

UDK: 371.126: 894.375

*Asiyat Kurbanova*Student of Silk Road International University of  
Tourism and Cultural Heritage

## **DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIZATION AND MARKETING OF SAMARKAND MARATHON AND ITS ECONOMICAL ADVANTAGE FOR THE STATE**

### **Abstract**

Nowadays sport tourism is rapidly developing all over the world, generating significant economic benefits for countries. However Uzbekistan just begins its path in leveraging sphere of sport tourism by arranging Samarkand Marathon. This article summarises opinions of previous researches of connected spheres as well as provides own research among Samarkand residents . The research conducted, mostly overviews Samarkand Marathon, its organization, facilities and promotion, with an objective to make it more profitable for the state. The findings pointed out that organizers of the marathon hosted in Samarkand should focus more both on the development of destination infructstructure and marketing of the event online. By providing recommendations, this article aims to suggest methods for enhancement Samarkand Marathon in order to attract more tourists.

*Keywords:* sport tourism, marathon, marathon development, marathon organization, marathon promotion

### **Introduction**

Nowadays, there are countless races, marathons and triathlons held all over the world. People are willing to spend their money and time on such events because races are an entertaining activities that positively impact their health. "Clearly, sport tourism can be significant to the economy of host cities. The economy of Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, is dependent on the economic impact of tourism and has been a minor international gaming and vacation destination" (Brown, et al., 2010). Therefore, countries can make a significant profit out of holding and supporting such sport competitions. While Uzbekistan is just beginning its journey in sport tourism development by arrangement of marathons in Samarkand and Bukhara, there are some ways to ensure positive economic impact of races on the state, including development of destination organization and marketing of the event. This article aims to suggest methods to make Samarkand Marathon economically advantageous for the state by enhancement of organization and advertisement to meet international standard. Active tourism in Uzbekistan, particularly Samarkand Marathon can become a source of financial output from tourists if the organization and marketing of the event are enhanced.

### **Literature review**

This article is focused on active sport tourism in Uzbekistan, city of Samarkand, particularly emphasising Samarkand Marathon. There are several sources and authors that were reviewed to gather more information on the theme and they are mentioned below.

Pawlikowska-Piechotka, in her article (2016), provided general information about active and passive sport tourism, which can be helpful in describing sport tourism as a concept, as well as travelling particularly to participate in the Samarkand Marathon. Furthermore, it includes some knowledge about economic impact of sport events.

While Pawlikowska-Piechotka provides more general description of active sport tourism, Balaglu, Brown and Busser in 2010 made broad research of data of races and suggested some ways

to drive interest of audience to sport events. They provided information about financial output of countries from sport as well, which can be used in this article as an example.

In research, accomplished by Erin Basavage in 2015, Boston Marathon is reviewed as a case study from different aspects, including general overview, marketing of the event, preparation of destination, and the way marathon is organized. Furthermore Basavage suggested plan for enhancement of general organization and promotion of Boston marathon. That information can be helpful for identifying development path and comparison with Samarkand Marathon race.

Chivu, in his article, published in 2013, overviewed sport tourism and competitions in Romania, providing as an example Bucharest International Marathon, which is not as developed and popular as Boston marathon, therefore that two researches provide different data to compare and find best way of development for Samarkand Marathon.

Wtodarczyk in 2016 in the article mostly provides information about the list of events, held in Lodz Arena. The research reviews all the competitions held in the Arena as well as the number of tourists participating and attending different tournaments.

### **Economical impact of Marathons**

Although in Uzbekistan marathons do not generate significant financial output yet, sport tourism all over the world is affecting positively the economies of many countries. So Samarkand Marathon presents a great opportunity to develop the economic sphere of sport competitions in Uzbekistan. According to researchers, sport events can generate great income due to the number of foreign participants of race and longevity of time they tend to spend in the destination. "Data suggest that sports tournaments are more likely to generate substantial positive economic impacts than special events because of the higher proportion of out-of tow participants and the frequent requirement that participants stay for multiple days" (Brown, et al., 2010). Therefore in order to benefit from hosting the Samarkand Marathon , organisers should consider a list of factors mostly connected to tourism sphere and infrastructure of the site as well as the quality of the event itself. "It must be stressed that sports tourism (like other forms) rarely occurs in a pure form. It can be assumed that during trips participants will be also taking part in cognitive (cultural, sightseeing, educational), business or recreational tourism" as mentioned in Anna Pawlikowska-Piechotka's article in 2016. While key role in attraction of foreigner runners play marketing and quality of organization of the event, other factors, including various tourist services, cannot be neglected. Authorities are responsible for providing high quality basic visitors' needs, including transport and gastronomy, as well and entertainment activities. "Sport and tourism are worldwide considered to be the modern niches for economic development, but only high developed countries have realized that to maximize their economic impact, sport and tourism must be considered as a whole" (Chivu, 2013). Therefore if the government is encouraging the development of sport in the state and tourism sphere is maintained in good conditions, providing high quality service, state can obtain significant income from sport tourism. For example, in 2010 publication mentioned that "Sport tourism is worth around UK£2.61 billion (US\$3.9 billion) to the U.K, tourism industry. That tourism dollar also includes spending on clothing, footwear, and equipment specific to sport event tourism activities" (Brown, et al.), while in the research about Boston Marathon Basavage says: "Participant fees are a substantial source of income; providing around \$5,250,000.00" (2015). Taking as an example top sport tourism countries of the world, it can be obviously seen that the most revenue is mainly obtained from participation fee, but there are other sources of income listed by Borzyszkowski in 2011, including players fees, merchandise of goods and sponsorship (Wtodarczyk, 2016). Samarkand Marathon also integrated merchandising of goods and sponsorship, however it is done on a low rate, therefore it is important to increase that spheres as well. Considering this information, coordinators and authorities can find best ways to captivate foreigners to Samarkand Marathon to increase profitability.

### **Discussions: Organization of Samarkand Marathon**

Organization and facilities of Samarkand Marathon should be enhanced to meet international standards in order to attract more and more tourists every year. Organization of sport events includes necessary equipment for running, facilities for participants of competition and developed destination of event. "In order to undertake sports tourism actively, a person needs exactly those predispositions, qualifications and specialist equipment which are necessary in a given sport" (Pawlikowska-Piechotka, 2016). So, first of all directors of Samarkand Marathon should consider special professional facilities of the event, equipment than can be provided to participants for free and for a sale, and overall quality of the area where Samarkand Marathon is held, because significant role in attracting tourists to sport tourism plays the organization of event. But as pointed out in 2016 by Anna Pawlikowska-Piechotka "Obviously, a part of the basic tourism infrastructure (accommodation, gastronomy, transport, elements of complementary infrastructure) remains unchanged, as it is needed by tourists regardless of the sports and the kind of participation." In that case, the organization of the event includes not only direct spheres connected with sport, but furthermore general facilities needed by tourists everywhere. That's why permanent enhancement of all services and infrastructures should be carried by authorities to develop tourism in Uzbekistan overall, not only particularly Samarkand Marathon. Moreover, while marathon, held in Samarkand, just started its way in sport tourism, most of the worldwide marathons provide necessary organizational information on their website. Samarkand Marathon also has its official website (<https://events.samarkandmarathon.uz/>), but unfortunately the information that is gathered there is not fully accomplished for foreigners' convenience. For example, in Basavage pointed that "Hotels, air-fare, and additional travel information is available on the website. There is a substantial list of hotels that offer discounts to anyone involved with the Boston Marathon" (2015), however website of Samarkand Marathon provides information only about the event itself, dates and basic data. Focusing on smaller details, including special healthy food, hotels near running destinations, recreational facilities to visit after the race, and addresses of shops selling professional running gear, shows the serious and precise approach of the organizers, which can attract more participants. Therefore, the website requires greater focus from organizers and managers of the event. Websites are not only a good opportunity to gain more attention to the marathon and show professional approach, but also to get sponsorship from local hotels and brands. There can be published advertisements of accommodation, restaurants, tour agencies, and shops, which can lead to an increase of customers overall. To summarize, there is a range of factors to consider while organizing Samarkand Marathon to boost its attractiveness among tourists and locals.

### **Marketing of Samarkand Marathon**

The marketing and advertisement of race plays crucial role in the development of the event. As pointed by Chivu in 2013, "Even with a proper infrastructural basis, with the required financial support, if there is no demand from the people, if the society does not show an interest for sporting activities, if the rebirth of physical culture is not active enough, there are no sustainable reasons to generate such an event". Obviously, to generate more income from hosting sports events, interest among society should be enough high, so that people, both locals and tourists, are willing to attend and participate. The strategies to fuel the interest of people and the market marathon differ depending on objectives, situation, specialty, and directions, however, some international examples can serve as a guide for Samarkand Marathon as well. For example, while managers of Samarkand Marathon are still neglecting television, researchers pointed out that "Among all advertising media, the television is considered the intermediary with the strongest impact in promoting the sport events. Television companies control 70% of the prime-time advertisement sale market" (Chivu, 2013). With this in mind, directors can start using television some time before the race advertisement to attract more participants. But unfortunately, TV is mostly watched by locals, while the main goal of this research work is to attract mostly foreign participants. Hence there are other strategies, for example, as Basavage mentioned, "There are specific places and

events to market the Boston Marathon that directly relates to populations that would show more interest than overall general advertising. Some great examples include: Chiropractic clinics, running stores, sporting goods stores, healthy restaurants, and organic grocery stores"(2015). These kinds of facilities fuel interest in tournaments by showing the quality and detailing of the organization. Moreover, it is convenient for runners because of easier access to their needs. What is more interesting about the Boston marathon is the day of organization: "The marathon is held on Patriots Day, a local celebrated holiday where most employees city-wide receive a paid day off from work" (Basavage, 2015). Although there are other factors affecting dates of competition, Samarkand Marathon similarly could become a part of another celebration, such as international music festival "Melodies of the East" ("Sharq Taronalari") that takes place in the end of august, and, because it attracts thousands of people from overseas, it can stimulate attendance of Samarkand Marathon as well. People coming to the city of Samarkand for cultural celebrations and simultaneously they can participate in sports competitions to fulfill their experience. Additionally, sales of goods associated with competition (with logos and branding) as well as selling special equipment is good for marketing of the Marathon. "Merchandise can include: Socks, rain jackets, running clothes, enhancement products, recovery products, headbands, sweatshirts, kids' clothes, fanny packs, and much more. Most of these items are specific to the event by print work" (Basavage, 2015). Merchandised goods in Samarkand can blend both sporty style and deep cultural value of the city, reflecting its history, because Samarkand is known all over the world for its ancient monuments. By employing different ways to promote Samarkand Marathon, including those mentioned in the paragraph above, more and more people can get to know more and be attracted to participate in the event.

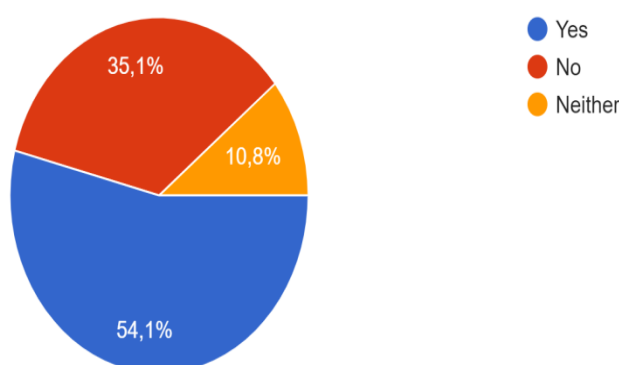
### Results: Research Data

Research accomplished according to the Samarkand Marathon overviews opinion of local citizens of Samarkand on the theme of race and sport tourism generally in the state as well. Participants are mostly younger generation representatives of both sexes. The results are presented below on the charts.

**Figure 1**

Did you see the advertisement of Samarkand marathon on the streets?

37 ОТВЕТОВ

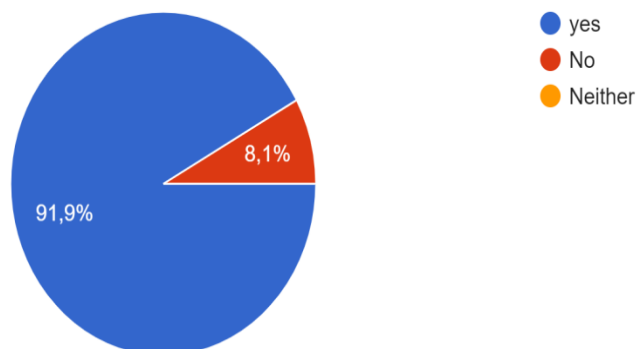


*Note:* As it is seen most of the locals have seen the advertising posters all over the city, what is necessary for good marketing of the competition, while 10% are not sure about the answer. Promotion in the streets can lead to excellent outcomes in the number of participants.

**Figure 2**

Have you ever heard about Samarkand marathon?

37 ОТВЕТОВ

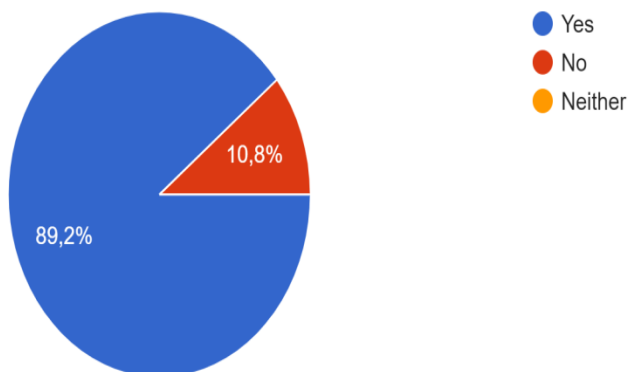


*Note:* While most of the people know about the existence of the Samarkand Marathon race, there are still more than 8 percent of locals who do not know about that competition. Thus, in order to enhance promotion more strategies should be used for advertisement both among citizens of Uzbekistan and foreigners.

**Figure 3**

Do you think the idea of development sport tourism in Uzbekistan can be successful?

37 ОТВЕТОВ

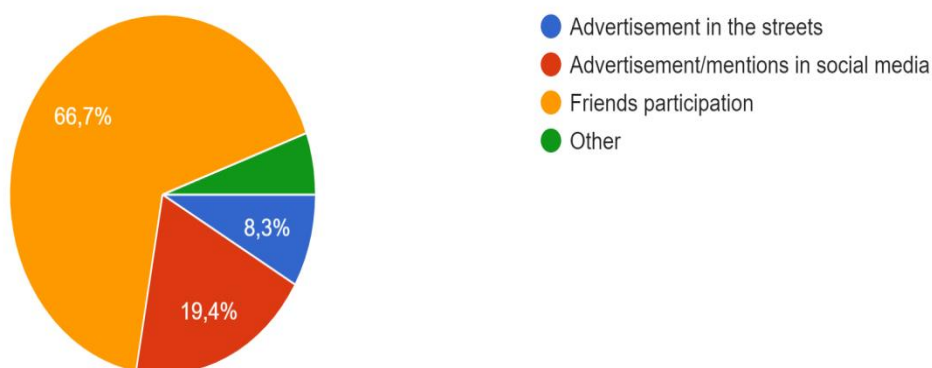


*Note:* Considering question above, major part of voters (89,2%) participating in the research regard that the efforts in sport tourism development can lead success and significant achievements. Thus, financial involvings authorities in Samarkand Marathon should give results in the nearest future.

**Figure 4**

What can motivate you to take part in running races?

36 ОТВЕТОВ

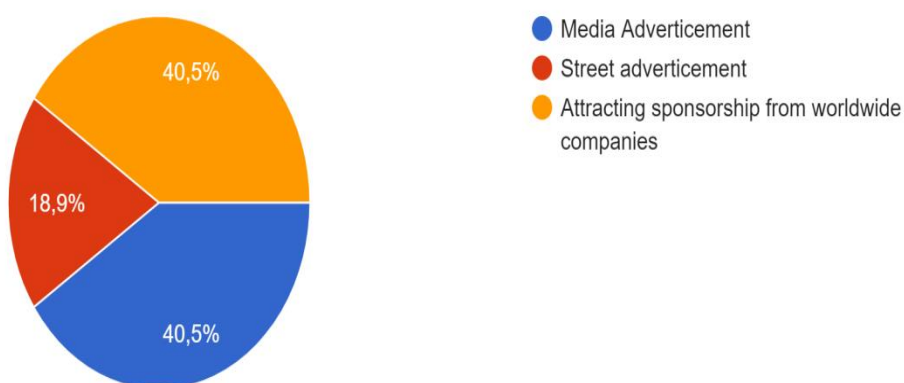


*Note:* Only 8,3 percent of respondents consider street advertisement is a good way to promote the race in Samarkand, while most of them think that friends participation can inspire them to join the marathon, as well social media promotion can be effective as well.

**Figure 5**

In you opinion what is the best way to marketing Samarkand Marathon?

37 ОТВЕТОВ

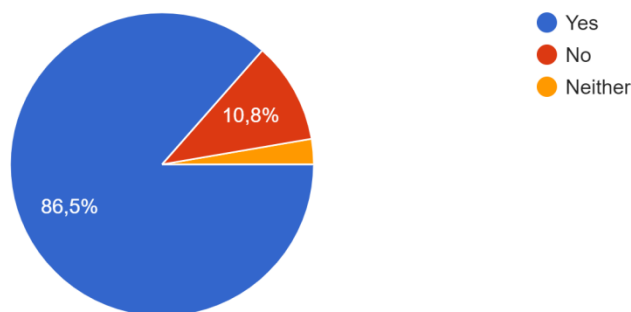


*Note:* Equal number of people consider social media advertisement and sponsorship the best way to market Samarkand Marathon. Only just below 19 percent of voters think that street advertisement is an appropriate option.

**Figure 6**

How do you think, is the quality of organization and facilities plays key role in promotion of marathon?

37 ОТВЕТОВ



*Note:* The major part of participants (86,5%) of the research are sure that organization of the event and provided facilities are crucial for development and promotion of Samarkand Marathon, however 10,8% think that organization cannot affect the promotion and number of participants.

### Recommendations

The summary of all main recommendations and advice to boost income of the event that had been discovered during the research work by reviewing world most known sport events and marathons particularly, as well as questioning citizens of Uzbekistan about the development and future of Samarkand Marathon listed below

1. It is remarkably important to consider forms of tourism that are not straightly connected to sport itself to capture attention of tourists and offer other entertainment options (for example enhancement and marketing of cultural touristic activities or adventure tourism destinations)
2. The government of the state can take responsibility for the level of basic tourist infrastructure, including accommodation, gastronomy, and transport. It should be provided on a high level, meeting international standards.
3. While the Marathon is held, its destination can be used to merchandise some goods connected with the event. It can not only provide extra income but also serve as an advertisement.
4. Attracting sponsorship of both local and international brands is a good way of development of Samarkand Marathon. Sponsorship serves as financial support of the organization process of the event and as advertisement among special groups of people (customers of the brand) simultaneously.
5. In order to attract more and more professional sportsmen, managers of the event should take into consideration required high quality of organization of destination.
6. Equipment for runners should be accessible in the city close to the marathon destination. While some necessary goods can be provided for free, others can be sold. Special shops with professional stuff for participants would greatly increase the willingness of people to participate.
7. The website of Samarkand Marathon does not provide a full variety of information that can be necessary for foreigners. Although there is organizational data including dates, destinations, and online registration services, international tourists can be interested in hotels, gastronomy sites and etc.
8. Unfortunately, Samarkand Marathon is not advertised on television, however, it is considered one of the strongest advertisement platforms. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to broadcast the advertisement of the event on TV a few months before the competition starts.
9. Samarkand Marathon can be held during some kind of national celebration, for example at the dates of international musical festival 'Melodies of the East' on order to attract more foreigners by combining cultural experience with sport competition.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Samarkand Marathon at the moment is rapidly developing and becoming more and more attractive to tourists all over the world. However, nowadays, it requires more focused actions, directed to maintain growth of financial income of the event. In order to maximize its profitability for the state, organizers and managers should focus more on some spheres, particularly on organization and promotion among foreigners. By providing more facilities for participants, enhancement of the destination, boosting official website, advertising through internet and television great results can be achieved in coming years. Additionally, further engagement of local communities and businesses will significantly boost Samarkand Marathon's reputation as a world-known tourist entertainment attraction.

### **References**

- Balaglu, S., Brown, C., & Busser, J. A., (2010). Sport Tourists in a Gaming Destination: Predicting Gaming and Non-Gaming Expenditures. *UNLV Gaming Research & Review Journal*, 14(2), 59-68
- Basavage, E., "Boston Marathon" (2015) Master of Arts in Sport Management. 1. <https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/sport-management-masters/1>
- Chivu, C. (2013). Sport tourism in Romania and the Romanian experience in organizing and hosting an international sport event: Case study; Bucharest International Marathon. *Cinq Continents*, 3(7), 88-113. [resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-359649](https://www.resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-359649)
- Pawlikowska-Piechotka, A. (2016). SPORTS TOURISM: Active and Passive participation in sporting events (amateur and professional). *Tourism*, 26(1), 94-96.
- Wtodarczyk, B. (2016). LODZ as an arena of grand sport events: selected examples. *Tourism*, 26(1), 49-59.