

Běžecké závody Run Czech jako produkt sportovní turistiky

Run Czech as a product of sport tourism

Eva Schwartzhoffová

*Faculty of Physical Culture, Palacký University in Olomouc, Czechia
Fakulta tělesné kultury, Palackého univerzita, Olomouc*

Abstract

This article presents the Run Czech series of cross-country races as sports events that have the potential to contribute to economic development in the Czech Republic by increasing tourism. It presents the results of research conducted during the family run in association with the Olomouc Half Marathon in 2014. These results confirm, among others, the general view that sporting events brings benefits to the host destination by increasing the number of tourists, including not only international but also domestic participants and the people who accompany them.

Abstrakt

Článek představuje sérii běžeckých závodů Run Czech jako sportovní událost, která má potenciál pro rozvoj ekonomiky a cestovního ruchu v České republice. Prezentuje výsledky výzkumu realizovaného v rámci rodinného běhu olomouckého půlmaratonu v roce 2014. Ty, mimo jiné, potvrzují všeobecný názor, že sportovní akce přináší hostiteli přínos v podobě zvýšeného počtu turistů, a to nejen zahraničních, ale i místních účastníků a jejich doprovodu.

Keywords: *sport tourism event, running race, economic impact, tourism development.*

Klíčová slova: *sportovní cestovní ruch, akce a události, běžecký závod, ekonomický dopad, rozvoj cestovního ruchu.*

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry takes advantage of some fields of sport, which are moreover developing into an essential part of the standard of tourism services. Sporting events are crucial for sports tourism and have a multiplier effect on the development of tourism. The economic potential of these events is also significant. According to an AT Kerney report, the worldwide sports events market, defined as all ticketing, media and marketing revenues for major sports, was worth €45 billion in 2010 (Collington, 2011). Sports events are also seen as a great marketing opportunity to attract tourists and promote a city or country. Running events generate a diverse group of tourists, not only running fans, but also the runners themselves. Running races are for-profit businesses which are beneficial to the host cities and states by developing tourism, bringing profits to the organizers, visibility to sponsors and ultimately unforgettable experiences to participants and fans. Even though Europe still cannot reach the level of popularity that running has in the running superpowers such as Japan and the character of marathons in New York, Chicago and Boston, races through European cities, nonetheless, rank among the most attractive. The most important road races (marathons) in Europe include those in Berlin, Paris, London, Lisbon, Budapest, Stockholm, Rotterdam and Prague. Most European cities in the temperate zone must fit their races into a two-month period. Thus, especially with the shorter runs, significant competition emerges for marathon tourists. According to the news portal Běžeckýsvět.cz, there are 31 million runners in the world who travel abroad for races twice a year (Uhl, 2011). Athletes are offered a wide range of the well-known races when it comes to marathon tourism. Thus, for reasons of capacity, these

runs are regularly sold out several years in advance. Currently, sports tourists can choose from a marathon through vineyards (du Medoc, Bordeaux), a marathon through three religions (Jerusalem), a marathon with a view of a monster around Loch Ness or a marathon through the Alps.

In the Czech Republic, in addition to runs organized by groups of amateurs which avoid main roads, a number of races have emerged with excellent facilities for anyone interested in attending. In terms of weekend of marathons, organizers of big races offer a series of shorter runs accessible to recreational runners or families with children. All these events attract tens of thousands of people to city centers, which is also good for tourism. The most famous running event in the Czech Republic, the Prague International Marathon, has been held since 1995. In addition to organizing the traditional city marathon, the organizers hoped to promote tourism. The popularity and positive reaction from the public as well as the high level of participation among both runners and spectators is a mark of quality and a guarantee of good publicity for the Czech Republic. Among runners from all over the world the race is primarily famous for its route, which is one of the most beautiful in the world. The Prague International Marathon was even ranked among the top 10 marathons in the world.

The goal of the organizers was to attract visitors and runners to regions outside Prague. Therefore, the running league **RunCzech** was founded in 2012. It consists of three Prague races (the Marathon, the ½ Marathon and the Grand Prix) as well as four 1/2 marathons in České Budejovice, Olomouc, Ústí nad Labem and Karlovy Vary and it also adopts one so-called guest marathon. The league is currently expanding to other regional capitals. The races are designed for experienced runners as well as for beginners. In each city, the main race is organized for adults and another run is organized for parents with children. The events differ in terms of their venue, route, and number of participants, but the registration procedure, rules and programs are the same for all the races. Currently there are four distances offered. In addition to the races there is always a rich accompanying program. Including for example a sports exhibition, at which the organizers of other running events are able to promote their own events. The series has received a total of 6 quality labels (3 gold and 3 silver) from the International Athletics Federation IAAF. In terms of the number of labels of quality, the Czech Republic thus ranks fourth in the world (behind the United Kingdom, Japan and China). This fact plays an important part in the decision process when choosing this event or the Czech Republic as a sport destination. This label is not only an award for the race itself, it also represents a guarantee of quality for the Czech Republic. Thus, just as the Czech Republic is already known throughout the world for its historical monuments and its beer, it is also becoming well known for hosting top quality running events. Marathon tourism has been a trend in the last few years. CzechTourism therefore helps the organizers of these races with the promotion of this sports event to develop tourism in the regions.

In the professional literature, attention has been paid to sports tourism (Higham & Hinch, 2009) or to big mega events. The topic of distance running events and tourism has been addressed in the last few years by, for example, Getz and McConnell (2014) or Shipway (2012). The issue of running races as sport events, has been addressed in works about the Gold Coast Marathon in Australia (Funk, Toohey and Braun, 2007; Chalip and McGuirty, 2004), about the London Marathon (Shipway and Jones, 2008) and about marathons in Germany (Hallmann, Kaplanidou and Breuer, 2010).

Individuals with high levels of enduring involvement in running have an increased frequency of participation in running events. They also stay overnight for running events and spend money on running related goods and services. Traveling to foreign countries and participating in endurance distance events, such as marathons or other running races, requires considerable dedication and reflects a level of enduring involvement with the recreational activity. While these sports events contribute to a local community's economy and add to its marketing appeal, smaller recurring sports events such as local marathons require relatively low investment in terms of organization and attract a relatively big number of participants and spectators on a regular basis. Such small events can generate more sustainable benefits for the destination because they make use of the

existing infrastructure, and are able to cooperate with tourism services in the destination where they take place. Reoccurring sports events and numerous smaller-scale events and sports matches, generate income for local and regional economies through an increase in spending at and near event sites, thanks to the increasing number visitors coming for the event who also use the occasion to participate in an array of tourist activities (Nauright, Giampiccoli & Lee, 2013). Some authors also deal with issue of the relationship between sports events and destinations. For example Weed and Bull (2009) consider sport tourism to be a phenomenon arising from a spectrum of unique interactions between people, place and activities, and claim sports events can be used as tourist attractions by destinations to develop the image of the destination.

The importance of sporting events in travel and tourism has been addressed by a number of Czech as well as foreign authors. The issue of the economic impact of events has been calculated by, among others, Šauer and Repík (2014), Dwyer, Forsyth and Spurr (2004), Wagner (1997) as well as Zhou, Yanagida, Chakravorty and Leung (1997). The Economics of sustainable events has been discussed by Raj and Musgrave (2009). The economic benefits of events are one of the major aspects of holding mega outdoor events in a city – to boost financial assets for the local community. Events have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism when they cater to out-of-region visitors, and they may also benefit the destination by bringing in revenue through grants or sponsorships (Getz, 2008). Some aspects of this role include events as image makers, economic benefit generators and creators of tourist attractions. These all contributing to the development of the economy of the host location and to supporting local businesses (Raj & Musgrave, 2009).

Some of the frequently used tools to evaluate economic impacts of event (not only sporting one) on the host destination include: CGE (Computable General Equilibrium) analysis and CBA (Cost Benefit Analysis). While the first two methods quantify the economic benefits, the third method is used mainly for the evaluation of other societal impacts that must also be taken into account. This includes an assessment of the environmental, social and media impact of an event. The English organisation Event Impacts provides on its web pages a toolkit of resources to help event organisers improve their evaluation of the impact associated with a sporting event. The main aspect of an event evaluated is attendance, which provides the basis for measuring other impacts (expenditures, consumption and employment, as well as gross and net benefit).

To analyze the data from the “RunCzech” events as tourism products and evaluate their impact on tourism development, we have used data from the “Study of the Economic Impact of International Running Events of RunCzech” (Raabová, 2011) and “RunCzech – Event Guide 2014”.

Thanks to money spent by runners themselves as well as the people who accompany them and other visitors, the races organized by RunCzech, have a significant economic impact on the entire Czech economy, as well as on the economy and the development of tourism in the towns and regions in which they are held. The first race took place in 1995 and was attended by less than a thousand runners (958). While another 15 000 people attended the related events. Today this prestigious sporting event is annually attended by a total of 69 000 people. The Prague International Marathon, has reached its capacity limit of 9 000 runners. In 2014, 12 500 runners participated in RunCzech races in Prague. The competitive runs alone all together drew 34 346 contestants in 2012. According to statistics the events held by RunCzech in Prague, Ústí nad Labem and Olomouc in 2011, were attended by 81 194 people (25 535 runners and 54 659 spectators). The geographic origin of the visitors was as follows: 34,9 % were local runners and their companions, 38,4 % were from other regions of the Czech Republic and 26,7 % were foreign. On average, foreign runners bring with them 2,27 companions. Czech runners, on average, arrive accompanied by 1,99 other people. All visitors together spent 215 560 000 CZK on accommodation, transport, food or other services and shopping in connection with RunCzech events. Of this, 138 210 000 CZK came from foreign visitors. The events were therefore a net benefit to the economy of the country. Marathons also draw another type of visitors. These are ordinary spectators who do not come to the city as marathon runners or as their companions. The amount spent by these spectators is not insignificant.

The most profitable events in RunCzech are two races (a marathon and a half marathon) in Prague. According to the organizers, they bring a total benefit to the Czech economy of nearly 400 million CZK. These two events were visited by 7 996 active participants from 86 countries in 2011. Along with those who accompanied the athletes, the total number reached 19 990 foreign participants.

METHODS

The primary methodology used in our research was quantitative research in the form of online polling through a web interface. The survey itself was conducted from the day of the event until the end of August 2014. Questionnaires were made available to all participants in the event and completing it was optional. Adult participants in the family run of the Olomouc ½ marathon race were made aware of the survey by the organizers – student volunteers from the Faculty of Physical Culture – during the accompanying program of the event as well as during the registration for the race and before the start. The results of the survey from the portal were subjected to statistical analysis and evaluation using descriptive statistics in MS Excel.

The survey was conducted on a sample of **110 respondents**. Of the respondents, **54 %** were **women** and **46 %** were **men**. The survey consisted of questions which were divided into three main groups: a) socioeconomic characteristics, b) tourism aspects of participation in the race c) the aspect of running as a sport activity.

RESULTS

The age distribution of respondents is as follows: young people aged **18-40 years** accounted for **72,3 %** of the sample, middle-aged people aged 41 – 60 represented 25,3 % of the total number and people over 61 years old represented 2,4 %. Most participants (26,4 %) in the family run were **local residents** – meaning that they came from the Olomouc Region (or rather identified this region as their place of residence). In addition to locals, the majority of families that came to Olomouc to run were from the Moravian-Silesian Region (21,3 %) and South Moravia (9,2 %). The Pardubice and Zlín Regions together with the inhabitants of Prague each made up approximately 8,1 % of respondents in the sample. None of the 110 respondents came from the Karlovy Vary or Vysočina region, and there were no foreign respondents (since the survey covered only participants in the family run and was not offered in other languages). Other questions in our survey were aimed to determine whether and how, or rather to what extent, participation in a family run influences tourism in the city. We were interested in how long the participants in the run stayed in the city, that is, whether they spent the night in the city or its surroundings and in what type of accommodation. Whether they made use of local food services, and, if they did, how they evaluated those services. Whether they were or were not satisfied with the supply and quality of such services. From this part of the research the following conclusions emerged: **83,0 %** of respondents came to Olomouc not only to participate in the race, but also in order to **get to know the city**. Only 17 % were runners who came exclusively to participate in the race. In 32,0 % of cases one or two members of the family ran, while **68,0 %** formed a running group of **three or more family members**. This as a whole is very pleasing both from the perspective of how people participate in sporting events, and from the perspective of encouraging an active approach to sport in the family. In terms of accommodation, considering that the vast majority of participants were people from the Olomouc Region it is not surprising that 69,0 % of them did not use any accommodation. Another **15,0 %** said they were accommodated in public **accommodation facilities** (hotels, guest houses, hostels) and 16,0 % of the participants were accommodated in private residences – i. e. with their friends and relatives. Given that the Olomouc ½ marathon itself is a daylong event, it can be assumed that food services will be used by participants to a significant extent. This was also confirmed by the results which show that **77,5 %** of respondents made use

of *food services* and just under a quarter, precisely 22,5 % of the respondents did not eat in town. In this case is necessary to mention another of the limits of our survey, which is that respondents were not asked to distinguish between dining and refreshments, and both of these options were considered to be the same. We also did not ask about the category of food services as we were only interested in whether or not they took advantage of these services.

The last part of our research is devoted to the race itself, its organization and the analysis of aspects related to the physical activity of participants and their preparation for and participation in this event. The following findings and results were revealed: **71,5 %** of respondents participated in this run for the *first time*. 28,5 % of respondents had already participated in races several times before (regardless of whether it was also a family run or another type of the race). Most respondents (**84,8 %**) identified themselves as *recreational* runners and 15,2 % considered themselves to be performance runners. This is related to the results of further investigation into how much time participants devoted to preparing for this race. 53,6 % of surveyed participants spent an extended period of time preparing for the race, while 46,4 % spent only a small period of time preparing, which in practice means that they did not prepare. A surprising result emerged from the question of whether the respondent had participated in another event within the RunCzech series. It was expected that the respondents would be people who came to run, because the race was taking place in or nearby their home. Therefore, the fact that 46,0 % of them were involved in other RunCzech events was surprising, although the number of participants was lower compared to the remaining 54,0 % of respondents who did not attend any other race in this series. Notable among the events this **46 %** said that they had already *participated in this year sometime or in the past* were the Prague ½ Marathon and the Volkswagen Prague Marathon. It can be said that this group of runners – participants in running events – for us represent a potential group of persons participating in tourism – active sports tourists, as well as passive tourists in the case of their family escort.

DISCUSSION

According to a survey conducted by GfK, the average age of people in the population who run is 19–39. This corresponds with the results of our survey. Although, according to the GfK Study (Winklerová, 2014), the number of women at the starting line increases as the races get shorter (22–29 %) and in family runs there are far more women. Almost half of the participants in runs are university educated and have above-average incomes.

The positive contribution of this race on tourism can be documented with statistics relating to tourism in the Olomouc region in the second quarter of 2014. At that time the number of overnight stays increased by 5,6 % (compared to the previous quarter) and the number of foreign visitors also increased by 6,1 %. This was related directly to the organization of the half marathon. According to the Czech Statistical Office, there has been an increase in the number Czech residents traveling to Olomouc for both shorter and longer stays. By contrast, the average number of over-nights stays by visitors to Olomouc has stagnated. This corresponds with the results of our research, which came to the same conclusion: that while race participants come along with the people who accompany them, only a minimum number of them stay overnight because they are either locals or residents of neighboring regions (Český statistický úřad, 2014).

One limit of the study in identifying visitor's motivation for attending the race is the fact that: although 83% of respondents reported that they came to the event not only to run, but also to "get to know the city," our questionnaire did not sufficiently distinguish between those who came purely to see the city as such and those who came to participate in the accompanying program.

CONCLUSION

Sport tourism has become an important and economically profitable activity within the tourism industry. Running races have become very popular sporting events and can be a key element in economic development for the Czech Republic. Travelers who come to participate in running race are more important for the event itself and for the sport business, but travelers who come to watch the running race are more important for a local destination and its tourism development. Running events in Prague can be considered events of international importance with significant economic impact, including an impact on tourism. Runners from more than 100 nationalities participated in events in Prague. In these terms, the second most international marathon was the New York Marathon, where the share of foreign participants was about 17 % lower. (RunCzech – Event Guide, 2014). The findings of our survey conducted at the Olomouc family run identified the profile of running tourists. The typical *profile* of the adult participant of the family race is a *women between 18-40 years*. She is a *recreational runner* from Moravia, who has come together with another *2-3 members of her family*. She participated *for the first time*, although some have already *taken part in another race* within the RunCzech Series. She takes advantage of *gastronomical services* as well as *hotel or private accommodation* options.

Measuring economic impact allows managers to evaluate their economic return on investment, but it also demonstrates how events drive economic benefits – allowing event organisers to develop practices which maximise these benefits.

References

- Collignon, H. (2011, May). Sports Market. Retrived from: http://www.atkearney.com/paper/-/asset_publisher/dVxv4Hz2h8bS/content/the-sports-market/10192#sthash.xOMDHQb8.dpuf
- Český statistický úřad (2014). *Cestovní ruch v Olomouckém kraji ve 2. čtvrtletí 2014*. Retrived from institution website: <http://www.czso.cz/xm/redakce.nsf/>
- Dwyer, L, Forsyth, P. & Spurr, R. (2004). Evaluating tourism's economic effects: new and old approaches. *Tourism Management* 25, 307–317.
- Getz, D. & McConnell, A. (2014). Comparing Trail Runners and Mountain Bikers: Motivation, Involvement, Portfolios, and Event-Tourist Careers. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*. 15(1), 69–101.
- Funk, D. C., Toohey, K. & Bruun, T. (2007). International Sport Event Participation: Prior Sport Involvement, Destination Image and Travel Motive. *European Sport Management Quarterly*. 7(3), 227–248.
- Higham, J. & Hinch, T. (2009). *Sport and Tourism: Globalization, Mobility and Identity*. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Hallmann, K, Kaplanidou, K & Breuer, Ch. (2010). Event image perceptions among active and passive sports tourist at marathon races. *International Journal of Sports Marketing Sponsorship*, 10(4), 37–52.
- Chalip, L. & McGuiry, J. (2004). Bundling sport events with the host destination. *Journal of Sport Tourism* 9(3), 267–282.
- Nauright, J., Giampiccoli, A. & Lee, S. S. (2013). Events and Sport Tourism. In. Finkel et.al (Eds.). *Research Themes for Events*. London: Cabi Publishing.
- Praque International Marathon (2014, June). RunCzech. – Event guide.
- Raabová, T. (2012). *Economic Impact of International Running Events of RunCzech*. Praha: EconomicImpact.
- Raj, R. & Musgrave, J. (2009). *Event Management and Sustainability*. London: Cabi Publishing.
- Shipway, R. & Jones, I. (2008). The Great Suburban Everest: An 'Insiders' Perspective on Experiences at the 2007 Flora London Marathon. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*. 13(1), 61–77.
- Shipway, R., (2012). Distance running events and the 'third place'. In. Shipway, R. Fyall, A. (Eds.) *International Sports Events. Impacts, experiences and identities* (208 – 220) London: Routledge.
- Šauer, M. & Repík, O. (2013). *Ekonomické aspekty událostí cestovního ruchu – teoretické přístupy k měření dopadů*. In Klímová, V. & Žitek, V. (Eds.). *Sborník příspěvků z XVI. Mezinárodního kolokvia o regionálních vědách*. (pp. 593–602). Brno: Masarykova univerzita.
- Weed, M. & Bull, Ch. (2009). *Sport Tourism: Participants, Policy and Providers*. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Uhl, J. (2011, June 15). Olomouci nekončíme. *Běžecký svět*. Retrived from <http://www.bezdeckyvet.cz/clanky/olomouci-nekoncime/180>
- Vincent, L. (2014, April 24). Běžci se valí městy. *Ekonom* 19, 24–28.
- Wagner, J. E. (1997). Estimating the economic impacts of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 24 (3), 592–608.
- Winklerová, A. (2014, June 11). Češi rádi sportují. Retrived from <http://www.gfk.com/cz/news-and-events/news/stranky/cesi-radi-sportuji.aspx>
- Zhou, D, Yanagida, J., Chakravorty, U & Leung, P. (1997). Estimating economic impacts from tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 24(1), 76–89.