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Article abstract

The paper analyses the relationship between sport and tourism. Starting from the literature on sport tourism and tourism sport, we examine the impact of a sporting event in terms of tourist flow in relation to the provision of sporting facilities in the Italian regions. The sport tourism is an original product, taking into account both relations between tourism and sport, but also a real osmosis of sport activities with the touristic ones. Mega events, like the Olympics, or local events, as city marathons, exert an increasingly significant role in positioning the resort in the tourist market, improving image, local amenities and infrastructure in general. Sports tourism could be a driving force for local development, community cohesiveness, economics benefits, social incentives, positioning the localities in the touristic market, improving their image.

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## Sport as a driver for local development and sustainable tourism

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*L'article analyse la relation entre le sport et le tourisme. Débutant avec la littérature sur le tourisme sportif et le sport de tourisme, nous examinons l'impact d'un événement sportif en termes de flux touristique en lien avec les installations sportives en régions italiennes. Le tourisme sportif est un produit original, prenant en compte la double relation entre le tourisme et le sport, mais aussi une réelle osmose entre les activités sportives et touristiques. Les événements d'envergure, comme les Jeux olympiques, ou des événements locaux, comme des marathons municipaux, exercent un rôle de plus en plus significatif dans le positionnement des stations de vacances dans le marché touristique, l'amélioration de l'image de marque, des équipements locaux et les infrastructures en général. Le tourisme sportif pourrait être un élément moteur pour le développement local, la cohésion communautaire, des bénéfices économiques, des motivations sociales, positionnant les sites dans le marché touristique, améliorant leur image.*

*Mots-clés : sport, tourisme, développement local, image, Italie*

*The paper analyses the relationship between sport and tourism. Starting from the literature on sport tourism and tourism sport, we examine the impact of a sporting event in terms of tourist flow in relation to the provision of sporting facilities in the Italian regions. The sport tourism is an original product, taking into account both relations between tourism and sport, but also a real osmosis of sport activities with the touristic ones. Mega events, like the Olympics, or local events, as city marathons, exert an increasingly significant role in positioning the resort in the tourist market, improving image, local amenities and infrastructure in general. Sports tourism could be a driving force for local development, community cohesiveness, economic benefits, social incentives, positioning the localities in the touristic market, improving their image.*

*Keywords: sport, tourism, local development, image, Italy*

*El artículo analiza la relación entre el deporte y el turismo. Comenzando de la literatura sobre el turismo de deporte y el deporte de turismo, examinamos el impacto de un acontecimiento deportivo en términos de flujo turístico en relación con la provisión de instalaciones deportivas en las regiones italianas. El turismo de deporte es un producto original, teniendo en cuenta ambas relaciones entre el turismo y el deporte, pero también una verdadera ósmosis de actividades de deporte con los turísticos. Mega acontecimientos, como las Olimpiadas, o acontecimientos locales, como los maratones de ciudad, ejercen un papel cada vez más significativo en la colocación del recurso en el mercado turístico, el mejoramiento de la imagen, servicios locales e infraestructura en general. El turismo deportivo podría ser una fuerza motriz para el desarrollo local, la coherencia de comunidad, ventajas de economía, incentivos sociales, colocando las localidades en el mercado turístico, mejorando su imagen.*

*Palabras clave : deporte, turismo, desarrollo local, imagen, Italia*

## Introduction

The DG Education and Culture of European Community write in 2011 about the role of sport: “Sport has a strong potential to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and new jobs through its positive effects on social inclusion, education and training, and public health. It helps limit the rise in social security and health expenditure by improving the health and productivity of the population and by ensuring a higher quality of life through old age. It contributes to social cohesion by breaking down social barriers, and it improves the employability of the population through its impact on education and training. Sport enables immigrants and the host society to interact in a positive way, thus furthering integration and inter-cultural dialogue”. (E.C., 2011: 8).

The Commission says about the relationship between sports and health activities: “Physical activity is one of the most important health determinants in modern society and can make a major contribution to the reduction of overweight and obesity and the prevention of a number of serious diseases. Sport constitutes a fundamental part of any public policy approach aiming at improving physical activity.” (E.C., 2011: 10).

The European Commission attaches great economic value to the sport: “Sport represents a large and fast-growing sector of the economy and makes an important contribution to growth and jobs, with value added and employment effects exceeding average growth rates. Around 2% of global GDP is generated by the sport sector. Major sport events and competitions provide strong potential for increased development of tourism in Europe. Sport is thus a contributor to the Europe 2020 strategy” (E.C., 2011:13).

The issue of tourism development, related with sport events, is an aspect of growing relevance for its impact in terms of economic regeneration, but also for its impact on the quality of life. Extraordinary and global mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, or local events such as city marathons are achieving a growing importance in positioning the localities in the touristic market, improving their image, endowments and territorial infrastructures in general. In particular, considering sports mega-events, cities like Barcelona grew their touristic attractiveness thanks to the Summer Olympics in 1992; also the case of Turin 2006 seems interesting from this point of view (Dansero, Puttilli, 2009).

The observation of a touristic flow related to sport events generated in the Eighties researches on the relationship between tourism and sport, bringing to the creation of a stream of literature referred to as “sport-tourism” or “tourism-sport” – definition appeared in Europe and in the United States in order to characterize a set of activities originated by the synergies between tourism and sport. The sport tourism, as argued by Charles Pigeassou, constitutes in fact an original product, taking into account both relations between tourism and sport, but also a real osmosis of sport activities with the touristic ones (Pigeassou, 2002).

The sport tourism is generated where there is an endowment of infrastructures able to attract events, but also when large events stimulate the building of new infrastructures – besides leaving a heritage of assets that could contribute to the diffusion of sport activities among residents, improving their quality of life.

The aim of paper is to analyze the relationship between sport and tourism. The paper is organized as follows: the second chapter presents an overview of some studies on the subject. The paragraph 3 provides a monitoring of the situation of the sport facilities in Italy in relation

to the increase in sport. The paragraph 4 is intended to emphasize the demand for sport and the paragraph 5 the positive role of sporting events favoring the recovery of existing structures and the creation of new facilities.

### **Sport and tourism: what relationship?**

The relationship between sport, events and tourism received a growing attention from the international literature, from both the theoretical and methodological point of view, while in the Italian debate it has been discussed only recently. A surprising absence, if one considers the economic and cultural relevance of tourism and sport in the country.

Nevertheless, referring to research on the issue for a more detailed discussion of the scientific debate (Dansero, Pioletti and Puttilli, 2008), we will mention in this discussion some aspects that put in relationship the availability of facilities, the events, economic regeneration and quality of life (Bessy, 2014).

The distinction in the literature between sport tourism and tourism sport is tackled by Sue Glyptis (1991), which focuses attention on the fact that the two phenomena, sport tourism and tourism sport, are treated by scholars separately as two different spheres of activity. The researcher seeks to identify the behavior of participants in sports activities and those of the tourists. His reading sees the link between sport and tourism in terms of governance, strategic planning, development opportunities and services, urban planning and promotion of a territory (Glyptis, 1991).

A study on the Italian context (CONI - CENSIS, 2008) presents the sports tourism as an extension of sport activities loisir. The sport tourism became an important means for the touristic development of territory.

Sports tourism can serve as a tool to improve relations and regional and local development. In this regard Chris Gratton offers a definition of economic regeneration as an effect of sport activities referring to a growth in local income and employment through a sport-related economic activity. This might include or not an improvement of local infrastructures for physical activity (sport, non sport, or both). The research by Gratton is referred to the framework of the Anglo-Saxon world. In the USA many cities made huge efforts to benefit to enhance the sports. Some strategies used to improve the touristic attractiveness are based on the presence or the creation of professional teams of football, baseball, ice hockey and basketball – which constitute, thanks to their popularity, a promotional window for the hosting area.

A second strategy of economic regeneration is directed to the improvement of existing facilities. In the period between 1987 and 2003, in the USA, 80% of stadiums have been replaced or refurbished, despite the fact that the impact of these choices has been discussed from opposite sides. Some scholars, as Crompton in the late Seventies, argued that the advantages for a city are related to an improvement in the image of the community, with benefits on the perception of the city by its residents thanks to the fact to be in possession of a professional sport team (Crompton, 1979).

Sport events represent an important factor of touristic attractiveness, which interests several categories of participants (Deery, Jago, Fredline, 2004): sportsmen (the protagonists of the event) with their entourage (trainers, instructors, managers, etc.), the audience, the press, and the

delegates of sports federations, technicians and so on. The events employ a growing number of people in their organization, management and in their marketing. Frequently, sport events raise a great attention and expectation, such as all the ritual activities attached to them. Events such as the Olympic Games include ceremonies and parties, and it is common to build a program of special events (for example cultural events) that are related to the sport event, in order to keep the audience and the media interested. These are all activities that enforce the role of the events as attractors of tourism flows.

Walo, Bull and Breen (1996) demonstrated that events such as the international University tournaments (Universiades) provide an excellent economic publicity for the community, thanks to the sales of food and beverages to the audience. The community participates to the event with the involvement of volunteers in its organization, and this provides economic benefits to restaurants and pubs (Pioletti, 2011).

The sport event frequently includes a set of public initiatives whose success depends on the involvement of the local community and the natural or built attractions that could appeal to the cultural interests of visitors. Other kind of sport initiatives, such as smaller events, requires little investment and use existing facilities and volunteer work for the management and control (Bondonio and Campaniello, 2006).

In 2012 Turin was awarded the title of European Capital of Sport 2015 and planned a rich program of some 800 events. The economic impact has been analysed through to measure of economic effects of 80 sport events. Main findings were that direct economic effects (additional local demand) coming from the events is in the magnitude of 18.6-20.8 million euros, in front of a net local public expenditure of 0.604 million euros, showing a substantial lever effect.

Any sport event generates a touristic flow of little or large dimension, that generates opportunities for cultural changes, revitalizes the local tradition, improves the quality of life and enforces the image of the community.

The organization of an event has, on the sociological point of view, the ability to build social cohesion strengthening the relationships in the community. The festival demonstrates in a symbolic way that a society believes in its existence and when a social group celebrates a specific event, it celebrates itself (Turner, 1982). Thus, festivals and special events strengthen the social and cultural identity building strong links between members of the community (Gumuchian and alii, 2003).

The growth of festivals and special events in numbers, diversity and popularity has been enormous in years (Gursoy and alii, 2004). Many communities developed or have been actively developing new festivals and events as leisure and cultural pursuits for residents, as well as for their economic and community development benefits. The development of new festivals and special events opens up a series of research questions regarding the social, environmental and cultural impacts of festivals and special events on local communities, the dynamics of local community-festival and special event organizers relations, the changing relations between key interest groups, and the scope of community involvement and so forth (Gursoy and alii, 2004).

Among the socio-economical factors pointed out as items of the impact of festivals and special events we could mention:

- a. cohesion of the community: income for local projects, improvements of the image of the community, building of the community pride, support for the preservation of local culture and internal cohesion;
- b. economic benefits: growth in employment opportunities, improvement of life standards, promotion of new opportunities among local actors;
- c. social costs: growth in traffic and congestion, pressure on local services, growth in the crime rate;
- d. social incentives: recreational opportunities, promotion of organizational and business opportunities, leisure activities intended to families, improvement of the image towards the outsiders, opportunities for the creation of relationships between residents and visitors, education for the population.

There are negative effects arising from the risk of increasing inequalities between the different strata of society or between different geographical areas of the city. This depends on several factors: the spatial concentration of the facilities and infrastructure in specific areas of the city; the increase of the public debt, which can impact heavily on future public investment in various services; the lack of consultation with local communities who are deprived of the ability to decide on issues relating to their future. In addition, the concentration of investments in degraded areas of the city can lead to a process of gentrification (Owen, 2001).

Sport events can be grouped according to various criteria, one being the time span as proposed by Crompton (Crompton, 1979). His model includes four kinds of events:

- Type A with irregular frequency: these are the most important events generating significant economic activity and interest of the media (such as Olympics, World Cups);
- Type B events with large numbers of viewers, generating significant economic activity, media interest and part of an annual series of national events such as Wimbledon;
- Type C irregular events with irregular participation of audience, with an uncertain level of economic activity (eg. Grand Prix athletics);
- Type D sporting events that generate a modest economic activity and are related to a stage of the annual competition (ex National Championships in many sports).

Donald Getz (2008) conducted various studies on sport events and differentiates between sport events (competition in which are involved pros or amateurs and the audience) and recreational events (festivals with several sports or games with a recreational purpose, usually intended for the young population). In the study of sport events, the author proposes to consider some antinomies<sup>1</sup>:

- the separation between professionals and amateurs, for what concerns the participants;
- indoor or outdoor, as to the place where the event takes place;
- regular, irregular or scheduled (league matches or championships), occasional or unique frequency of the events;
- the local, regional or international scale;
- the presence of participants, of the audience or both.

1. Antinomies should not be considered as self-excluding. Some events, in fact, might entail antinomies and different characteristics.

In a geographical perspective, we can refer to the concepts of space, place and environment used by Bale (1994) for the spatial analysis of sport events<sup>2</sup>.

Among different kind of sport events, we should differentiate between mega-events and smaller events. Mega-events are interesting for their importance for sports and tourism and for their impact in terms of territorial transformations. The global competition between cities and territories for hosting mega-events testifies the role that they play as opportunities for territorial regeneration and improvement of the image of places, both factors that could be determinant for the success on the international tourism markets (Gibson, Willming, Holdnak, 2003). Nevertheless, season competitions such as ice hockey, basketball, soccer and rugby – both in their master edition or for disabled persons (Higham, 1999), taking place in existing facilities and thus requiring little use of public funds, are more easily manageable in terms of crowds and traffic if compared to a mega-event – and reduce the season effects.

The international literature recognized the relationship between sport events and touristic development, an aspect that should be studied in Italy on both the theoretical and empirical level, while there is a growing territorial competition for hosting the largest sport events. In order to provide an adequate methodology, it should be useful to define the various territorial and spatial impacts of sport events: on one side building a map of the different kind of events and their potential spatial and touristic impact; secondly analyzing in detail some examples of the relevance of the sport event for the hosting territory. The following sections are intended to provide some insights on the issue, despite the fact that it deserves a more widespread and analytic discussion (Augustin, 2011).

### **The state of sport facilities in Italy**

The definition of sport in the “European sports chart” issued by the European Council is: sport “means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels” (Pioletti, 2008: 150).

The sport activity is a voluntary and has the psychophysical equilibrium as its aim. The choice of performing is free, but each sport needs a defined adequate space, indoor or outdoor.

In the 1920s and 1930s stadiums have been built to affirm the role of sports through events, mainly in soccer o athletics. After Second World War a new concept of sport is progressively being diffused among all social classes and opens to various contributions. Sport events became not only a mean for diffusing the performance, but also opportunity to meet sportsmen from far areas of the country.

The circular nr. 1 of September 16<sup>th</sup> 1959 of the Ministry of Tourism and Arts, from which the National Olympic Committee depends, states the creation of a thousand million lire fund to provide funding for sport facilities “that constitute a coefficient for the growth of tourism”. The program involves swimming pools, tennis fields, cableways and ski lifts (Bonini, Verratti, 2008).

2. Bale (1994) analyzes soccer and the sense of place generated by the stadium, a legitimated heir of the “agorà” or the “foro”, the place where the loyalty and the sense of belonging is materialized. Soccer fans see in the stadium the materialization of the “sense of place”. Thanks to the frequency of the sport matches, the name of the city in which events take place are diffused among millions of people in a country, providing a free promotion for places otherwise unknown and not involved in the largest touristic circuits. The success of a club attracts the interest by medias and works also as a powerful mean for collective identification with a place.

It is the first attempt of doing a survey on the facilities endowment in Italy, a picture of the state of the art before the Olympic Games in Rome in 1960. Data collected are as a matter of fact rather generic, surveying 34.936 basic facilities. A new attempt is made in 1978: this survey points out a 23% growth in available facilities. Also in this case, the information on the endowments is generic and only one year before the World Soccer Championship in Italy 1990 a survey of sports facilities is promoted by CONI, ISTAT and Istituto del Credito Sportivo (ICS).

In the half of Nineties, also according to updated laws, the discussion points out the need for updated information on the state of sport facilities in Italy, according to both active and non active facilities.

The first detailed survey on the endowments in Italy has been made in 2005 by the Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro (CNEL), in collaboration with representatives from the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, the CONI, and representatives from Regions, Districts and Communes. The survey is organized in three levels:

1. quantitative analysis of the facilities (data and indicators);
2. qualitative analysis of the facilities, with a survey involving the municipalities;
3. case studies of "good management practices".

The data show the existence of 148.880 spaces devoted to sports as basic facilities, while 14.590 facilities (9,8%) are "non active". In 1996, the spaces devoted to sports are 144.380, while in the 1989 Census they are 133.886 – with a 3,2% growth in 2003-1996 and a 7,7% growth in 1996-1989.

As to the qualitative comparative studies in the different areas of the country, the geographical areas considered are the territorial partitions (North-west, North-East, Center, South and Islands) and the municipalities according to population classes. The sources are: the national census on sport facilities in 1989 (updated in 1996 by Coni, Istat and ICS); regional census; surveys made by Districts and Communes and their associations such as UPI (Unione delle Province Italiane) and ANCI (Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni Italiani), ICS funding post-1996 and funding by Cassa Depositi e Prestiti.

According to data organized by regional territories and different kind of infrastructures, the number of facilities in 1996 was 144.280.

Areas devoted to sports belong to different typologies that could be simplified in:

- sport area (or primary system): a space conformed to allow the practice of one or more sports;
- sport facility: a collection of one or more areas of activity of the same type or different types of accessories they have in common spaces and / or ancillary services;
- sport complex: one or more sports facilities with shared components, accessories and service spaces;
- area of unconventional sport: a space or a place where there are mostly outdoor sports equipment, including non certified ones, anyway used as a place of sport.

As the authors of the survey declare, they did not take into account of unused areas, not working facilities and changes in land-use which occurred in some areas and facilities. In some regions, the surveys are based on estimations and do not take account of the new facilities built



after 1996. Data available thus offer an un-complete map, which should be updated at the level of provinces. A 60% of facilities in Italy have been built before 1981, a 30% in the Eighties, 5% between 1991 and 1996 and 3,4% is esteemed after 1996. Among the most recent sport facilities, the football (five-a-side) fields in Northern Italy and swimming pools in the South (CNEL, 2005).

The interviews conducted by Istat on cultural consumption of the Italians allow to relate the costs for sporting events relation to the number of sporting facilities in the Italian regions. The available data are unfortunately few and reduced to a period of time ranging from 1989 to 2007. Revelations sporting facilities are referred to the research conducted by the Olympic Committee in 1989 and 1996 and the Report of the CNEL on the situation of the sports facilities in Italy to 2003 (CNEL, 2005). The costs for sporting events are the subject of multipurpose household survey investigations by Istat years 1987-1991 (Istat, 1989 and 1993) and on cultural statistics for the year 2007 (Istat, 2009). In the last Italian Statistical Yearbook from 2008 shows the number of tickets sold but not the expenses incurred by the Italian for sporting events (Istat, 2013).

Over the years, the number of sports facilities increasing from 59 743 in 1989 to 70 030 in 1996, to 200 944 in 2003. Some regions have seen a huge increase as the Piedmont went from 5,779 (1989) to 22 915 (2003) and Tuscany from 4,090 to 31 536 facilities. In contrast, the Valle d'Aosta has grown from 487 to 321 facilities. Regarding the costs, Campania region is revealed with greater spending on sporting events with € 258 755 523 (1991). The costs per resident ranging from 0.85 of Basilicata to 16.85 euros in Emilia Romagna. In 2007, the costs remain high with the maximum peak in Piedmont (€ 334.42 million), followed by Lombardy with 151.235.00 one.

The European funds can play a significant role in financing sustainable sports facilities in partnership with local authorities: "EU funds could be used for projects and actions in support of sustainable sport structures. For instance, in order to take full advantage of the value of sport as a tool for local and regional development, urban regeneration, rural development, employability, job creation and labour market integration, the Structural Funds can support investments in line with the priorities set in the Operational Programmes. Regional stakeholders (municipalities and regions) play a crucial role when it comes to sport funding and access to sport and should be increasingly involved in the related EU-level discussions." (E.C., 2011:14).

The governance of sports needs new directions: "Good governance in sport is a condition for the autonomy and self-regulation of sport organisations. While it is not possible to define a single model of governance in European sport across different disciplines and in view of various national differences, the Commission considers that there are inter-linked principles that underpin sport governance at European level, such as autonomy within the limits of the law, democracy, transparency and accountability in decision-making, and inclusiveness in the representation of interested stakeholders. Good governance in sport is a condition for addressing challenges regarding sport and the EU legal framework" (E.C., 2011: 16).

### **The demand for sport**

If in the Sixties and Seventies 80 per cent of individual time was devoted to work and 20 per cent to leisure, the 21<sup>st</sup> century starts with a 40% of time devoted to leisure – a 50 per cent in perspective. Running through the last sixty years of our life, according to the endowment of facilities, we could see that a first period until the Seventies was characterized by a policy oriented to public investments for soccer fields and stadiums. From the Seventies, the model is towards an integration

of sport with other leisure activities and mixing different disciplines. In order to see a change in the mentality, one need to wait for the Eighties, when multi-purpose facilities are planned, in which side by side the sports club, club houses and other typologies of facilities are diffused thanks to private contributors. At the beginning of the new century two models became popular: the “specialism” model, with franchising networks based on fitness and the “multi-sports container” with the presence of multi-sports containers and areas for restaurants and other activities. The two models share the size: the areas become even larger with huge investments involving private contributors. The new stadiums or the “sport cities”, large architectonic structures, are built side by side with buildings intended for other commercial functions. They are not only spaces for physical activity, but spaces intended for an integrated consumption of free-time.

The demand for sports and physical activities goes beyond the traditional sectors, preferring the building an opening of private spaces for physical activities, especially in urban areas, intended for the fitness.

Users can now do activity at various levels: amateur, in which participation is individual and free, dilettante, with the attendance to organized classes, as pre-professional and professional activity to those belonging to sport associations and for a peculiar kind of users. The amateur participation and the pre-professional and professional one include competitions and tournaments in which participants need to buy a ticket, thus allowing surveys on the number of participants.

The physical activity contributes to an improvement of the quality of life and to provide the state of well-being that we could define “health”. In the framework of sedentary and urban lifestyles, there is a need, even at the institutional level, to promote the environment as a place for sustainable activities in the natural environment, such as the case of parks, and the regeneration of urban areas as an integrated life environment for meeting, activity, and play for children and seniors (CNEL, 2005).

The interaction with the environment is not news in particular for those sports that need natural areas, but the approach is different towards non conventional spaces, which becomes less related to niche disciplines, frequently performed at professional level but intended for a diffused leisure behavior.

Since the Sixties new sports have appeared in the urban space: focusing not on discipline and competition but on experimentation, personal expressivity, bodily sensations, and fun, those sports redefine the relationship with space: the parkour participants’ processes of re-discovery and re-appropriation of urban space and their development of technical, sensorial and cognitive skills through body experimentation. The analysis shows also the potential impact of parkour as an urban sport practice on city planning and on the promotion of active citizenship (Genova, 2011).

### **Events, tourism and sport**

The relationship between sport events and tourism has been studied only recently in Italy, as demonstrated by studies on the topic (Montanari 2003; Dansero; Puttilli, 2009), but has produced a discussion on tourism policy. The preparation of a mega-event needs what Raffestin (1980) calls production of territory, leaving a heritage to the community in terms of a territorial capital (Dematteis, Governa, 2005) that could be promoted by a far-seeing tourism policy.

A sport event has undisputed benefits on the territory as it allows the regeneration of infrastructures and areas of the city otherwise declining; in small sized cities already perceived as touristic destinations based on specific specializations such as sports, the event could contribute to strengthen their international positioning.

A sports event could contribute to an improvement of the physical, relational and network territorial capital. The inheritance of an event, could contribute to stimulate tourism policy in a medium-long time span. These policies might be understood as a process of producing “a project territory” (Dansero, Mela, 2007), in which the needs of visitors and tourists coexist (Innocenti, 2007). The event, from an extraordinary factor, could become a tool for managing the ordinary needs of residents, also in its ability of attracting tourism flows.

The transformation of the city goes side by side with important innovations in the territorial and environmental transformations and in the elaboration of environmental plans (waste management, water), in the choices for innovative architectural solutions such as bio-architecture (Dansero and Puttilli, 2009).

In 2009 has been presented the “1st Society and Sport Report”, by CONI and CENSIS. The report does not take into account the assessment of the expenditure in the sport sector and the lack of an updated survey of facilities (the last survey has been made in 2003). This prevents us from doing a social assessment of sport, of its impact in terms of attractiveness but also as a tool for improving the quality of life of residents. Nevertheless, the Report shows that if the average expenditure on tourism is 9000 billions, a significant share is due to sport tourism. In 2008, the Italian citizens spent 7,3 billions of euros in activities related to sport tourism, +16% on the amount and +18% on travels compared to 2007 (6,3 billions of euros in expenditure) (Econstat, 2009). The survey shows that sports entail more than 15% of the vacations of Italian citizens: it represents a growing sector according to travels for participating in sport activities (+76%) and according to the attendance to events (24%). The available figure is aggregated, while one of the few researches on the value of sport tourism in the Italian provinces has been done by a private consultant body, Econstat ([www.econstat.it](http://www.econstat.it)).

Sport tourism generates in Italy a market up to 7-8 billions of euros, +62,5% from 2003 (Censis-Coni, 2008). The interest is growing, with an economic impact of the events in the areas where competitions take place. According to data from ISNART (Istituto Nazionale Ricerche Turistiche), in 2007, 15,2% of Italian citizens performed sport activity while on vacation and 2,8% attended to sport events. An event such as the Rome Marathon had 14.500 participants in 2008 (8.800 Italians and 5.700 from 76 different countries). In the previous year, participants have been 12.500, with a growth by 4.500 units from 2003 and with an income of 30 million euros, with 45 thousands sojourns spent in the city, 70 thousand public transportation tickets sold and the entrance tickets to the museums (Coni, Censis, 2009).

The data collection on the supply and demand of sport events in Italy was made by SIAE (Italian Society of Authors and Publishers), through a yearly survey in its peripheral offices. Data are referred to tickets sold for a set of sport events: first and second soccer league, international matches, the Lega Pro, other team sports (basketball, volley, rugby and baseball), individual sports (boxing, cycling, athletics, tennis, horsemanship, car, motorcycle and boat racing, bowling, go-kart rental, swimming, water polo, winter sports etc.). The available data include the number of events, the number of tickets sold, the box office, audience expenditure and the general revenues.

We considered the expenditure of the audience, which includes box office and services such as reservation fees, food and beverage, wardrobe etc. Data for 2007 are not comparable in time series with those collected before 2000, as the collection procedures changed due to the abolition of the taxes on shows.

According to available data, 199.984 sport events and almost 28 million tickets have been sold during 2007. Data on a regional basis highlight the fact that almost 63% of the business volume (calculated by adding the audience's expenses to all other amounts earned by the organization like sponsorship proceedings, TV rights grants, and advertisement) refers to sport events that took place in northern regions, almost 26% in the central regions and only about 12% in the southern ones. Regions from Northern Italy win about 57% and 53% respectively of events and tickets sold in Italy (Istat, 2009).

In 2014 the biggest consumers of sports shows were located centrally in the Italy (27 per 100 inhabitants), followed by Italy North East (26%), and from the north-west to 25%) (Istat, 2015).

Football proves to be the sport with the largest activity and business volume in terms of events, sold tickets and audience's direct and indirect expense. But Football also other sport are recreational sporting activities. The multiplication of roles and styles that players pick, oscillating between leisure and competitive practices, is an interesting field of inquiry (Gaubert, 2012).

In order to have relevant information on the consumption of sport events, reference must be made to data from the nineties with different survey procedures. Data referring to expense for events in 1991 show the whole datum upon provincial basis while expenses for event in 1999 are shared out among inhabitants.

The tendency of single towns to draw sport competitions depends on structures available and quality of facilities as well as cultural supplies that allow participating to trips and so increasing the volume of tourism flows, not only with regard to incomers but most of all to presences. The ability of a resort to attract people is influenced by the importance of local federations and by the great tradition of sport in the city. Yearly events as Athletic Meeting- "Primo Nebiolo" that takes place in Turin at Parco Ruffini not only celebrate an International manager, but also are a showcase for new talents.

If we consider the cost of events on a provincial basis with respect to 1991 provinces that are not regional capitals like Bergamo and Verona highlight a great expense for sport events (more than 4 million Euros) while in Southern Italy and the isles only Bari (more than 10 million Euros) and Cagliari (more than 6 million Euros) present amounts of relevant interest. In 1999 the most remarkable cities with respect to inhabitants' expense for events are: Varese (31,33 Euros), Bergamo (36,62), Vicenza (44,03), Treviso (47,04), Udine (73,41), Parma (57,94), Salerno (53,12).

The field of sports offers a broad array of events: the classic World Alpine Ski Championship in January in Bormio (So), the Marathon Race in Siracusa or the XXth Winter Olympic Games in Torino in February 2006. But international marathons such as the one in Prato, golf contests and championships, the Italian Beach Rugby Championship in Montebelluna (Tv), the Bicinotturna in Prato, the Italian Triathlon Championship in Comacchio (Fe), the Trophy Equestrian Sport Città di Vicenza, the Ecomaratona del Chianti in Castelnuovo Berardenga (Si), the "Rally delle Marche" or the "Torneo Open Integrale di Scacchi" in Terni in December are just few of the

catalytic events of a tourism flow that are engaging from the point of view of sports, but also have positive financial results for the territory in terms of coming persons and presences.

Therefore, the difficult financial context did not affect travels (which have increased) - it has instead affected the choice of destination. The fall of travels abroad fosters destinations like Emilia Romagna (13,1%) or Trentino (12,6%), as well as Piemonte (4,8%) and Valle d'Aosta (4%). In Emilia Romagna the destination of greatest attraction is Riccione's Centro Natatorio Federale with a number of 100,000 presences (playing people and visitors) in 2008.

When considering sports, ski gathers 29% of travels, while swimming and all other water sports grew considerably (24%). Sports like football are dropping instead, as a result of the chance to comfortably watch matches at home.

The strongest point of the destinations lies in the first place in sport practice facilities, and then come the entertainment opportunities. On the contrary, one weakest point can be the lack of sport specialization like expenses to get to the places. The ability of a place to attract tourists depends on the capability to raise interest also in the field of sports. Sport events for professionals or amateurs strengthen the interest on the hosting locality that can reutilize existing sport facilities or build new ones. After all, the sport event is a tool in a marketing strategy, as the case of Barcelona in the past and recently Turin has proved, but wrong planning estimations (like in Athens, where a baseball stadium was built in 2000 in spite of the fact that no one played baseball there) must be avoided.

According to Ejarque, events have a tourism value scale. Olympic games, football world cup and sailing competitions belong to the first level; athletics, golf and tennis belong to the second level; ski, swimming, sports played in teams like basket or baseball belong to the third level (Ejarque, 2003).

Interest for Master category tournaments in all sports has arisen in later years. Athletes or simple followers discover again as adults the desire to play sport and to be in competition with people their age. Golf, for instance, great interest has arisen in later years leading to the construction of new fields. In fact, about 25 million tourists every year discover the paths of golf, which is a huge step forward with respect to the 7,9 million travelers in 1989 (Censis-Coni, 2009).

Thanks to its own features, golf can join together many aspects: the practice of outdoor sport, outdoor or indoor, is at the same time geographically connoted because it needs spaces with particular features but is also a non-place due to compatibility between golf fields; it rouses the interest of the golf player to always try new fields according to a "cherry effect". Having abandoned the image of a sport intended for few people but affordable has in later years fostered being introduced to golf playing in areas previously stranger to its world. As the President of Federazione Italiana Golf maintains, building a golf field in the level land of Gioia Tauro could have meant capability of attracting tourism, hence growth. Something different happened in Sciacca, where an 18-hole golf field was built in an area equipped with spa and archeological sites. So a sport has been promoted, and a tourism investment has been made that could allow Sciacca to enter a golf circuit to be planned in Italy, relocating the area in the picture of Italian tourism centers.

Golf produces surplus value, increasing quality of tourism supply and of income: tourists who play golf spend only 8% directly for their hobby (golf expenses, golf lessons) devoting 92% left of the expense to induced consumption (lodging, transport, food, entertainment, gadgets).

The sport event does not always need facilities, but can be realized using public ground as in the case of marathons like “Maratona degli Etruschi”, which takes place along 100 kilometres, and where 70% of the participants come from places other than Central Italy.

One last thought must be made upon the planning of sport tourism (that in Nicolò Costa’s opinion must start from a low point since, according to a post-modern view, prospective consumers have changed). The catchment area in fact consists of the International middle class, coming from advanced economy countries looking for an offer always more personalized.

Among the choices to be made is the planning of multifunction stadiums, connected with the cities, with a diversified offer aiming to rouse the need in the tourist who can choose but must also be guided when choosing.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of paper has been to analyze the relationship between sport and tourism. Even though available data do not allow putting structures available in relation with sport events and the sale of prospective tickets, it is out of any doubt that a sport event creates a flow generated by participants and viewers.

The phenomenon is still poorly studied and would deserve a deeper analysis on the basis of data on small scale that would allow to precisely knowing evolution of tourism with reference to the different geographic areas.

In the last years one form of special tourism interest that has garnered a particular attention is travel related to sport or sport tourism. There is a distinction between individuals who travel to actively participate in a sport and those who travel to watch a sports event.

In Italy, the practice of physical activities it has become a fundamental requisite for a modern traveller. The BTS 2013, the 21th international sport active and wellness tourism exchange, in Montecatini Terme, supplies the numbers of sport tourism: 10 million of travels and more than 60 million overnight stays in Italian facilities. The turnover is estimated about euro 6.3 billion and euro 1.5 billion spent within Italy is on water sports like sailing, canoeing, diving; 1 Italian out of 4 plans his holidays considering sports in his decision (BTS, 2013).

Some considerations arise from what emerged: sport is a factor that can change the periodicity of tourism demand, improve and coordinate tourism flows by creating special paths, to plan structures in a given territory and accommodation facilities in its whole drawing new portions of sport tourists establishing or revitalizing the practice of any sport.

Events such as the World University Games or World Championships canoeing and water-skiing which will be held in Milan at Idroscalo between July and August 2015 as an opportunity to attract tourist flow and an exchange between different cultures (Pioletti, 2011).

Much of the exiting literature on event sport tourism has focused on mega or hallmark events but suggest that the small scale-sport events might result in more positive effects for host communities (Gibson et al., 2004).

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The attraction of an event, besides from the interest it draws among the sport audience, also depends on the ability of a city to offer a cultural, environment and wine and food supply that can be a surplus value for the sojourn.

Sport venues are the local territory resource, result of the transformation of city and territory and function as factors of modernization. The building of sport venues can also be seen as catalyst and accelerator of changes to create a new identity and to relocate a place at a national and international level. Any sport event generates a touristic flow of little or large dimension, that generates opportunities for cultural changes, revitalizes the local tradition, improves the quality of life and enforces the image of the community.

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