in the near future.



15) Which is your future strategy for the development of sport tourism in your region?

Fostering alliances and networks of stakeholders for the adoption of participatory multisectoral approaches.

16) Do you see other forms of tourism in your region that can be developed in line with sport tourism?

Sport tourism can be positively impacted by the growth of tourism in rural areas, with the improvement of the capacity and quality of receptive structures (BnBs, Country Houses, Agri Tourisms, Hotels...).



Montenegro (Tivat)

1) Do you think that sport tourism can help economic development in your region?

YES NO

If YES how?

Sport tourism is very important kind of tourism and its very significant form of tourism which contributes in the extension of the tourist season.

2) On top of economic development, in which other aspects sport tourism development can benefit your region?

With a development of sports tourism, the sports infrastructure of a certain region will also be developed. Developed sports infrastructure implies quality education of top athletes with a special emphasis on youth.

3) Does your region have specific characteristics (environmental, structural, facilities, services etc.) which fit with sport tourism promotion?

YES NO

If YES what are the most important ones?

Our region has ideal climatic and geographical conditions for the development this type of tourism. Abundance of sun and wind, sea water, diversity of relief makes us ideal for the development of various types of sport tourism.

4) Can you give us examples of sport tourism services (i.e. programs/activities) promoting in your region?

Sailing is the most represented and the most promote kind of sports activities in our region.

4.a) Which of these are the most successful? Why?

We organise "Wind festival", "New year regatta"... and a whole host of other events which relate to sailing. All those events have been organized in the period of pre and after season.

5) Do you see sport tourism:

a) as an autonomous form of tourism to be developed,

b) as a supportive one to mainstream tourism

c) both forms?

Can you give us examples?

6) Which is the profile of sport tourists in your region? (e.g., age, country, family, socio-economic status)



The sport tourists usually come from west Eu countries, with age between 25-30, and with very good socio-economic status.

7) Is your country / region investing on your tourism?

YES NO

If YES, how?

In the last few years, our country has started to invest significant funds in the reconstruction of sports infrastructure. However, those funds are still not enough to be able to talk about a serious development of sports tourism. We need Olympic, football and other stadiums that will meet the needs of the world's most successful clubs.

If NO, why?

8) Which stakeholders are involved in your region in relation to sport tourism promotion and development?

Sport tourism has been promoted by national and local tourism organizations, national and local media, sports clubs and associations.

9) Do you have the support of the a) local or b) central government or c) both on promoting sport tourism?

If YES, how?

Depending on the type of sports event, it is organized and promoted from different levels.

If NO, why they do not support you?

10) Which are the main challenges/ difficulties in sport tourism promotion in your region?

Examples of the future challenge of sports tourism can be the following, the first would be used for greater profitability of the offered accommodation and refer to the specialization of accommodation capacities for a certain group of consumers, i.e. special target groups, for example cyclists. While another example can be the branding of objects that would bring mutual benefit. Such a place would be attractive to tourists because it is intended, i.e. adapted to their needs. The facilities would increase recognition and occupancy, the destination would complete its content offer and would have an additional comparative advantage.

11) Can you tell us some good practices that are applied by your region to promote sport tourism?

The best practice from our region is "Wind festival". It is a combination of sports, music and cultural event.

11.a) How sport tourism is promoted (e.g. media, social media and internet) in your region?



Its promoted in all local, national media, social networks, etc.

12) Comparing mass tourism vs. alternative tourism (sport tourism included) which is the best tourism model for your region? Why?

The combination of alternative forms of tourism represents the best model of sustainable development of a tourist destination.

13) Has COVID-19 influenced a) tourism and/or b) sport tourism in your region?

YES NO

If YES, on what way?

COVID-19 slowed down tourism develop and development of all types of tourism in our region.

If NO, how did you manage?

14) Do you have people (human resources) who are specialized to work on sport tourism?

YES x NO

If YES, what kind of services are their expertise?

If NO, do you have any plans to develop specialized workforce?

15) Which is your future strategy for the development of sport tourism in your region?

The development of sports tourism is recognized through national and local tourism development strategies as well as local sports development plans.

16) Do you see other forms of tourism in your region that can be developed in line with sport tourism?

Along with sports tourism, other selective forms of tourism such as adventure, birdwatching, glamping, rural, agro etc. can be developed.



Greece-Thessaloniki (CERTH)

1) Do you think that sport tourism can help economic development in your region?

YES NO

If YES how?

Sport Tourism might help the economic impact in the region of Thessaloniki. Sport tourism involves travel to other places and engagement in various destinations. Today, small scale sport events, such as mountain trial running or mountain biking events, have become powerful tourist attractions. In the region of Thessaloniki, we host both small-scale outdoor events and major sport events such as "Alexander the Great" marathon. Also, sport tourism empowers local businesses by creating demand in areas and extent the seasonality phase of the tourism. Additionally, local communities can benefit from these jobs and income opportunities. Generally, sport tourism could serve as direct revenue for the host destination and might improve the GDP of the country.

2) On top of economic development, in which other aspects sport tourism development can benefit your region?

The sport tourism could help to increase the touristic season, create jobs for local, build a sport image, empower the community pride for their destination and impact the individuals' wellbeing.

3) Does your region have specific characteristics (environmental, structural, facilities, services etc.) which fit with sport tourism promotion?

YES NO

If YES what are the most important ones?

Thessaloniki has many characteristics which fit in sport tourism sector. First, it has several green areas for outdoor fitness, bicycle road, sport infrastructures and the Seih Sou Mountain. Into this mountain there are several trail running, hiking and mountain bike paths to experience. A tourist could explore several sport activities in Thessaloniki combined with other tourist activities such as visiting museums. Also, Thessaloniki has an Olympic Museum. Thousands of people visit the museum. Moreover, in Thessaloniki took place two major running marathons.

4) Can you give us examples of sport tourism services (i.e. programs/activities) promoting in your region?

4.a) Which of these are the most successful? Why?

a) Alexander the Great marathon event

b) Thessaloniki night half marathon



- c) Hiking in Seih Sou
- d) Gedi Koule downhill race in the old town

5) Do you see sport tourism:

- a) as an autonomous form of tourism to be developed,
- b) as a supportive one to mainstream tourism
- c) **both forms?**

Can you give us examples?

Sport tourism can be developed in both forms, either as an autonomous form or a supportive form. As an autonomous form, it can be developed for sport events or for tourists that seek exclusively destinations for sport activities. However, sport tourism can operate complementary to other forms such as heritage tourism, culinary tourism and museum tourism.

6) Which is the profile of sport tourists in your region? (e.g., age, country, family, socio-economic status)

The vast majority are families or couples who travel in Chalkidiki or the North Aegean Island. Thessaloniki is a city-break destination, and they stay up to 4 days.

7) Is your country / region investing on your tourism?

YES NO

If YES, how? Mainly yes but there are few problems. Initially, local authorities and companies claim for new kind of tourist with specific profile and needs. However, there are no investments and nothing of marketing actions on that way. The major focus is on city running events. Still, there is some room for the outdoor activities sector.

If NO, why?

8) Which stakeholders are involved in your region in relation to sport tourism promotion and development?

The main stakeholders are: the Regional Authority, Municipalities, private businesses and non-profit organizations.

9) Do you have the support of the a) local or b) central government or c) both on promoting sport tourism?

If YES, how?

Both central and local government support sport tourism either through the funding of infrastructures and related services or through promotional campaigns.

If NO, why they do not support you?



10) Which are the main challenges/ difficulties in sport tourism promotion in your region?

- a) covid 19 pandemic
- b) lack of expertise in human resources
- c) too many competitors
- d) waste management
- e) fund raising opportunities
- f) collaboration between public and private sector
- g) to find volunteers who are our major pillar to bid the marathon

11) Can you tell us some good practices that are applied by your region to promote sport tourism?

11.a) How sport tourism is promoted (e.g. media, social media and internet) in your region?

Sport tourism is integrated in the promotional mix of the tourism product of Thessaloniki. Local stakeholder had understood the power of sport tourism products and now they promote sport services in mass media. Also, local authorities participate in theme trades related to sport tourism sector in order to develop a sport image and tourism awareness for the destination. Of course, there are several channels such as YouTube and Instagram on which companies post their footage and images of their products.

12) Comparing mass tourism vs. alternative tourism (sport tourism included) which is the best tourism model for your region? Why?

Both could work in Thessaloniki. This city has several hotels, hostels and guesthouses for large groups and, also, holds a unique identity of an alternative destination for youths and couples. I strongly believe that both forms could well-combined and offer different experience to the tourists. Last, I think that mass tourism could bring the direct revenue which is needed more than the past and alternative tourism might provide and reveal the quality tourism form with small groups, not so crowded places.

13) Has COVID-19 influenced a) tourism and/or b) sport tourism in your region?

YES X NO

If YES, on what way? Like all over the globe, Covid-19 has also influenced Thessaloniki. However, the last year was a blast. There was tourist all over Thessaloniki.

If NO, how did you manage?

14) Do you have people (human resources) who are specialized to work on sport tourism?



YES X NO

If YES, what kind of services are their expertise? Yes and no at the same time. In Thessaloniki there are few people who holds expertise in the field. However, there are not enough to coverage the total demand in the job.

If NO, do you have any plans to develop specialized workforce?

15) Which is your future strategy for the development of sport tourism in your region?

Local stakeholders and authorities will visit two sport trades and will discuss with tour operators. Also, local media promote sport tourism services for outbound tourism.

16) Do you see other forms of tourism in your region that can be developed in line with sport tourism?

Complementary to sport tourism, almost all other tourism forms can also be developed in the Thessaloniki such as culinary tourism, cultural tourism, city breaks etc.