

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT – BUCHAREST



Abstract of the doctoral thesis:

Author: Marcu Daniela

Scientific advisor: Prof. Phd. Tudor Virgil

Title of the thesis: *Strategies for promoting street running sports events adapted to the new sports consumer*

Keywords: sports event, sports marketing, running events

Introduction

Sports activities regularly practiced contribute to improving physical and mental health. These include physical activities carried out in free time, both independently and in an organized manner, physical activities carried out at work and sports activities carried out in performance sport.

Practicing sports activities, considering their effects, have a particularly important role in forming an active lifestyle and in maintaining an optimal state of health. The following depend on the state of health: harmonious physical development, formation of a correct body posture, good coordination of physical, organic and mental functions, stimulation of the body's major functions, increase of the body's resistance, etc.

Motivation and purpose

In the context of the chosen theme, sports marketing brings together all the activities carried out to promote street running sports events, from the conception to the conclusion of the events.

One of the reasons for choosing this theme lies in the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle in which movement and participation in running sports events play a primary role.

Another reason why I chose this theme was the importance of creating a marketing strategy that can have a beneficial effect both on the sports events organized by Clubul Sportiv Bucharest Running Club Association, as well as on sports event organizations in general, and the activities to promote them are carried out in an overwhelming proportion through the mass media.

Theoretical, methodological and operational framework of the research

The research undertaken in this thesis was achieved under the aegis of the National University of Physical Education and Sports in Bucharest, within the Doctoral School. The thesis was structured in three parts.

The theoretical background

Street running is a widespread social phenomenon, a form of addiction, which millions of practitioners consume regularly with tenacity and pleasure, having immense benefits. Street running has become very popular lately, especially the organized running races. Various running events take place around the world at different distances and locations, including charity running events

Specialists in the field have demonstrated, over time, that participation in sports events has a beneficial role on positive self-esteem, efficiency in daily activities, reduction of mental tension and stress, manifestation of well-being, organization of running sports events representing an excellent means of creating good mood, optimism and self-confidence.

Conclusions

Sports marketing refers to the use of the sports field as a tool to promote the products and services of sports organizations.

We believe that an important role is played by the promotion system used for each event, using online promotion, both nationally and internationally.

Through the promotion strategies carried out by the organizers, street running sports

events are considered by sports consumers as a way of spending free time, entertainment, socializing and practicing physical activities.

International promotion made it possible to increase the number of participants from various countries of the world at the same time with the improvement of tourism.

Part II of the thesis

The purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to identify the opinions of runners regarding the way to promote the running sports events organized by the Bucharest Running Club Sports Association in which they participated, as well as to identify a profile of the participants in this category of competitions.

In the secondary plan of the research, the emphasis was placed on identifying the opinions of the organizers of the street running sports events organized by the Bucharest Running Club Association regarding the way of organizing the running sports events Bucharest Half Marathon and Bucharest Marathon. The importance of this study consists in creating an image regarding the main aspects within the process of developing a sports culture from the very initial planning phase of such an event.

The objectives of preliminary research

- Studying the opinions of the participants regarding the aspects that need to be improved when organizing and promoting running sports events;
- Establishing a correlation between the participant's profile and the plan to promote running sports events;
- Forming a plan to promote running sports events in accordance with the wishes and the type of participants.

Hypotheses of preliminary research

- Polling the opinion of the participants in the running sports events regarding the organization and promotion of the running sports events leads to the creation of a profile of the runners;
- Identifying the opinions of the organizers regarding the way of conducting and organizing street running sports events leads to establishing the possibilities of development and improvement of sports events.

Subjects, place and duration of preliminary research

The research was carried out in the online environment by means of a questionnaire that was addressed to the participants of the running sports events organized by the Bucharest Running Club Association. The data collection interface was made through the Daedalus Online Data Collection application.

In order to investigate the profile of the runner in street running sports events, a sample of 1054 runners was included.

Preliminary research conclusions

- From the analysis undertaken, we conclude that the average age of the participant is 39.07 years, and 64% of the runners are men. Also, from the point of view of the socio-demographic profile, the runner at the street running events has university or postgraduate education and monthly income between 2000-4999 lei or over 5000 lei;
- Participants in running sports events are active people, 41% of them participate in various sports activities, go on trips and hikes, on average 2-3 times a week. Also, participants in running sports events read books, surf the Internet and attend personal development courses;
- The preliminary research led to establishing the profile of the participant in the running sports events, which led to the confirmation of the first working hypothesis: *Polling the opinion of the participants in the running sports events regarding the organization and promotion of the running sports events leads to the realization of a profile of runners.*
- A final conclusion to be drawn from the preliminary research can be represented in a first phase by the importance of monitoring the way of organization correlated with a questionnaire applied to the participants from which the elements that need to be improved will be extracted, having the final aim to provide athletes an optimal framework for these competitions. From the perspective of these aspects, it also emerges the need to develop a new promotion strategy necessary for the transmission of useful information regarding the organization and conduct of events.

Part III of the thesis

Purpose of basic research

The purpose of the research wants to highlight the importance of the existence of a correlation between the profile and the desires of the participants and the promotion tools of running sports events through the media and social networks. Also, the aim of the research is to identify the influence of the mass media on the development of running sports events.

Research hypotheses

- Developing a strategy to promote street running sports events, depending on the profile of the participants, can lead to the corresponding increase in the number of participants, depending on the age categories;
- The application of a promotion plan, consistent with the profile of the sports consumer, has a positive impact on the development of running sports events.

Subjects, place and duration of research

The present research is based on the preliminary research.

Following the data collection and their interpretation, we carried out a SWOT analysis that provided us with the necessary information to develop a strategy to promote street running sports events. (see figure 58).

As part of the basic research, we developed, implemented and analyzed promotion plans for the OMV Petrom Bucharest Running Club and Raiffeisen Bank Bucharest Marathon events held between September 2021 and May 2022.

Research results

Four sports events were longitudinally analyzed (between 2020 and 2022), that is the categories of participants in these competitions, taking into account certain demographic aspects, but also other elements that can lead to an increase in the interaction with sports. The purpose of exploring these characteristics was to create a profile of the athletes and follow the trends that configure the overall image of the participant in sports competitions in order to develop and expand the network of practicing sports-type activities.

- **Conclusions drawn from the research**

After carrying out the basic research regarding the realization and application of the strategy for the promotion of street running sports events, the following conclusions were formulated:

1. Advertising and sponsorship have a measurable cumulative impact over time. The attendance at Bucharest Half Marathon 2022 doubled (8397 participants) compared to the previous year (3839 participants), and at Bucharest Marathon 2021 the attendance was 4782 compared to 2151 participants at Bucharest Marathon 2020, an important factor being the achieved promotion;
2. Although the portals and Facebook represent the main sources of information regarding sports events, there is an increase in the consumption of radio, TV and photography information channels, their impact on the visibility of sports competitions being on the rise from 2020 until now, which suggests an increase in the interest for this type of activity and, at the same time, the possibility of increasing popularization in an environment with new beneficiaries (other athletes);
3. Live broadcasts of sports events had a positive impact on the audience with a reach of 57% at the last event, as well as on the growth in number and the attraction of sponsors or partners;
4. The statistics obtained show a very strong and positive correlation between the variables "Advertising" and "Categories" (0.818), thus confirming the first research hypothesis saying that *the development of a strategy to promote street running sports events by age category can lead to the corresponding increase in that category.*
5. The reflective variable has a very high Cronbach Alpha coefficient (0.861), which denotes that the elements that form it are representative of the global category variable. Articles that were published in connection with these events had the greatest impact, as evidenced by the very high loading factor (LF=1.216). They are followed by sponsorship (LF=0.675) and the large number of readers who share articles on Facebook (LF=0.588). In total, AVE has a loading factor of 0.428.
6. The four events held between 2020 and 2022 show a greater presence of men, the differences regarding the gender of the participants vary between 10% and 26% in favor of male participants. Male participants are constantly more involved in sports competitions than women, the gender discrepancy being more accentuated in the Bucharest Half Marathon 2021 event, only 36.9% of the participants being women;

Following the research carried out, we believe that the working hypothesis *Applying a promotion strategy consistent with the profile of the sports consumer has a positive impact on the development of running sports events* has been validated.

