

Italy: Sport Tourism Events. The Case of the Rome-Ostia Half Marathon



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Abstract This Italian case study of the Roma-Ostia Half Marathon was carried out with the aim of looking at the socio-economic impact of the event on the local territory and its contribution to the development of communities. In Italy, there are 70 marathons and 271 half marathons distributed throughout the year, mainly thanks to the Italian climate. The Roma-Ostia Half Marathon is the oldest marathon, and the one with the largest number of participants (almost 12,000). The whole survey analysed the host city and event characteristics, concentrating on social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects. The study shows that, although this sporting event is very much appreciated by the participants (58%) and evidently pays attention to the protection of the environment (60%), it does not sufficiently promote opportunities for tourism (21%). Local development could also be better improved by reinforcing the relationship between the team organization and the public administration. Unfortunately, in Italy (and not only in this country) a strategic planning of this type is lacking. Among the positive aspects that emerged from the research were the sense of belonging and pride of the event (88%), and the number of tourists it attracted (93%).

Keywords Half marathon · Socio-economic impact · Sporting events · Territorial relations · Tourist attraction

Introduction

The case study on the Roma-Ostia Half Marathon presented here aims to examine the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impact of half marathons on the host territory. While many international studies of the sector mainly concentrate on the impact of large and mega running events of considerable attraction, few studies focus on smaller sporting events, which, however, are just as useful as larger ones, in terms of contributing to the growth of a territory (Pigeassou, Gammon, &

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Kutzman, 2002; Gratton, Shibli, & Coleman, 2005; Tarfanelli, 2010; Moretti, 2015; etc.). In Italy, there are 271 half marathons held each year. What is the impact of this type of sporting event on the country? In this research, the Rome-Ostia Half Marathon was chosen for study, as it is the largest, with the most participants, and is also the oldest, having been held for over 40 years (Italy Half Marathon, 2016). It represents an excellence that offers valuable indications of the socio-economic value of half marathons in Italy.

Half marathons often activate powerful processes between organizers, local authorities and stakeholders to support the economic, cultural and environmental growth of the territory. Half marathons are accessible to participants on a national and international level, and can fuel economic activity in support of the local commerce and tourism.

The methodological approach adopted here follows that used by the entire international research group, involving interviews with the organizers, a questionnaire to the participants and a questionnaire to the inhabitants (see Van Rheenen, Melo, & Sobry, [this volume](#)). In Italy, the case study chosen was the half marathon of Rome-Ostia, which takes place regularly every year and has now reached its 42nd edition. The race took place on 13 March 2016.

In this chapter, for the sake of brevity, only the results of the questionnaire to the participants are presented, only the most interesting aspects being reported, while the interviews with the organizers and the questionnaire to the inhabitants are reported as an in-depth tool. In the 2016 edition, 10,714 athletes participated and the number of respondents was almost 20% (2,139). After the appropriate checks, some questionnaires were eliminated, due to an excess of missing answers, with the number of valid cases reaching 1910 questionnaires, equal to 17.8% of participants (STD = 0.942). The information collected was then analysed according to a qualitative-quantitative approach. The principal results of the univariate, bivariate and multifactorial analysis of the questionnaire are presented below. The main indications provided by the athletes were then compared with what was declared by the organizers during the interviews, to provide a complete picture of the value attributed to the event and its impact on the territory. The survey allowed the negative and positive aspects of the half marathon to be identified, and to place it in the national and international scenario.

Sport Tourism Events in Italy

Sport tourism is a strategic lever for the development of a territory, as it fuels the flow of tourists, converges the interest of increasingly differentiated groups of users around the organization of events, and encourages the development of new businesses, while strengthening existing ones (Gibson, 2013). Although not yet recognized by world statistics, in the present era, this segment of tourism has enormous potential for growth, increasingly going beyond a niche and involving people on a

mass scale, in the logic of experience economy (Newland & Aicher, 2018; Pine & Gilmore, 2000).

Available data also confirm the exponential growth of sports tourism. According to the National Association Sports Commission (2017), more than 30 million sports tourists worldwide generate a turnover of \$10.47 billion, a growth of 10% compared to 2015. According to the latest survey of the Ipk (2016) (commissioned by ITB of Berlin), over the past five years, sports holidays among Europeans alone have increased, involving 9 million tourists – 12% of European tourism. People with a higher propensity to sports tourism reside in continental Europe: Austrians (26% of about 10 million travellers), Czechs, Belgians, Poles and Germans, while only 3% of Italians (about 31.5 million travellers) consider sport as the main reason for a holiday (Eurobarometer, 2016). Conversely, Italy is second only to Austria, in being able to attract sports tourists, but with a considerable percentage gap (18% vs. 42%), as Italians are not among the most active (with only 28.5% of Italians practising sport). Based on the main dichotomy given by the classic definitions (Pigeassou et al., 2002: 204; Gibson, 1998a, b; Gammon & Robinson, 1997), the active tourist chooses a holiday to compete in a sport, seeing themselves as an amateur competitor or considering the chosen sport as an additional holiday attraction, especially with cultural and beach holidays.

According to the National Research Institute (Istat, 2017; see Table 1), only 28.5% of Italians practise sport, while tourism accounts for 4.2% of the national GDP, the European average standing at 4.1% (OECD, 2016). So, does Italy adequately exploit opportunities for sports tourism, given the potential.

Considering Italy's resources in terms of culture, climate and natural beauty, this is not a very positive result. In the period 1997–2016, the tourist incidence grew at an average annual rate lower than that of the country's GDP (2%), while, in the same period, the world tourist revenues measured in euro grew by an average of 5.6 per 100 a year, those of Spain and France (Italy's main European competitors) reaching 4.5% and 2.3%, respectively. These trends record a decline in the market

Table 1 Italy (facts in 2016)

Capital	Rome
Geographical size (km ²)	301,338 km ²
Population (million)	60.59 million (in 2015 – last national census, ISTAT)
GDP (euro per capita)	1.716,238 million euro.
Annual net earning average (€)	29,380 euro
Sport participation index	28.5% (CONI_ISTAT 2017)
Tourism contribution for GDP (%)	4.2% (of national GDP)
Most important sport tourism categories	SKIING, CYCLING, TREKKING, SAILING, SURFING / WINDSURFING, TENNIS, MOUNTAIN CLIMBING, SUB / DIVING, HORSE RIDING
Most important sport tourism events developed	Football, skiing, running, cycling, tennis, rugby, horse riding

shares of traditional destinations in favour of emerging countries: Italy's share, second only to the United States in the 1980s, remained stable in the first half of the following decade, but gradually decreased to reach a minimum of 3.3% in 2015 and 2016. In the last two years, the weak growth in international tourism revenue (1.9% per year, on average) follows that of the number of travellers in Italy. On a daily average, the increase in expenses was entirely offset by the decrease in the average travel time (from over 5 days at the end of the 1990s to 4.2 in the last five years, the calculation including hikers), leaving the average expenditure per traveller unchanged (Banca d'Italia, 2017).

Given this negative trend, is Italy adequately exploiting possible opportunities in tourism? As stated above, according to the National Research Institute (Istat, 2017, see Table 2), tourism accounts for 4.2% of the national GDP, while the European average stands at 4.1% (OECD, 2016). Unfortunately, there is no specific data on sports tourism, since in the main statistics, they are aggregated in an "other" item

Table 2 Rome Area (facts in 2016)

Name	Rome area
Geographical size (km ²)	2.43501 (Rome:128,736)
Population (million)	Municipalities involved by half marathon (IX: Eur and X: Ostia): 408,301 (179,034 Eur and 229,267 Ostia)
GDP (euro per capita)	133,718 mln € (2015 = 9.6% of national gdp)
Annual net earning average (€)	24,306 € (2014)
Main professional sectors	Real estate activities, business services and other entrepreneurial and professional activities 15.7 education, health, social assistance 14.1 trade 12.8 other collective and personal services 12.5 public administration, defense 10.1 hotels and restaurants 7.2 industry 6.4 information and communication services 6.0 transportation and storage 5.9 constructions 5.0 financial and insurance activities 3.8 agriculture, silviculture and fishing 0.8 (Ufficio statistico Roma Capitale, 2018, 2017)
Other races in the city	La corsa del giocattolo, Corri con la Befana, Trofeo Lidense, La corsa di Miguel, Trofeo Cinecittà Due – Carrefour, Corsa del ricordo , Rock & Run, X M ilia, Corriamo al Collatino, Talenti Run, La corsa di San Giuseppe, San Paolo Race, M aratonina della Cooperazione, Roma Tre Ville Run, R oma Appia Run, 1° maggio lavoro..in corsa, Corri Bravetta, Cecchignola in corsa, Per antiqua itinera, R in Corriamo la pace con Emergency, Race for Children, Vale..Correre, Corsa podistica, AlbaRace, M ezzaMaratona di Roma, La corsa de' noantri, Ostia in corsa per l 'ambiente, Roma by Night Run, Roma by Night Run –Stracittadina, CorriRoma, Cardio Race - La corsa del Cuore, UltraRoma 50 km, R oma Urbs Mundi, Roma City Trail, C hristmas dream for Africa. (LazioRunners, 2018 = 31% in the region)
Other sport tourism events	Running, tennis, rugby, horse riding, athletics and swimming

which is 14.8% overall. The main sports that generate tourism in Italy are: skiing, running; cycling, trekking, sailing, surfing / windsurfing, tennis, mountain climbing, sub / diving, and horse riding. Some of these include some of the most popular national and international sporting events: skiing, running, cycling, tennis, rugby, horse riding and football.

In this study, the focus is on running. In relation to this sport, specialized organizers and travel agencies provide packages that allow participants to partake in competitions around the world, while satisfying their various tourist needs, with visits to the most important capitals, particular cultural sites or enchanting seaside resorts and naturalistic excursions in the most evocative places, etc. To complete the picture in Italy, in 2015, there were 887,000 foreign sports tourists, equal to 1.8% of all foreign tourists to Italy. The sport tourists generated over 3 million overnight stays (1.6% of total foreign overnight stays), with an average stay of 3.5 nights and a total expense of 355 million euros (1.6% of total foreign expenditure) and they spent an average of 115 euros daily (CISSET-Bank of Italy, 2016).

Smaller sporting events attract visitors consisting of participating athletes, staff, carers, friends and family. In this regard, some studies have shown that the trend of sports tourism is to travel in groups, and these groups are proportionally more numerous in small events (Choi, Shonk, Bravo, & Choi, 2016; Getz & McConnell, 2014; Melo & Gomes, 2017).

According to a 2017 survey conducted by the Piepoli Research Institute on behalf of the Italian Athletics Federation (Fidal), 74% of Italian runners go on sports holidays to follow football matches (49%), or to practise winter sports (22%) or water sports (7%), or, naturally, to take part in marathons (8%). Some 80% travel with friends, especially on weekends (43%) and stay 3 days or more (24%). Italian runners especially plan the trip on the web (72%), and during the holiday, take the opportunity to visit exhibitions and museums (57%), take walks (47%), and go on excursions (55%).

Therefore, the sporting event in general and the race in particular, facilitates tourist influx and increases local reputation, while favouring the urban and economic growth of the territory. In order to be effective in the long term, the main stakeholders (national institutions, regional promotion agencies, etc.) need to share a common local development policy to improve access, increase user-friendliness, and maximize the tourist attractions of the area where an event is held. The literature discusses Stakeholder theory, project management techniques and strategic planning to start an integrated, systemic and holistic process, in which all the actors involved - organizing committees, institutions and stakeholders - participate and are co-responsible for achieving the objectives and providing effective management of market relations (Djaballah, Hautbois, & Desbordes, 2015; Freeman, 2010; Hautbois, 2017). The involvement of local administrations, for example, should not only promote the event but also encourage the legacy to be spread throughout the territory, to improve the quality of citizens' lives, while safeguarding the environment. All the interested parties, especially those looking for an economic benefit, must—according to the theory of social exchange (SET) of Sirmon et al. (2007: 275)—participate in the development of the event and encourage dynamic

management of resources to pursue the expected profit in a process of continuous adaptation between the parties. Rosemann and Vom Brocke (2015: 105–122) identify six elements involved in the relationships between the actors: strategic alignment, governance, methods, information, technology and people and culture. Bucher and Winter (2010: 93–114) add four factors for development and success: the degree of services provided, professionalism in process management, the impact of those responsible and the use of appropriate methodologies. Sobreiro et al. (2015: 157) indicate an operating model composed of 8 phases: (1) definition of the mission and the vision of the organization; (2) identification of strategic objectives, (3) stakeholder assessment, (4) estimate of business capacity, (5) verification of the concerns and objectives of the parties concerned, (6) negotiation of the operational objectives between the parties based on business capacity and the definition of strategies, (7) delimitation of the priorities of the improvement areas and (8) planning and drafting of an action plan. Still referring to planning approaches, we can add a further and ninth phase – monitoring the results achieved, compared to the expected results. This would allow required corrective measures to be identified. A tenth item concerns the measurement of the positive and negative impacts obtained, not estimated in the definition phase of the objectives. Every dimension that affects the territory – economic, occupational, market, cultural, reputational, infrastructural, urban, public, environmental, etc. – has direct and indirect, contingent and permanent consequences, not only on tourists but also particularly on the citizens of the host territory, and the territory itself. For this reason, careful monitoring is required, along with periodic feedback and continuous updates (Bosnjak, Brown, Lee, Yu, & Sirgy, 2016; Kim, Jun, Walker, & Drane, 2015; Mazza, 2007; Veal, 2017).

For sports tourism to be a tool to promote the sustainable growth of a territory, it must be a lasting form of tourism, capable of maintaining its qualitative and quantitative values, gratifying the expectations of residents and tourists, enhancing the quality of the tourist experience, with no harm to the environment (Pellegrini, 2009). The World Tourism Organization has specified some guidelines for applying the principles of sustainable development to the tourism sector, to meet “the current needs of tourists and host regions, while protecting and improving the prospects for the future. Sustainable development, thus ensuring the protection of the quality of life of local populations, must integrate the management of all resources in such a way that the economic, social and aesthetic needs can be met, while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and living systems” (WTO, 2003).

As far as the Italian situation is concerned, there are no structural policies to support sport tourism either in social and cultural terms, or in terms of economic and environmental sustainability. A document from the Ministry of the Environment (2009) carefully identifies both the weaknesses and opportunities of tourism, and its potential impact on biodiversity, and outlines objectives and policies to be implemented. It also underlines how present measures in this area are still contradictory, and therefore ineffective. Unfortunately, even today, the situation does not seem to have changed, as demonstrated by the present study.

The world of sport posed the problem of defending the natural environment as early as 1994, during the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway. It started from the need to foresee – as an Olympic legacy – the creation of “green” games, and to adopt ecological measures in the construction of new facilities, to reduce the impact of sporting events on host territories and to use sport as a means of environmental awareness (Trendafilova et al., 2014).

Recalling the 1994 provisions, in 1995, a special commission was set up aimed at assessing the relationship between sport and the environment: in 1999, it allowed the Italian Olympic Committee and United Nations Environment Program (Unep, 2015) to draft together the Agenda 21 of the International Olympic Committee. The document provides the guidelines and the ways in which sports activities and the life of sportspeople can contribute to sustainable development, and indicates how a Green Code can be adopted. These guidelines provided by the Code aim to encourage and spread the adoption of a series of rules of conduct to protect the environment by sportsmen, spectators and sports organizations. In particular, the athletes are required to: respect nature, environment (green areas, city, territory) and the heritage of sports facilities and equipment; collaborate in an adequate management of sports services; eliminate waste in the consumption of water and energy; avoid polluting and dispersing waste into the environment; prefer public and economic means of transport and choose recyclable clothing and environmentally friendly equipment. Sports organizations, on the other hand, are required to: encourage sport in nature; adopt environmental criteria in the construction and management of sports facilities; control water and energy consumption and promote environmental values, in the selection of clothing and equipment, and in the management of relations with the sports industry, schools and the media. Finally, spectators are expected to: respect the fans and the athletes of the opposing side; not damage sports facilities and equipment; not disperse waste in the environment and prefer public and ecological means of transport.

Likewise, in the tourism sector, environmental sustainability is considered a strategic approach to revitalize local supply, improve livability through the construction and promotion of urban or cultural areas in which the tourism product is focused on “green” and “ecological” guidelines (Fainstein, Hoffman, & Judd, 2003; Rath, 2007; Robinson & Novelli, 2005). This allows, on the one hand, the promotion of sustainable development, the improvement of accommodation facilities for tourists and the recreation for residents, and on the other, it supports and encourages the population and local governments to work for the protection and conservation of environmental and cultural assets, as well as spreading and consolidating ecological knowledge and awareness in the territory (Zhang & Lei, 2012). Therefore, the network of local actors should concentrate their organizational and management efforts on ecologically sustainable medium/long-term projects. Unfortunately, according to the fourth report on competitiveness in the travel and tourism sector, published by the World Economic Forum (2011), it appears that Italy ranks 27th in the world rankings and 20th in the European ranking (with Switzerland, Germany and France at the top). The strong points of Italy include cultural resources and tourist infrastructures (8th), while the drawbacks are due to non-transparent rules and

regulations (84th), which pay little attention to sustainability and the environment (129th), and produce a situation with low propensity for welcoming tourists (91st).

Furthermore, as a response to increasingly higher global competitiveness in the tourism sector in general, and in the sports sector in particular, many authors underline the ethical need to actively protect the environment as the added value of a destination. To minimize the environmental impact, renewable sources need to be increased, with investment low impact development. This foresees: optimizing logistics, recycling materials, increasing the life span of products, encouraging the consumption of local food products, and, stimulating “slow” and zero-kilometer consumption, using the train as the main travel tool or, alternatively, bio-compatible solutions (Angeloni, 2013; Dickinson, Robbins, & Lumsdon, 2010).

The Rome-Ostia Half Marathon

The metropolitan area of Rome, made up of 15 municipalities, hosts the Rome-Ostia Half Marathon. It covers a territory equal to 0.8% of the Italian population. According to the latest ISTAT census of 2015, in Italy 2.864,348 people (equal to about 0.5% of the entire Italian population) are involved, and 2 municipalities are directly involved in the competition – IX (Eur) and X (Host). The GDP of the Rome metropolitan area is €133,718 million (in 2015, equal to 9.6% of the national GDP – see Table 3). The annual average of earnings is equal to €24,306 (2014), 5000 euros lower than the national average. The area is mainly dedicated to administration and services. The first three main professional sectors are: real estate activities, business services and other entrepreneurial and professional activities (15.7%), education, health, social assistance (14.1%) and trade (12.8) (Roma Capitale. Ufficio statistiche 2017; 2018). Some of the most important sports events organized in the area include various international events in running, tennis, rugby, horse riding, athletics and swimming. In particular, the area hosts as many as 31% of the running competitions organized throughout Italy (LazioRunners, 2018). These races serve to: increase the identity of the community, promote the history of the territory and stimulate socialization and aggregation among people.

Table 3 Rome-Ostia Half Marathon (facts in 2016)

Name	Roma-Ostia half marathon
Type of organization (private, public, both)	Private
Sponsors (private, public, both)	Private
Total number of participants	10,714
Scope and objective of the race (fund raising, charity, promotion of the city, promotion of brands, etc.)	Sport event. It is part of the international IAAF (Gold Label) and national FIDAL calendar
Number of volunteers	500
Number of inhabitants participating in the race (% of total)	11.9%

The case study chosen is the most important half marathon organized in the area. It is managed by a private family-run company (Roma-Ostia Srl), which operates in close collaboration with a sports association (Bancari Romani), active in the runner's world and rooted in the territory. The company works all year round to manage the event, dealing with technical, administrative, logistic-organizational and communication issues. In the last three editions, the number of participants has been more or less stable, around 11,000, but the organizers recorded an exponential and constant growth from 2000 to 2013, claiming numbers doubled in this period. In proportion to the overall increase in the number of athletes, the presence of foreigners has also increased (12–13% – equal to about 1500 units). This is thanks to word of mouth, especially in Europe where athletes tell others of their Roman experience, relating both the technical value of the race and the quality of the organization. In contrast, the number of local participants is only 11.9% of the total of participants. In the last few editions, about 500 volunteers per year were engaged, with 120 at the start, 150 along the route and 250 on arrival. In an area of about one kilometre – volunteers were responsible for the management of prizes and medals, the delivery of T-shirts and slickers, refreshments and the depositing area of bags, etc. Among the volunteers, 150 came from civil protection, with the company paying the remaining portion.

According to the organizers, the main mission of the event is setting up the race itself, and for this reason, the management efforts are only concentrated on sporting and technical aspects. Notably, the race is considered a very taxing and tiring track for athletes, but, for this reason, it is an important challenge for any runner. Since the race has a good reputation from a purely competitive point of view, little thought is given to combining the race with supporting events aimed at entertainment or the enhancement of local aspects, unlike with other similar events in the world, where attention is given to these areas. There are only some collateral activities, such as the performance of a local band of a neighbouring town (e.g. Frascati) at refreshment points.

For the same reason, there are no packages to encourage combining the race with cultural initiatives during the stay. Although the organizers are aware that at least one-fifth of the participants remain on site for at least 3 days and 2 nights for tourist reasons, nothing is organized related to this. The organizers explained that once some tourist activity was organized, with guided tours and sightseeing bus tours being provided, but since the demand was low, the service was discontinued. While this is guaranteed during the Rome Marathon, probably, on the half marathon, the participants prefer to organize themselves.

The respondents to the questionnaire were mainly men (84%), and the interviewed quota is quite representative of the participant percentages (men 81%, women 19%, data provided by the organizing committee). The average age among participants is 46, the prevalent age group being between 40 and 49 (39%) and the majority of athletes (89%) being aged between 30 and 59. This figure is in line with the general trends in the world of running. According to an American research of 2016 commissioned by Brooks, a leading company in the field of running, for the research company Equibity (2016), the average age is 43 for men and 39 for women.

The typical profile of the European sports tourist is a 43-year-old man who lives with his family, and has a good spending power (IPK International on behalf of ITB Berlin, 2015).

The interviewed runner lives in the family: 75% are married or cohabiting and only 18% are single. In this case, they are women (63% vs. 37% of men) and young people under 30 (76%). Almost half of the sample has a bachelor's degree (42%), and 14% of participants have a post-graduate degree. The highest levels of education are concentrated in the age group between 30 and 39 years (45%). Some 71% are employed and have an average income of between 1500 and 2000 euros per month (31%). Added to these are 14% who are self-employed and, despite not declaring a higher income bracket, have a higher socio-economic profile, being mainly made up of graduates (18.6%) in the age group over 50 years (15.4%). Although having higher qualifications (46% graduates vs. 39% of graduates) and carrying out more independent activities than men (+16%), women have lower incomes (up to 1.500 euros per month 47% vs. 23% of men), unfortunately in line with Italian and European estimates.

The majority (79%) consider the race the main reason for moving from home; one-fifth (21%) consider it an additional reason and, therefore, participate to have the excuse to travel. Only one-third of the sample participated for the first time, clearly indicating that a good majority is very loyal to the race (STD = 0.45. See Fig. 1).

Among two-thirds of the “seniors”, half have already participated 1–3 times, 35% 4–10 previous events, 12% 10–20 editions and a 3% 20–42 times (STD = 0.942). While 11% of newbies have never participated in any other competition, most of

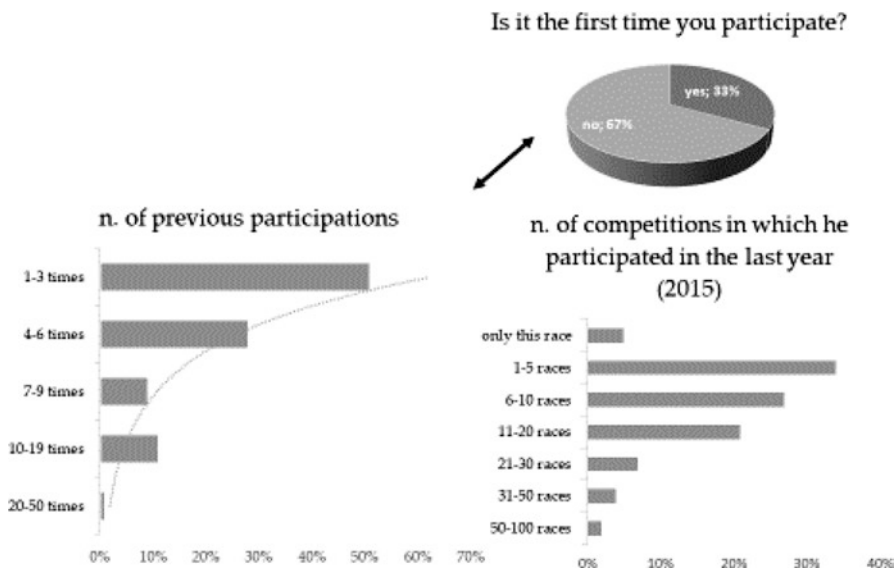


Fig. 1 Loyalty

them participated, just the previous year, to five other events (42%), if not 10 (25%), 20 (16%) or even up to 50 (6%). The seniors live the half marathon circuit to the full, so much so that a mere 3% attend only the Roma-Ostia, 31% attending five other events in the previous year, 28% to 10, 25% to 20 and 13% to between 30 and 50.

Of those taking part for the first time, 85% only come for the race itself, though with subsequent participations, people also begin to consider the holiday aspect. Depending on the number of participations, taking part exclusively for the competition proportionally decreases: from 79% (to 75%, to 69%) to 57%, depending on the number of times of participation. As indicated in the literature, a well-organized event encourages continuity and the desire to return for future editions. Furthermore, the more you return to the same event the more opportunities you have to combine sport and tourism. Over half of the participants (58%) are satisfied or very satisfied with the event, and if the city were to organize other sporting events, 92% said they were willing to come back for the event. They particularly appreciated the management and technical aspects of the Rome-Ostia half marathon. The interviewees mainly participated (without particular differences between beginners and seniors being noted) due to the quality of the organization, and for its prestige, creating a certain emotional bond (41%), and for the type of route (27%), allowing participants to train in view of other competitions (12%). The remaining ancillary reasons (20%) included the proximity from home (16%) and tourism (only 4%) (See Fig. 2). The low value attributed to this last reason is influenced by the fact that the share of those arriving from abroad or from other Italian regions is less than one-third of the entire sample of respondents.

With regard to the presence of foreigners, the level of representativeness of the sample (2% of the total) is somewhat below the level declared by the organizers (12%). Regarding the geographical distribution of the interviewees, 69% live in the

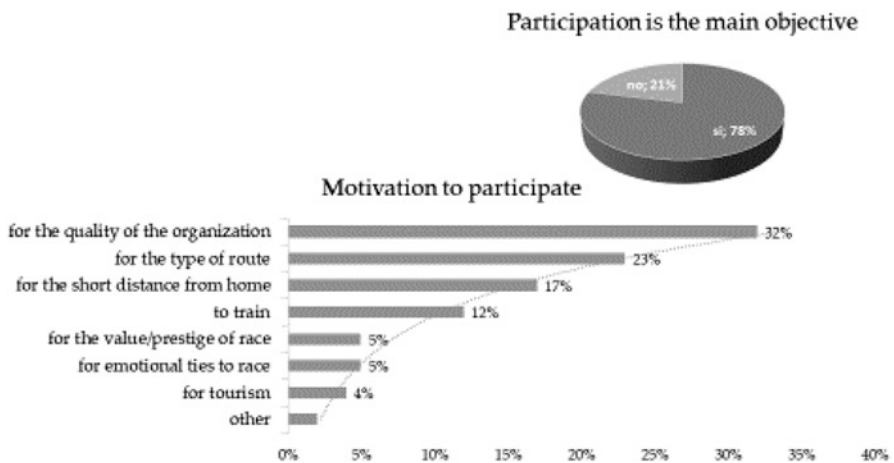


Fig. 2 Participate in the event: a motivated choice

city or in the surrounding areas, no more than 40 km from the headquarters, while the remainder comes from further away: 2% comes from the provinces of Lazio and day-return transfers, 27% from other Italian regions, and only 2% from abroad, in particular from European countries (76%).

Clearly, travelling from abroad requires logistic and organizational considerations: those arriving from abroad (88%) or from the most distant regions of Italy (65%) travel mainly by plane, train or bus (often provided by the sponsoring sports company), while participants from neighbouring regions (69%), from the same region, and from the metropolitan area of Rome (44%) prefer using a car. Alternatively, they choose public transport (39%).

The distance also influences the stay of at least one night (57%), and encourages the combination of participation in the race with other activities, thus extending the period of up to 2–3 nights in over a third of cases (38%). This period coincides with the stay of a typical short holiday, as indicated by all official statistics at national and international level. As little as 5% remains an entire week. The preferred accommodation for over half of the respondents (55%) is the hotel, but, when possible, the hospitality of friends and relatives is preferred (28%), while other types of solutions are less common. Non-resident participants limit the hotel stay to no more than one night in over one-third of cases (65%), almost half stay 2 nights (47%), over one-third 3 (35%) and 28% organizes for the whole week. Participants stayed in the territory for 3 (46%) or more nights (48%) as guests of friends or relatives (see Table 4).

In line with the literature, most of the participants tend to travel accompanied compared to those who came alone (63% vs. 36%, $STD = 0.942$). In detail, 58% of residents and 77% of non-residents arrived accompanied. With more than one person involved, costs are obviously higher, and increases proportionally with the length of stay: 77% participants staying 1 night were accompanied, 80% staying 2 nights, 73% staying 3 nights and 88% staying the entire week (see Table 5).

Preferred supporters are predominantly family members (50%, the core consists mostly of 1–3 members, 76%), followed by friends (49%), and companions of the company (23%). Over half of non-residents with family stay at a hotel (53%), 30% with friends and relatives, 14% in a bed & breakfast, 2% in holiday homes and 1% in camping, staying 1 night in almost half of the cases (45%), 2 nights in a third

Table 4 The permanence ($STD = 0,886$)

Means of transport	Stayed	He has not stayed	1 night	2 nights	3 nights	4–8 nights
By plane	97%	3%	38%	31%	23%	8%
On the train	81%	19%	51%	36%	9%	4%
On the bus	23%	77%	83%	11%	4%	2%
By car/camper	24%	76%	66%	26%	4%	4%
By metro/bus		100%				
On motorbike/scooter		100%				
On foot or by bike		100%				
Total	28%	72%	57%	28%	10%	5%

Table 5 The accommodation

No. of nights	Hotel/Motel	Bread & Breakfast	Holiday homes, apartments, residences, Airbnb	Camping	House of friends or relatives	Total nights
1	65%	12%	1%	1%	21%	56%
2	47%	18%	2%	2%	31%	29%
3	35%	18%	1%		46%	10%
4–8	28%	8%	12%	4%	48%	5%
Total	55%	14%	2%	1%	28%	

(33%), 3 nights in 15% of cases and only 8% for the whole week. As the presence of family members ups expenses, the length of stay is shortened.

Given the above results, the participants of the half marathon appear mainly athletes and only partially sports tourists.

The Economics, Environmental and Social Impact of the Rome-Ostia Half Marathon

To examine the economic aspects, the research differentiated the clusters of residents and non-residents; the two groups obviously having a different impact on the factors under consideration. A total estimate of the overall budget can be made to identify the items on which the athletes prefer to spend their money.

Looking at the highest peaks, “**equipment**” (23,310–98,170 euros) is in first place. Probably, this is influenced by participant passion for the discipline and the desire to improve performance, and also by the awareness that the equipment is useful and can be further used. The “**journey**” (40,246–95,750 euros per capita) is in second place, especially for non-foreign residents, with “**other activities**” (18,840–€ 33,570) being in third place. This indicates the propensity of foreigners to combine sports and tourism. The further you come, the more you take advantage of the trip for tourist reasons. To a lesser extent, residents living in adjoining areas take advantage of combining participation in the race with trips, leisure activities and visits. The item “**accommodation**” (21,621–67,650 euros) is instead limited only to the category of non-residents, but indicates an important and significant potential for the hospitality sector. The trip produces benefits to the territory provided the different actors (organizers, institutions and sector of production of the sector) provide local offers that encourage tourism with participation in sporting events. Similarly, as prolonging, the stay would be positive for the catering sector (27,857–59,185 euros), investment in communication strategies and marketing of the territory is required to attract non-residents, and especially foreigners. Buying souvenirs remains residual and does not reach, in total, even 10,000 euros (see Table 6).

Table 6 Average spending (MR%. STD = 3012)

Expense item	Habitants		Inhabitants		TOT.
	Euro	V. %	euro	V. %	
Travel	11.517	14.4%	56.485	34.4	67.998
Accommodation	–	–	41.909	25.6	41.909
Food & beverage	9.534	11.9%	33.986	20.7	43.520
Equipment	45.315	56.8%	15.425	9.4	60.740
Souvenir	257	0.3	4.232	2.6	4.489
Others	13.225	16.6	12.980	7.9	26.205
Overall average	79.848	32.7	164.017	67.3	243.865

Overall, therefore, the participants invested a budget of 104,487 to 362,835 euros (with an average expenditure per person 55 to 190 euros), but the general expenditure for the participation of the half marathon is actually much more, as most of the athletes are accompanied by family members, friends and company partners. The expenses of the groups amount to a range from 468,045 to 1,805,150 euros, with an average surplus of 1572 percentage points higher than that of individual athletes. If the per capita share of individual participants is removed from this total, the expenditure of companions is shown to be between 363,558 and 1,442,315 euros. This is an interesting share since it concerns the tourist sector alone.

The items related to the “journey” of the athletes should be separated from the total figure, as they do not bring direct economic benefit to the territory. Some 77% of non-residents and 58% of residents were accompanied, predominantly (respectively 63% and 48%) by 1–3 people. Multiplying this number of participants by three (average number of escorts) and the average travel expense identified for the two categories gives an average estimate of the expenditure per group combined with each athlete. Travel expenses increase to 10,206 euros for residents and 82,530 euros for non-residents. Consequently, the net revenue remains between 313,106 and 1,264,035 euros. The income generated only by the athletes is worth an average of almost a billion euros: a figure that could be used to invest in local production projects and to create interesting and innovative offers in view of future editions. Despite the considerable potential of the sporting event to generate a good return, this appears not to be the case due to a lack of proper investment in the host territory.

Another dimension needing attention when planning activities of sports tourism and local sustainable development strategies concerns respect and protection for the environment.

During the research, a section of the questionnaire was dedicated precisely to verify participants’ perception concerning the measures taken by the organization to protect the environment. Since the half marathon does not make use of sports facilities but takes place on the road, no construction of ad hoc systems is required. Rather, the environmental issues requiring attention are anti-pollution and waste collection measures, recycling of resources and enhancement of local production. Among the measures implemented by the organization, those most appreciated by respondents were those protecting the environment from pollution, the positioning

Table 7 Environmental protection measures taken by the organization (MR%. STD = 0,8,26)

	Habitants	Inhabitants	TOT.
Proximity to public transport stations (metro, bus, train)	81%	72%	30%
Presence of chemical baths	66%	58%	24%
Collection of waste and support for the cleaning of the environment	45%	32%	15%
Use of shuttle buses	37%	41%	14%
Recycling	19%	20%	7%
Use of local suppliers of food and beverages	14%	12%	5%
Re-use excess supplies	7%	5%	3%
I do not know	1%	1%	2%
Total	72%	28%	100%

of the points of departure and arrival of the race in areas adjacent to public transport stations (30%), and the widespread presence of chemical toilettes (24%) along the entire route. These particular measures were even more appreciated by residents (respectively, 81% and 66% vs. 72% and 58% of non-residents, see Table 7).

Firstly, the responses show a widespread awareness of the interviewees on the subject in question, so that only a 2% could not answer, because perhaps not attentive to the issues in question. Secondly, there was a greater sensitivity among the over 40s (40–70 years) who generally recorded the highest percentage values in each response item, while the under 40s - especially young people in the 18 and the 29 years - are more attentive than others to the issue of recycling (14% compared to the total value of responses which stands at 3%). Finally, being more sensitive to local conditions, the residents underlined the organization's commitment to cleaning-up the environment, with an effective collection of waste (45%). To a limited extent, but still higher than non-residents, residents, perhaps due to their knowledge of local products and brands, also noted the organization's commitment to the recycling and valorization of the zero kilometer, through the use of local suppliers of food and beverages (14%), in addition to the re-use of excess supplies (7%). With regard to safeguarding against pollution, non-residents also appreciated the use of shuttle buses (41%) to accompany them when traveling from venues to the hotels, and one-fifth of them complimented the commitment of the organizational staff in the separate waste collection points made available.

During the interview with the President of the Half Marathon, it emerged that the "Green Code" had not been adopted, and that the code is not generally implemented in running events in Italy. In another interview, the President of the Rome Marathon confirmed that the "Green code" was not widespread in Italy and in the sports sector in general. This, of course, does not mean that events and sports events are not attentive to environmental protection and preservation, especially during the race. Indeed, even the answers provided by the participants confirm a positive orientation of the organization. However, widespread use of the code could lead to the recognition of best practices, rewarding them through a special "green stamp". This could be a first step in further stimulating the dissemination of "ecological" knowledge and

awareness, something which sport has been promoting for the last fifteen years: above all, it could become a useful reputation tool to encourage organizing committees to operate in favour of a greater synergy with local institutions in favour of common sustainable development projects.

In addition to protecting the environment, an organization that encourages sustainable development should put itself at the service of society and be sensitive to the livability and growth of local communities, paying attention to integration, inclusion, cultural enhancement, and supporting initiatives and activities that can involve citizenship and promote the local economy. These aspects were discussed with the President of the Half Marathon and confirmed during the interviews with the participants.

To testify the social the commitment of the Half Marathon and cooperation with all the different stakeholders, the President pointed out the organization's involvement in charity activities, especially those in favour of the disabled: the organizing committee has long collaborated with several non-profit associations (including: Sant'Egidio, Comen, Sport without frontiers, and various Italian non-profit organizations) in order to provide hot meals to people in difficulty, and to encourage free participation of disabled people in the race (around 130–140).

Equally important on a social level is the strategic role of the event in developing a sense of belonging and identification on the part of the community with the half marathon. The President emphasizes that the event, along with the Rome Marathon, is eagerly anticipated by athletes and inhabitants alike, both categories living the event intensely. For example, local inhabitants competing in the race consider it as a sort of “derby” – they check the results to see if they have ranked better than their competing relatives, friends, colleagues and company partners. In general, they are all-proud of the event and, especially when they hear about it in the newspapers and even more during their travels, they are proud of “being part of it” and that it is a “thing of their own”.

Confirming these statements, as already emerged during the description of participant profiles, more than half (58%) is satisfied or very satisfied with participating in the competition, with two thirds being “regular” actors of the event, participating in several previous editions, 92% intent on returning. This consolidated loyalty is confirmed during the year, so much so that the community on Facebook is made up of a number practically equivalent, if not higher, to those who then sign up for the event (interview with the President of the Half Marathon).

Taking part in the Half Marathon is almost considered a party, an anticipated appointment throughout the year (see Table 8): without significant differences in gender or age, the competition is thus fun (94% of all participants) and a chance to test one's abilities (81% of all participants). The residents like the opportunity to exercise and improve their physical condition (84%) in a situation that offers the opportunity to relax (63%) and socialize (63%), while non-residents emphasize the advantage of trying a different experience (61%) and traveling and visiting new places (59%).

Table 8 I consider it important to participate in the event for: (MR%. STD = 0,934)

	Habitants	Inhabitants	% N. Respondents on the total
Having fun	93%	95%	94%
Challenge myself	82%	89%	81%
Exercise and improve physical condition	84%	78%	81%
Relax	63%	68%	64%
Socialize	58%	60%	59%
Try a new experience	46%	61%	50%
Health reasons	47%	40%	45%
To compete	42%	42%	42%
Travel and visit new places	28%	59%	36%
Support a friend and / or relative	28%	26%	27%
Total	28%	72%	100%

Legend: the percentages indicate the number of respondents who consider each item fairly or very important and the percentage of the number of respondents is calculated on the total number of respondents

Two thirds of the residents see the event as a chance for fun and socialization (63%), meeting and staying with friends and relatives, while non-residents, in addition to the race, eat out (64%) and visit the city (60%) during their stay. As further confirmation of the tourist potential inherent in a sporting event (already emerged in the literature and in different parts of the research), two-thirds of non-residents (63%) also say they were impressed by the host city, and were willing to return just as tourists.

At the end of the questionnaire, an open question was asked aimed at tracing the strengths and weaknesses of the territory with respect to tourist hospitality opportunities. Firstly, it is interesting to note that in a web survey, the usual percentage of respondents to an open question is rather low, usually no more than 10%, while in this case it was almost one-fifth (19%). In addition, initially designed only for non-residents, it was decided to leave the possibility of response also to residents, as their privileged point of view can be equally important in highlighting the potential and limitations of the territory. Notably, the latter explicitly outlined the limits (69%), while non-residents mostly underlined positive elements (57%).

In general, both categories of respondents (68%: 63% residents vs. 71% non-residents) underlined the value of the host city Rome, for its uniqueness, beauty and wealth of tourist, cultural and especially, artistic and historical sites to visit. A 10% of non-residents also considered the municipality of Ostia a pleasant place, with its sea front and beautiful promenade. An equivalent share (10%) attributed added value to the reception and quality of the organization (also in this case, especially by Italian participants, 12%).

Among the negative factors, almost half of non-residents (48%) said that, in the absence of new incentives, they might opt for other destinations in the future. The other negative aspects indicated by one-third (35%) of non-residents, concern

problems typical of the territory and local hospitality – chaos, decay, dirt and delinquency – which can discourage a return to the capital. They considered the tourism infrastructure poor or even of poor quality (13%), and not very welcoming (4%).

Conclusions

The case study highlighted some potential for growth due to a solid, attentive and committed organizational committee, while it also indicated some limitations by a lack of a relational network to support economic and socio-cultural development deriving from the event. In fact, the participants are very loyal to this event, most participating in more than one edition. However, the expenditure on the part of the participants has little impact on the development of the territory. This is partly a result of a reduced participant spending power, but mainly due to a lack of a network capable of exploiting resources to enhance the territory, as evident from interviews with the organizers.

This prevents opportunities provided by the sporting event from being exploited, to start a sustainable and virtuous local development project, especially desirable given the socio-political conditions of the territory, and the need to redevelop and enhance the enormous historical, cultural and tourist potential of the area, as declared by the participants.

As indicated by the literature, the concept of sport and the sporting event as a lever for local sustainable development is fully confirmed by the present research, but given the results, sports tourism development in the area appears to be rather thwarted in the absence of project synergy initiatives. The dialogue between institutions, organizers and stakeholders is a fundamental requirement to fully exploit the sporting event for local and tourism development. In some areas in Italy, local consortia have been created to work on sports tourism projects. In these best practices, the network listens and gratifies the expectations of residents and tourists, promotes the image of sport in the host location, protects the quality of life of local populations, without harming, indeed even enhancing the social, cultural and environmental values of the territory, and improving the prospects for the future. This is the right way forward to enhance the half marathons as a strategic tool of the host territory.

Unfortunately, the comments made by the participants are rather timely and well represent the Italian scenario in general. There is no doubt that Italy is characterized by cultural wealth, large historical and artistic heritage, a number of fairs and world exhibitions and the presence of a significant number of international sporting events. The city of Rome alone hosts every year events of excellence for many sports - the Rome Marathon, the International Tennis Open, Piazza di Siena, the Golden Gala, and the Six Nations rugby. Moreover, few other destinations in the world offer such a vast and heterogeneous combination of history, culture, artistic treasures,

landscape, sport, fashion, design, food and wine as Italy. For this reason, it should be first in each world ranking on tourist destinations, both nationally and internationally. However, it only comes sixth place in the world ranking UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) (2015) and, as reported by Federalberghi, is even in decline. Further, in Europe Italy is twelfth for its offers of hotels. The main problems are bureaucracy, difficulty in attracting investments, poor maintenance of tourist facilities and transport infrastructure, personnel not adequately trained to face strong world competition, limited ability to fully understand the demand and develop competitive tourism products, and a lack of price competitiveness (Angeloni, 2013: 125–141). These problems need to be addressed and resolved to re-launch a sector that only represents 10.2% of national GDP (Ontit, 2016) at the moment, despite its potential.

Based on these considerations, some recommendations for the various stakeholders involved in the organization of events can be summarized, as follows:

1. Organizers need to more effectively attract investors and create a closer relationship with local businesses to increase local development. The organizers need to promote local networks and to strengthen a sense of “ownership” by the different stakeholders with regard to the events;
2. Through their increased returns, companies could then also invest in improving accommodation facilities and thus generate a virtuous circuit to attract tourists;
3. In this study, the municipality was found to be completely absent, mainly for political reasons. In general, as already mentioned, the scarce support by local institutions is a widespread problem due to a lack of sensitivity on the part of policy makers, or a lack of resources and economic funds. In accordance with the analysis of some good practices in major events, this study shows the benefits for the administrations in terms of image, visibility and economic returns when supporting sports initiatives. Given the general lack of awareness, the organizers need to explain the advantages to the municipalities, encouraging them to become protagonists of the organizational network, so as to improve institutional-citizen relations, and the quality of the services offered, and to capitalize on the value of the territory;
4. Finally, for academics, studying cases of sporting events, which support local development, is important, since such cases can significantly help define effective public policies. This book, both in the development of a common methodology and in comparing different cases in various parts of the world, exemplifies the value of this type of approach. In Italy, few such studies are available, and greater commitment in this direction is required.

This study of the half marathon has some limitations. Although 20% of the participants answered the questionnaire (already a statistically representative threshold), an even greater number of answers would be desirable. One of the main problems is how to sensitize people to participate in scientific research. In the future, the researcher needs to further actively encourage participation of the participants

and the inhabitants. On this occasion, this was done through numerous solicitations, especially through the organizers' newsletter and at the Village of the Half Marathon, but in the future, we need to begin even earlier, disseminating the research objectives, from the moment registrations are open to the race.

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