

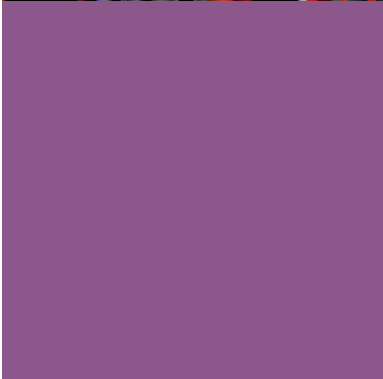


Insight Department



The Tourism Benefits of Mass Participation Sporting Events

2014



Key Insights on Mass Participation Events

Tourism & Mass participation events

- A growing trend with people booking holidays around participating in an event combined with sightseeing
- A spectrum of events from big city marathons to small quirky events with unique appeal
- Cost-effective and can be self-financing
- Opportunity for place marketing and showcasing a destination
- Sustainable tourism benefits, promoting a healthy image, community and local business involvement
- In 2012, Baxters' Loch Ness Marathon and Festival of Running attracted over 9000 runners, while the Edinburgh Marathon Festival had 30,000 runners
- Some events, including the Great Scottish Swim and Edinburgh Marathon Festival, have a majority of participants from outside Scotland
- Many participants bring supporters and stay overnight

Spectator sports tourism enjoys a high profile, particularly with the scale of media coverage given to top sporting events. However the infrastructure such as stadiums required for top level events is expensive to provide and maintain. Recent studies have shown that this investment is not always justified in terms of economic benefit to the region or as a sports tourism strategy¹.

Participation sports tourism is far less demanding in terms of infrastructure than spectator sports tourism² and covers a broad spectrum of activity for all ages and levels, from club training and team travel to individual participation and competition. Events of varying sizes and levels can be tailored to fit a destination's resources and capacity.

People are increasingly travelling to take part in mass participation sports events. As running has become increasingly popular, and big events such as the London Marathon and Great North Run receive widespread media attention with a mix of elite athletes, celebrities and charity runners adding to the interest, more people are travelling to take part in races. The same behaviour can be seen in other sports such as cycling and swimming. Combining all three activities, triathlons have also soared in popularity since their Olympic debut in Sydney 2000. The Olympic event involves a 1.5km swim, 42 km bike ride and 10km run, however distances vary from novice (400m swim, 10km cycle, 2km run) to the seriously challenging Ironman and extreme triathlon events.

There is plenty of evidence to show that people are willing to travel for such events. Data collected by event organisers show a high proportion of participants travel from outside the area, or even internationally, to participate. Furthermore, they are often accompanied by non-participating friends or relatives, increasing the benefit to the destination.

The high profile city events attract the biggest numbers (and have the infrastructure to accommodate them). However there is a healthy market for smaller events in small towns and rural areas. A number of events have developed a niche appeal through promoting unique features or quirks of the event itself, or a backdrop of stunning scenery. Smaller towns and rural communities are often ideal locations for off-road events, such as trail racing. Scotland's geography lends itself well to this type of event, with examples such as the Lochalsh Dirty 30 Challenge Walk and the Cape Wrath Challenge running event already established on the event calendar.

¹Walmsley, D., 2008 *Sports Tourism: Strategies for Successful Development* London: SportBusiness Group

²Abboud, A., 2012 *Sport Tourism (Part I): Why Cities Should Subsidize Marathons, Not Stadiums*. Available from: <http://alexabboud.wordpress.com/2012/08/17/sport-tourism-part-i-why-cities-should-subsidize-marathons-not-stadiums/> [accessed 23 April 2013]

There are many events that have benefitted tourism in the host area, bringing in visitors, often repeat visitors, and raising the destination profile. Specialist tour operators offer packages to big events across the globe for individuals and groups.

As well as the biggest and best-known city marathons - New York, Boston, Chicago, London and Berlin - there are a number of 'quirky' races. In China, the Great Wall Marathon includes 6km and 3,700 steps on the wall, while in Kenya the Safaricon has armed rangers to protect runners from wildlife getting too close. The Niagara Falls Marathon is the only marathon that includes a border crossing, while the Antarctica Marathon was set up by tour operator Marathon Tours specifically so their customers could create a Seven Continents Club.

Sports events can enhance the image of a place. As well as showcasing an area's natural or built attractions, they can promote healthy, active lifestyles and community involvement. Accommodation providers, restaurants and local producers can all benefit from events and the visitors they bring while community groups can get involved in organising and volunteering. Local charities can benefit through race fundraising and awareness building. There are many examples across the world of mass participation events that have had a positive impact on tourism in the local area.

One example is the Luang Prabang Half Marathon in Laos, a charity race organised to help the more marginalised residents in the area. Corporate sponsors, led by luxury resort group Amanresorts cover all the race costs so that the entry fees can all go to charity. Only 500 runners are allowed to avoid overcrowding and disruption for the community³.

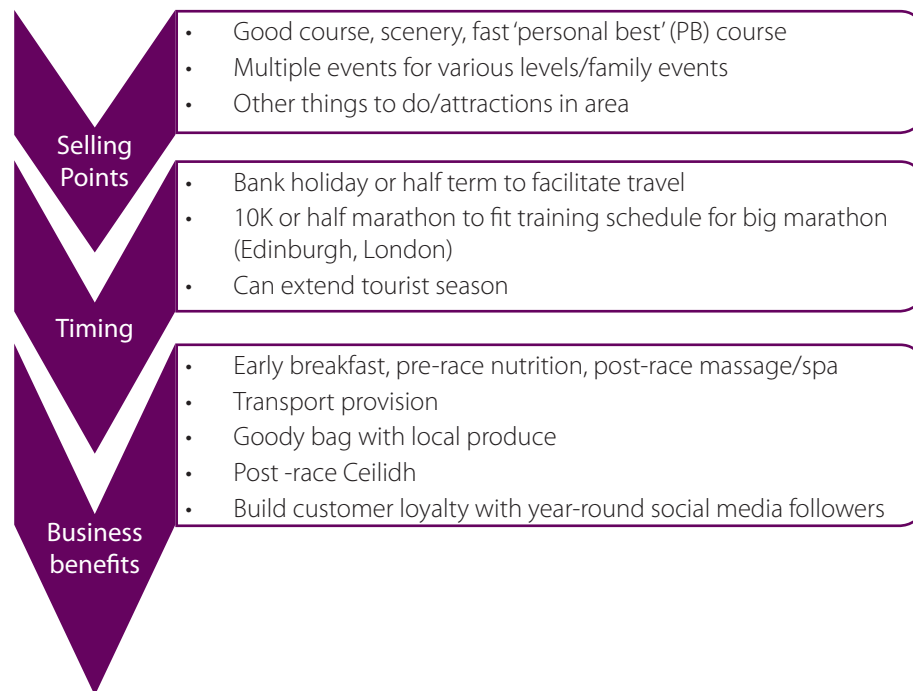
- Events can bring in visitors, and repeat visitors
- Participants are often accompanied by relatives and friends.
- Increasingly attending an event is part of a longer holiday
- Events can showcase a destination, enhance image of destination as a healthy place, promoting active lifestyle
- Encourages locals to become more active
- Opportunities for community involvement, e.g. school groups helping with organising, marshalling
- Opportunities for local businesses, local produce, accommodation.
- Publicity, press coverage

While the most profitable events are often in big cities, that have the infrastructure to put on big events and accommodate large numbers of visitors, small community events can also have a big impact and provide scope to involve the local community, helping local businesses and the economy. In particular, they can help tourism businesses promote a positive destination image and reduce seasonality.

³Travelmole *Running for a cause in Luang Prabang*. Available at: http://www.travelmole.com/news_feature_P.php?news_id=2006328 [accessed April 2013]

In Scotland, events can often capitalise on tourism assets such as landscape and heritage, for example the scenic Loch Ness backdrop for the Baxters Loch Ness Marathon and Festival of Running.

Events can benefit local charities, for example the Aviemore half-marathon and 10K which takes place during the October half term is organised to benefit the Speyside Trust, which helps people with disabilities enjoy an outdoor holiday⁴. Locations that are unable to accommodate large numbers of participants can benefit from small, niche events that fill quickly, such as the Black Rock⁵ in Kinghorn and the Barrathon⁶.



Feedback suggests that participants and those accompanying them look for a variety of activities outside the actual event. The Baxters Loch Ness Marathon provides a Festival and Food Fayre: a good opportunity to showcase local produce and provide an outlet for local businesses. A post-race ceilidh can provide post-race entertainment while involving the local community. Local attractions can also benefit from additional visitors. Post-race massage and spa facilities are often welcome. Choosing a course or a route can showcase scenery and local attractions. For serious runners, accurate timing through use of electronic chips and officially verified distances are welcome. Events can also achieve customer loyalty with year-round social media campaigns.

⁴<http://www.aviemorehalfmarathon.org/index.html>

⁵<http://www.blackrock5.org/>

⁶<http://www.barrathon.org.uk/>

Athletics event organisers need to obtain a permit from Scottish Athletics.

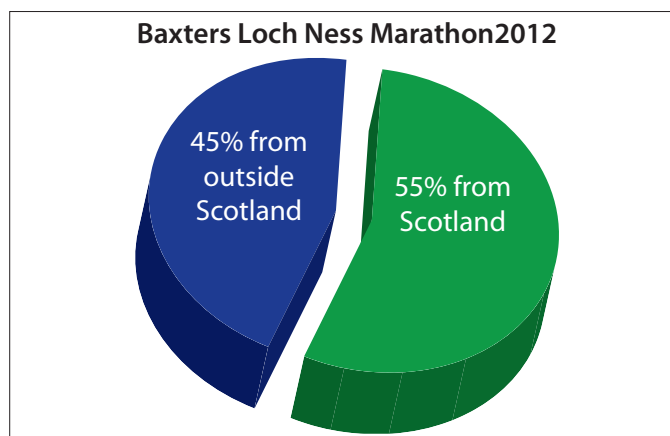
Scottish Athletics will provide organisers with information about risk assessment, insurance, potential date clashes, required permit standards for road races, course measurement and other requirements⁷.

EventScotland provide advice and information about organising events, for more information please see their website www.eventscotland.org

Baxters Loch Ness Marathon and Festival of Running 2012

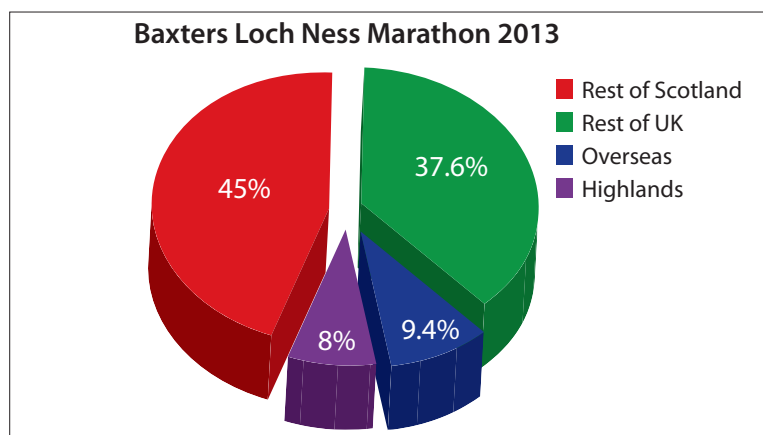
Baxters Loch Ness Marathon provides a significant boost to tourism in Inverness, with hotels and restaurants typically full over the marathon weekend. Over 9000 runners took part in the Festival of Running. Nearly 4000, including participants from 28 countries, entered the marathon, which achieved a 97% race satisfaction rating in Runner's World magazine.

The location of the event with a backdrop of Loch Ness is an essential part of its appeal, while the Festival and Food Fayre provides entertainment, activities and sustenance for participants and spectators.



Baxters Loch Ness Marathon and Festival of Running 2013

The 2013 event once again attracted over 9,000 runners, 47% of them from outside Scotland.

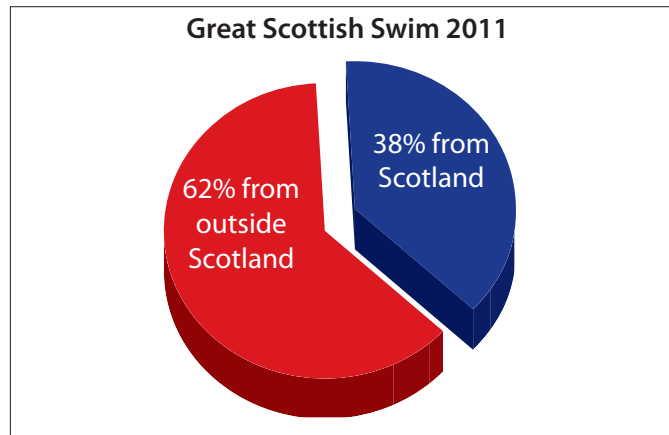


An independent economic impact study carried out by EKOS calculated the event had an economic impact worth £1.2 million to Scotland and £1.6 million to the Highlands.

⁷<http://www.scottishathletics.org.uk/index.php?p=154>

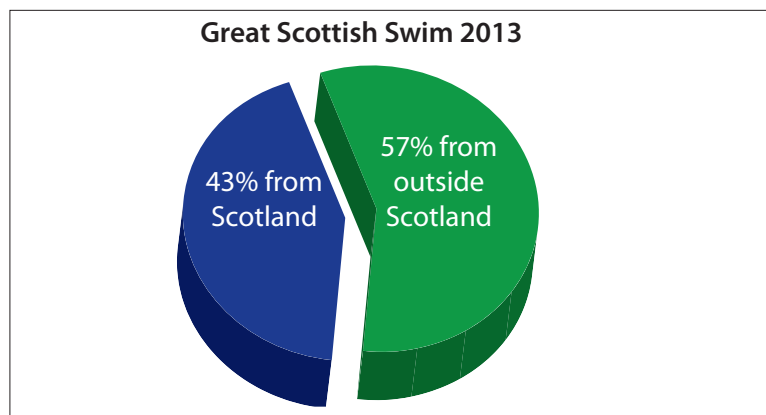
Great Scottish Swim 2011⁸

The 2011 Great Scottish Swim was held at Strathclyde Loch and attracted 1624 participants. Participant survey results showed that on average, each participant brought 3.2 people with them to the event, giving an estimated spectator attendance of 5,197 if it is assumed all spectators were associated with a participant. The demographic split based on survey results showed a higher than expected attendance from outside Scotland; 3% from local authority area, 35% rest of Scotland, 61% rest of UK and 1% overseas. 58% of survey respondents stayed overnight in Scotland as a result of their attendance.



Great Scottish Swim 2013

In 2013 the Great Scottish Swim moved to Loch Lomond and attracted a record 1,913 participants. 49% of participants stayed overnight. Of those, 47% stayed 2 nights, 31% stayed 3 nights and 19% stayed just one night.



Scottish 6 day Orienteering 2013 - Moray⁹

This event attracted 3,967 participants:

- 97% from outside Moray & Nairnshire
- 80% from outside Scotland

95% of participants stayed overnight. The length of stay was 5 - 8 nights in Moray & Nairnshire, and 7 – 10 nights in Scotland.

Net additional expenditure was estimated at £1.35 million in Moray & Nairnshire and £2.03 million in Scotland.

⁸Data provided by event organisers Nova International

⁹Data based on an independent study conducted by EKOS

Etape Caledonia 2009¹⁰

This cycle challenge took place over a 130km course on closed roads. Additionally there were a number of events providing activities for participants and spectators.

Just under half of participants lived locally while 44% were from outside Scotland.

According to an Economic Impact Assessment conducted by EKOS, there were 2920 participants and 4853 spectators.

14% of participants (413) took part in a survey conducted by EKOS:

- 71% were participating for the first time
- 20% had competed in the previous year
- 86% were spending at least one night away from home. Over half stayed in Pitlochry, with others in Perth, Aberfeldy, Birnam, Dunkeld, Glasgow and Edinburgh
- 88% indicated they were likely to compete again in 2010, while 92% were likely to return to Highland Perthshire for a holiday. 10% would like to see more activities before and after the race

200 spectators were also surveyed:

- 62% were female
- 38% aged 31-45, 27% 46-60
- 30% were there with children

Edinburgh Marathon Festival 2012¹¹

The EMF is the UK's largest running festival, and the marathon is the only UK race outside London that is IAAF accredited.

The 2012 event attracted 30,000 participants, 70% of them travelling from outside Scotland with 60 countries represented. Runners were accompanied by an average of 2 supporters staying 2 nights. Bed nights associated with the event were estimated at 126,000.

The marathon course is flat/downhill and fast, offering runners good prospects of achieving a personal best, or PB.

Celtman! Extreme Scottish Triathlon

The Celtman! Endurance triathlon in Wester Ross makes great use of the stunning scenery in the Torridon area, with the 3.8km swim held in Loch Shiel, 202km cycle over incredible Highland roads and 42km run taking in two Munros. The race attracts a significant number of overseas competitors.

New events

Upcoming new events on the calendar include the Kilomathon in March 2014, a running event in Edinburgh featuring distances of 13.1 km and 6.55km, along cycle paths from Ocean Terminal finishing in Murrayfield, and a kids' event in Murrayfield. This provides a variation to the usual race distances and is promoted as a stepping-stone between 5k and 10k, or 10k and half marathon distances.

A new Scottish half marathon is planned for autumn 2014, again held in Edinburgh and East Lothian.

In September 2013, the Cycletta, a women's only bike ride, took place at Scone Palace. Supported by Victoria Pendleton, the event was designed to encourage women to get out cycling, with 3 distances on offer to cater to all abilities.

¹⁰Data based on an independent study conducted by EKOS

¹¹Data provided by event organisers GSi Events

Further Information

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