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**Participant's Quality Perception and Motives for Attending Marathon Events  
in Natural Areas**

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## **Participant's Quality Perception and Motives for Attending Marathon Events in Natural Areas**

### **Abstract**

The marathon on Fruška Gora is a two day sports-tourist event that has been taking place for 37 years annually in national park near Novi Sad, Serbia. In the year when the study was conducted, 10177 participants have been registered. From this basic set, a sample of 1192 examinees has been extracted (604 male and 588 female), age between 17 and 78 years. The aim was to quantify the motives significant for the participation in this event, as well as to evaluate certain aspects of the event quality based on the evaluation of the participants. Research shows that entertainment, pastime, relaxation, forgetting of everyday concerns and the need for good mood are the strongest motives. The significance of health as a motive increases with age. Factor analysis which was applied to the quality items resulted in a stable two-component structure. The greatest influences on the first component (named Self Experience of Development Resources) were the items: convenience of the destination for active tourism, contribution of the events to the development of tourism and natural environment. The second component (Tangible Indicators) was defined by: quality of the accompanying contents, quality of transportation, tidiness of the tracks and media promotion.

**Keywords:** marathon events, nature, service quality, motivation, tourism

## **Participant's Quality Perception and Motives for Attending Marathon Events in Natural Areas**

### **Introduction**

Tourist destinations which do not possess monumental activities are frequently included in tourist courses by organizing different kinds of touristic manifestations (events). In a broad sense, manifestations can be defined as non-routine and uncommon events that stand out from everyday life of a group of people (Shone & Parry, 2004). From the perspective of the visitors, a manifestation represents an event which provides possibilities for leisure, social or cultural happening that is outside their everyday life experience (Getz, 2005). Based on the form of exhibition, manifestations can be classified into cultural, political, entertaining, sports, art, economic, local, and interpersonal.

One of the fastest growing tourism niche markets is sport tourism, defined as "leisure-based travel that takes individuals outside their home communities to participate in or watch physical activities, or to venerate attractions associated with them" (Gibson, 1998). Within it, sport event tourism plays a significant role (Funk & Bruun, 2007). An increasing number of host destinations incorporate sport events into their marketing mix, as both large-scale and small-scale sport events can attract participants, spectators and tourists and improve the destination image (Getz, 1998). Contemporary research results indicate that sport-based attractions have significant economic, social and political advantages over other attractions (Hinch & Higham, 2005; Nogawa, Yamaguchi, & Yumiko, 1996).

In the beginning, local events were usually organized "for the city and for its people" (Yardimci, 2007), without any concern for tourists and tourism. Over the years, some of these local events began to grow in proportions, gain national or even international popularity, build tradition and became recognisable as hallmark events (Ritchie, 1984). Since then, their titles and image began to be connected to the destination where they take place. These type of events cannot exist independently of their host community, as they are rooted in one place and appeal mostly to the residents (Getz, 2008).

Manifestations are starting to take up a more important place amongst modern tourist products of Serbia, and are becoming a more significant factor in choosing tourist destinations that attract visitors with their appeal (Jovanović & Delić, 2010). This is why

the manifestations that are connected with sports and recreation (hiking, running, bicycling etc.) are gaining an important role in modern tourism. Apart from the economic component, they have an intense influence on the promotion of culture and authenticity of the region where they take place, and their socialising context is the dominant characteristic (Pfister & Tierney, 2008). Sports-recreational events (such as the marathon on Fruška Gora) are a form of special event in the sphere of selective tourism (Getz, 2008) that has large motivational potential as it creates the possibility of raising the level of tourist appeal, media coverage and promotion of the destination (Backman et al, 1995).

The focus of this study is the sports-tourist event titled The marathon on Fruška gora, which is a two-day event organised every year in National Park outside Novi Sad, the capital of Serbian province of Vojvodina. The aim of the study is to examine the motives of the tourists to participate in marathons that take place in natural environment, to generate factors of the perception of quality of such events and to establish perceptive differences of the event quality in relation to demographical characteristics of the participants, on the example of the marathon on Fruška Gora.

Fruška Gora is a narrow and geographically isolated island mountain that is located in the region of Panonian Basin in Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (Republic of Serbia). As of the year 1960, it attained the status of a national park, which ensures permanent protection of its first category natural resources. From the aspect of tourism development, most of the protected natural wealth, and especially the national parks, prove to be highly interesting and special destinations that provide possibilities for the development of sports and sports-recreational tourism of the region in which they are located (Newsome, 2014). Some research has shown (Fakić, Romanov & Nešić, 2014) that the ambient of Fruška Gora is one of the most influential reasons for visiting this natural tourist destination, i.e. that a single-day or weekend stay in natural forest environment represents a particular experience for the visitors, which in turn creates a sort of non-material value of the destination.

The marathon on Fruška Gora manifestation is a sports-tourist event which is organized by a mountaineering association „Željezničar”, continually for the past 37 years. The aim of this two-day sports-recreational manifestation is to popularize hiking, active lifestyle, acquisition and improvement of healthy habits, as well as to promote scenic beauty and the potential for the development of active tourism.

When the research was conducted, as in the previous years, the offer of the marathon on Fruška Gora consisted various tracks of different difficulty, which were divided into 7 categories (Table 1). According to official records of the organizer, 10177 participants applied to participate in the 37<sup>th</sup> marathon on Fruška Gora. From this basic set a sample of examinees has been chosen for this research.

**Table 1.** The selection of tracks of various difficulty by the participants of the 37th marathon on Fruška Gora (Fakić et al., 2014).

<i>Track</i>	<i>Distance of the races</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
Joy and satisfaction	4,1km	1.43%
Beginners	18,4km	5.17%
Little marathon	34,2km	22.07%
Middle marathon	56,2km	4.03%
Big marathon	87,4km	1.02%
Ultra marathon	107,4km	0.1%
Ultra plus marathon	133,6km	1.62%

### **Review of Literature**

#### *Motives assessment in tourism and recreation*

Touristic motives, in general, are divided into two groups. The first group consists of PUSH forces (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979) as intangible factors that push a person away from home and the monotony of daily routine (experience change, try something unusual and new, have fun, stress relief, refreshment, feel younger etc.). The second group consists of PULL forces, as extrinsic motivations that pull a person to engage in something while the decision about the travel has been made (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Those can be better health, more free time, attractiveness of the environment, promotion packages, advertising campaign and word of the mouth, etc.

Motives that stimulate visitors to attend festivals (events), as Crompton (1991, 430) cites, are: *novelty* (the people's desire for new and different experiences that enable travel as the need to experience thrill, adventure, surprise and diminish boredom), *socialization* (the desire for interaction with a group and its members), *prestige/status* (the desire for a high position in the eyes of other people), *rest and recreation* (the desire to refresh one's physical and mental energy and diminish stress), *education/intellectual enrichment* (the desire for acquiring knowledge and expanding intellectual horizons), *family bonding* (the desire for better family relations) and *regression* (the desire for returning to childhood). Considering the motives for the

participation in sport events, visitors are usually divided into *participants*, *spectators* and *tourists* (Funk & Bruun, 2007).

Strength of motivation represents a personal moderator that gauges the intensity of a person's attitude toward engaging in an activity such a marathon event, while involvement is a general measure of enduring attitude toward running (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004). Carroll & Alexandris (1997) conducted a research in Greece, which suggested that participants have a higher level of motivation towards sport participation than non-participants (Carroll & Alexandris, 1997).

As tourism marketing stakeholders play an important role in the process of creating a destination image, respectively pull factors, understanding the motives that drive consumers' interest to participate or watch the sport events, and provides sport marketers with information that can be used to develop targeted promotional campaigns. Literature suggests that involvement, strength of motivation and attitude toward the host destination are three key constructs for measuring Crompton's (1979) socio-psychological motives for participation in a sport event (Funk & Bruun, 2007).

As sports and recreation involve two different groups of players – spectators and participants, different motivational structures are characteristic for either group (Kim, LaVetter & Lee, 2006). This research contains the analysis of 8 different motives which are defined as the most frequent and most significant in previous studies (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004; Kim, LaVetter & Lee, 2006; Funk & Bruun, 2007).

#### *Measuring service quality in sports and recreation*

A large number of instruments were used to measure service quality. For the needs of this research a specific questionnaire was designed containing 9 items, which were defined based on the experience of previous researchers. The most used instruments up to now have been analysed here. The elements of some of them were used during the construction of a specific instrument, with necessary modifications aimed to adapt the questionnaire to the needs of this research.

The most famous model used to measure service quality is SERVQUAL (service quality) model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, 1988, 1991). This model consists of five dimensions of quality: reliability (the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), *assurance* (the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence), *tangibles* (the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials), *empathy* (the

provision of caring, individualized attention to customers) and *responsiveness* (the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service) (Parasuraman et al, 1985, 1988, 1991). Even though SERVQUAL served as a basis for measuring service quality for a long time, it was necessary to modify the model and adapt it to the specific areas (Hung-Chih Yu, Morais & Chick, 2005; Beckman & Velfkamp, 1995). Crompton noted that SERVQUAL cannot be used in the evaluation of service quality in sports and recreation industry and suggested the development of a new scale to measure service quality in this field known as REQUAL model (MacKay & Crompton, 1990; Crompton et al, 1991). This scale contains four dimensions of quality (safety, reliability, responsiveness and tangible). Kim and Kim (1995) developed the QUESC model (Quality Excellence of Sport Centers) on the sample of sports centres in Korea. This model measures up to 12 dimensions of quality: atmosphere, staff attitude, staff reliability, sociability, information, programming, personal account, price, privileges, ease of mind, stimulation and convenience. Howat et al. (1999) developed CERM-CSQ model (Center for Environmental and Recreation Management – Customer Service Quality) that measures three dimensions of quality: primary attributes, personal and peripheral attributes. This model was frequently used by authors to measure service quality of recreational centres in Australia and New Zealand (Murray & Howat, 2002).

Researching if visitor's satisfaction acts as a mediator of the relationships between service quality and behavioral intentions, Tzetzis, Alexandris & Kapsampeli (2014) used model of three following dimensions: access quality, venue quality and contest quality. This model proposed by Shonk and Chelladurai (2008) and the authors wanted to test if the service quality model can be applied in the context of a small-scale outdoor sport event. The results showed that satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between access, venue quality and intention and partially mediated the relationship between contest quality and intentions. Furthermore, satisfaction partially mediated all the relationships between the quality dimensions and word-of-mouth communications.

Ko and Pastore (2004, 2005, 2007) developed a detailed instrument titled SSQRS (Scale of Service Quality for Recreation Sport) to measure service quality in recreational sports. Four dimensions were selected: programme quality, quality of interaction, quality of the outcome, quality of physical environment. Ko et al. (2011) developed MEQSS model (Model of Event Quality for Spectator Sports) based on previously mentioned SSQRS.

## Methodology

### **Sample**

This empirical research is transversal in nature, realised with the aim to make an assessment of individual aspects of quality of a single sports event. This specifically constructed questionnaire was used to poll 1192 participants (604 male and 588 female) during the event known as the marathon on Fruška Gora. The age of the participants was in the span of 15 to 78 years old. To analyse the influence of age on certain variables, the sample was divided into four age groups based on WHO criterion (1982): (1) 726 youth (up to the age of 24), (2) 360 young adults (from 25 to 44 years old), (3) 84 middle adults (from 45 to 64 years old) and (4) 22 older adults (over 64 years old). The sample was obtained by selection amongst the officially applied contestants of the marathon. According to the data of the organiser, the total number of participants of this event was about 10.000, which shows that Confidence Interval on the selected sample of participants was 2.66 with Confidence Level of 95% ([www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm](http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm)). The parameters of the sample show that the results of the research can be generalized on the level of the basic set with great probability.

### **Evaluation tools and statistical analysis**

The applied questionnaire contained, apart from personal data (gender and age), two sets of items: first set that refers to the motives of the participants significant for the participation in this sports-tourist event, and the second set that was aimed to evaluate individual aspects of event quality. In the first set, the examinees were offered a total of 8 motives that are the most frequent for the participants of these sort of sports events: (1) Maintaining health colloquially – *Health*, (2) socialising and meeting new people – *Friendship*, (3) relaxation and forgetting everyday worries – *Relax*, (4) entertainment and pastime – *Entertainment*, (5) fighting obesity – *Obesity*, (6) the feeling of liveliness and good mood – *Gaiety*, (7) keeping track of modern trends and fitting in – *Be trendy*, and (8) affirming to oneself – *Self-affirmation*. The examinees valued the intensity of each of the given motives by selecting a numerical value of 1 to 5.

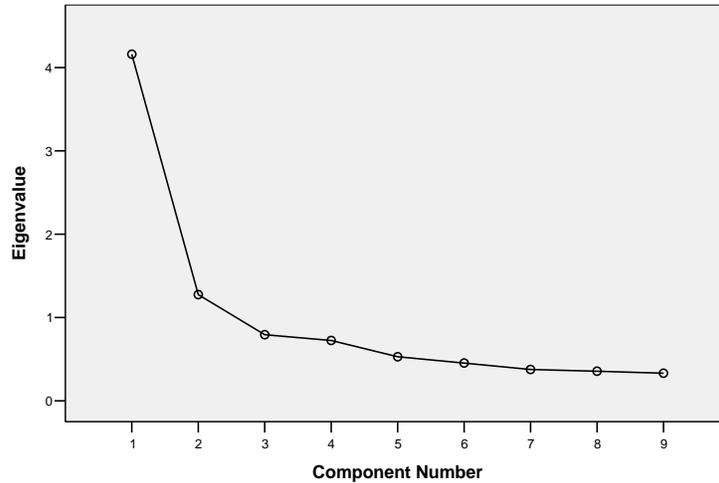
The second set of 9 items was treated as a separate scale (questionnaire), so the examinees gave their evaluation by selecting one of the five positions on a Likert type scale, where the value 1 represented the lowest and the value 5 represent the highest level of quality. The metrics of this questionnaire was assessed by applying two procedures: (1) Scale Reliability Analysis that was based on Cronbach's Alpha (Table 2),

and (2) Factor Analysis, Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with Direct Oblimin method of rotation (Table 2). All statistical conclusions were conducted on the level of 0.05 (Sig. < ,05) significance. The results indicate that the scale has good internal concord, which indicates that Cronbach Alpha coefficient is significantly higher than the recommended theoretical value of 0.7 (De Vellis, 2003). All nine items had high internal concordance.

**Table 2.** Reliability Statistics for applied quality questionnaire.

<b>Q</b>	<b>Element of quality of sports-tourist event</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</b>
1.	Atmosphere (environment) where the event takes place.	.826
2.	Organisational aspects of the event	.820
3.	Orderliness of tracks on taken by the participants	.817
4.	Transport quality to and fro the event.	.842
5.	Accompanying content (toilet, catering offer, info-stands)	.820
6.	Media promotion of the event.	.825
7.	Convenience of the area for the realisation of similar events.	.817
8.	Contribution of such events to the development of regional tourism	.821
9.	Convenience of destination for the development of sports and active tourism.	.827
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>.852</b>

Aiming to evaluate the validity of this questionnaire, nine items were subjected to the analysis of main components (PCA). Before conducting PCA, the suitability of data for factorial analysis has been assessed. By overviewing correlational matrix, many coefficients of 0.3 value and higher were recorded. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) was 0.853 which exceeds the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974). Bartlett's test of sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) also reached statistical relevance. All of this points to factorability of correlational matrix. The analysis of main components gained after Oblimin rotation revealed the presence of two components of Eigenvalues value over one. The Scree plot showed the existence of a point of breaking of after the second component (Figure 1). Based on Kattel's criterion (1966), it was decided to keep both components. This can be also seen in the results of parallel analysis with two components, whose characteristic values exceed the appropriate values of the threshold gained through equally large matrix of random numbers (9 variables x 1192 examinees).



**Figure 1.** Scree Plot for Stress questionnaire.

This two-component solution explained the total of 60.386% of variables, where the contribution of the first component was 46.216% and the second component 14.167%. All nine variables gave significant factorial gravity to only one of the extracted components. The hierarchical structure of Component Matrix shows that the first factor was mostly saturated with items 9, 8, 1, 7 and 2, and the second factor saturated with items 5, 4, 6 and 3 (Table 3). It is noted that the first factor covers the data related to the subjective experience of development resources of the tourist destination (convenience of the destination for the development of active tourism, contribution of the event to the development of tourism, natural environment where the event is realised etc.), while the second factor is related to certain objective (material) elements of quality. Taking into consideration the content of all 9 items that describe the quality of sports-tourist event, the first factor was titled *Self-experience of Development Resources*, and the second one *Tangible Indicators*.

**Table 3.** Factor Analysis for 9-items questionnaire.

	Paterrn Matrix Component		Structure Matrix Component		Comunalities Extraction
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2	
<b>Q9</b>	.859	-.133	.800	.253	.654
<b>Q8</b>	.818	-.011	.814	.357	.662
<b>Q1</b>	.794	-.035	.778	.322	.606
<b>Q7</b>	.698	.158	.769	.472	.611
<b>Q2</b>	.607	.223	.708	.496	.540
<b>Q5</b>	-.029	.878	.365	.865	.749
<b>Q4</b>	-.078	.733	.251	.697	.491
<b>Q6</b>	.066	.729	.394	.759	.580
<b>Q3</b>	.304	.547	.549	.683	.541
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .853    Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 4011.575    Sig.= .000					

The data about the motives of the participants and the quality factors of the marathon on Fruška Gora were analysed in relation to gender and age. T-test was used to analyse the significance of the differences between arithmetical mean of the examinees of different gender, and ANOVA for examinees of different age. All statistical procedures were realised by using the application programme SPSS, and conclusions were drawn based on the level of significance of 0.05 (*Sig.* < ,05).

### Results

By analysing average scalar values attained for each of the 8 motives, it was determined that on the level of complete sample the highest values were given to *Entertainment* and *Relax*, then *Health* and *Gaiety*. The average scalar means for these four motives were higher than 4. For motives *Friendship*, *Self-affirmation* and *Obesity*, average values were less than 4, and for the motive titled *Be trendy* the values were under 3. The research shows that *Entertainment*, (pastime), *Relaxation* (forgetting everyday worries) and *Gaiety* (need for good mood) are the most important motives for participation in the marathon as a typical sports-tourist event. Caring for health is expectedly highly valued motive, but generally it was not rated as most important. *Health* occupies first place only with middle age persons. In general, the influence of health as a motive increased with the age of the participants.

By comparing the average scalar values assigned to individual motives by different categories of participants, it has been established that age had a lot higher influence on displaying significant differences than gender. Statistically significant differences in relation to age were detected for up to 7 out of 8 motives (Table 4), while gender was a significant factor of discrimination only for 3 motives (Table 5). All significant differences were related primarily to the intensity of certain motives, while they had a lot lesser influence on their hierarchy. That is why *Entertainment*, *Relax*, *Health* and *Gaiety* received the highest marks with all examinees regardless of their age and gender, while motive *Be trendy* occupied the last spot on the value scale with all examinees. It can also be noticed that the youngest examinees (Youth) value the categories of *Entertainment* and *Relax* significantly more than other motives. The eldest examinees produced the highest scalar averages for all motives. Thus, each of the 22 older adults valued *Relax* with the maximum grade of 5, while only the motive *Be trendy* had lesser average grade than 4. All things considering, by aging and gaining experience the spectrum of significant motives for participation in sports-tourist event is

expanded. Unfortunately, the increase in motivation is not accompanied by biological abilities that decrease with age. This wane of ability is quite possibly the primary reason why the number of participants of this sports-tourist event decreases with the increase of age.

**Table 4.** Motives for participation in sports-tourist event for examinees of different age.

Motive	Age	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	ANOVA	
					F	Sig.
Health	Youth	<b>3.92</b>	1.208	.045	30.140*	.000
	Adults	<b>4.41</b>	.906	.048		
	Middle	<b>4.76</b>	.481	.053		
	Older	<b>4.91</b>	.294	.063		
	<i>Total</i>	<b>4.15</b>	<i>1.114</i>	<i>.032</i>		
Friendship	Youth	<b>3.79</b>	1.308	.049	12.713*	.000
	Adults	<b>4.14</b>	1.136	.060		
	Middle	<b>4.35</b>	1.037	.113		
	Older	<b>4.73</b>	.631	.135		
	<i>Total</i>	<b>3.95</b>	<i>1.250</i>	<i>.036</i>		
Relax	Youth	<b>4.29</b>	1.083	.040	9.098*	.000
	Adults	<b>4.53</b>	.796	.042		
	Middle	<b>4.61</b>	.761	.083		
	Older	<b>5.00</b>	.000	.000		
	<i>Total</i>	<b>4.40</b>	<i>.983</i>	<i>.028</i>		
Entertainment	Youth	<b>4.50</b>	.855	.032	1.051	.369
	Adults	<b>4.56</b>	.788	.042		
	Middle	<b>4.46</b>	.813	.089		
	Older	<b>4.73</b>	.631	.135		
	<i>Total</i>	<b>4.52</b>	<i>.829</i>	<i>.024</i>		
Obesity	Youth	<b>2.90</b>	1.620	.060	16.296*	.000
	Adults	<b>3.35</b>	1.634	.086		
	Middle	<b>3.75</b>	1.430	.156		
	Older	<b>4.45</b>	1.262	.269		
	<i>Total</i>	<b>3.13</b>	<i>1.637</i>	<i>.047</i>		
Gaiety	Youth	<b>3.91</b>	1.185	.044	20.617*	.000
	Adults	<b>4.39</b>	.911	.048		
	Middle	<b>4.35</b>	.912	.099		
	Older	<b>4.82</b>	.395	.084		
	<i>Total</i>	<b>4.10</b>	<i>1.108</i>	<i>.032</i>		
Be trendy	Youth	<b>1.85</b>	1.330	.049	24.243*	.000
	Adults	<b>2.47</b>	1.644	.087		
	Middle	<b>2.12</b>	1.508	.165		
	Older	<b>3.73</b>	1.638	.349		
	<i>Total</i>	<b>2.09</b>	<i>1.492</i>	<i>.043</i>		
Self-affirmation	Youth	<b>3.26</b>	1.537	.057	5.045*	.002
	Adults	<b>3.49</b>	1.535	.081		
	Middle	<b>3.36</b>	1.445	.158		
	Older	<b>4.36</b>	1.255	.268		
	<i>Total</i>	<b>3.36</b>	<i>1.533</i>	<i>.044</i>		

**Table 5.** Motives of participation in sports-tourist even for examinees of different gender.

Motive	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	T-test	
					t	Sig.
Health	Male	4.17	1.166	.047	.589	.556
	Female	4.13	1.060	.044		
Friendship	Male	4.13	1.202	.049	4.933*	.000
	Female	3.78	1.272	.052		
Relax	Male	4.45	.935	.038	1.965*	.052
	Female	4.34	1.028	.042		
Entertainment	Male	4.54	.843	.034	.987	.324
	Female	4.49	.814	.034		
Obesity	Male	3.06	1.729	.070	-1.309	.191
	Female	3.19	1.534	.063		
Gaiety	Male	4.22	1.077	.044	3.559*	.000
	Female	3.99	1.127	.046		
Be trendy	Male	2.32	1.616	.066	5.540*	.000
	Female	1.85	1.312	.054		
Self-affirmation	Male	3.43	1.561	.064	1.810	.071
	Female	3.27	1.501	.062		

By analysing scalar means attained for two multi-item factors of quality of sports-tourist event, it has been established that the greater values were attributed to the first component, so called *Self Experience of Development Resources*. The average grades for the first component were higher than 4 with all categories of examinees (regardless of gender and age), while with the second component (*Tangible Indicators*) they were under 4 (Tables 6 and 7). The exception is the scalar mean calculated for the eldest examinees (Older Adults). Generally speaking, according to the assessment of the participants, natural potentials of the destination surpass material indicators of quality that are the consequence of former investments. It can be concluded that Fruška Gora has significant natural potentials for the development of active (recreational) tourism, however, there is a realistic need for its advancement. This primarily refers to greater material investments and better organisation, i.e. the improvement of: quality of accompanying content (toilets, catering service, service information etc.), improving the quality of transport, better tidiness of tracks, as well as better media promotion of the event.

**Table 6:** Factors of quality of sports-tourist events for examinees of different gender

Quality Factor	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	T-test	
					t	Sig.
Development Resources	Male	4.51	.635	.026	6.863*	.000
	Female	4.24	.732	.030		
Tangible Indicators	Male	3.85	.956	.039	8.362*	.000

	Female	<b>3.41</b>	.866	.036	
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**Table 7:** Factors of quality of sports-tourist events for examinees of different age

Quality Factor	Age	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	ANOVA	
					F	Sig.
Development Resources	Youth	<b>4.28</b>	.745	.028	15.533*	.000
	Adults	<b>4.53</b>	.568	.029		
	Middle	<b>4.49</b>	.664	.072		
	Older	<b>4.85</b>	.328	.069		
	Total	<b>4.38</b>	.697	.020		
Tangible indicators	Youth	<b>3.41</b>	.931	.035	43.912*	.000
	Adults	<b>3.97</b>	.818	.043		
	Middle	<b>3.93</b>	.837	.091		
	Older	<b>4.57</b>	.955	.204		
	Total	<b>3.64</b>	.939	.027		

Statistically significant differences between arithmetic means calculated for the examinees of different gender show that the women were stricter with valuing certain aspects of quality. Significant differences were discovered in relation to the age of examinees. Post Hoc test (Turkey HSD) showed that the main sources of variability in both factors were the significantly higher grades by Youths, as well as significantly lower grades by Older Adults from all sub-samples. Groups Young and Middle adults did not show any statistically significant differences with either of the two isolated factors.

### Discussion

There is an ever greater need for the creation of tourist and recreational activities adapted to different needs of the participants. Amongst such activities, the most popular are recreational-sports event such as the marathon on Fruška Gora, which was the subject of this research. Moving in a moderate pace in an ecologically preserved area represents the most popular health activity, which is at the same time creates a challenge to remain in contact with nature and new discoveries. It is estimated that by year 2040, over half of the developed world population will be over 50, enjoying good health with a more informed global perspective (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). The rise of popularity of outdoor recreation may become a centre of attention for elder people, especially for baby boomers (Naidoo et al. 2005). This rise is partially due to progression in the commercialisation of outdoor recreation (Buckley, 2007).

About 10% of the participants used in the sample of this study were older than the age of 45, and amongst them approximately 2% older than 64. In comparison with similar events in the world, that is still a small portion of participants that belong to the so

called Third Age. However, the marathon on Fruška Gora, with all its characteristics, could attract precisely this age group that, according to current demographical flux, is becoming the most numerous in Europe.

The marathon on Fruška Gora was observed from two angles. The first one is in relation to the structure and the hierarchy of motives for the participation in this event, while the second is in relation to the perception of different aspects of quality from the viewpoint of the participants. Through literature overview, numerous models of research instruments (primarily questionnaires and scales) used in similar categories have been mentioned. Due to the specifics of the event and the area where the marathon was realised, complete instruments were not used, and instead certain items were adapted for the needs of this study. The justification for this action can also be found in previous research. For example, as an answer to the question why people participate in special events and what makes them so appealing, Getz (2008) points out that each event is unique as it results from the interaction between geography, people and the management system. Its uniqueness constitutes the main appeal and the very reason for people to participate.

All motives analysed in this study were almost identically valued by participants as in previous research (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004; Kim, LaVetter & Lee, 2006; Funk & Brunn, 2007). Apart from similar intensity of display, similarities in hierarchy have been noticed. It was confirmed that the highest ranked motives were *Entertainment* and *Relax*, then *Health* and *Gaiety*. The second hierarchal group consists of three motives: *Friendship*, *Self-affirmation* and *Obesity*. As in previous studies, the *Be trendy* motive received the lowest position in all categories of examinees (regardless of gender and age). Entertainment, pastime, relaxation, forgetting everyday worries and the need for good mood were confirmed to be the most significant motives for participating in sports-tourist events. It is interesting to note that the significance of health as a motive increased with the age of the examinees. Generally speaking, age of the examinees proved to be a far more significant predictor for the formation of motives than gender of the participants.

Crompton and McKay (1997, p.426) point out the main reasons why it is extremely important to learn and understand the primary motives for attending events. Firstly, by identifying the needs of the visitors, organizers could better prepare the program to meet or even overcome their expectations. Satisfied visitors are more likely to return and recommend the event to their friends and colleagues, especially using e-

WOM (electronic Word of Mouth) and thus facilitate its promotion. Sport event tourism, as one of the fastest growing tourism niches of the modern time, has to be professionally managed. Understanding visitor motivation is the most important issue in that process. Sport event managers must leverage the equity built by tourism campaigns into their marketing mix (Mohsin, 2005), as special events may serve important roles in local and regional development, as well as economic revitalization (Egresi & Kara, 2014).

Apart from the motive, the perception of the visitors of the event quality has a significant influence on the success of the tourist event. This study discovered two factors of quality, the first of which is in relation to natural potentials of environment where the event took place (Development Resources) and the second in relation to current indicators of quality (Tangible Indicators), such as the tidiness of the tracks, transport quality, catering offer, quality of informing and media promotion. Unlike previous studies, which recorded four factors (Ko & Pastore, 2004, 2005, 2007), in the case of the marathon on Fruška gora only two factors of quality were isolated. Factor of physical environment was confirmed, while programme quality, quality of interaction and quality of the outcome were manifested within the component titled Tangible Indicators. The structure of extracted factors was very similar to those received in previous research (Murray & Howat, 2002; Ko & Pastore, 2004, 2005, 2007; Ko et al. 2011). It is interesting to note that in this study the factor of physical environment (Development Resources) has received the highest hierarchal position and explained the largest portion of the total variable, while in previous studies it had received a lower position. This data indicates that in comparison with similar sports-recreational events in the world, the quality of the marathon on Fruška Gora is mostly based on natural potential, while the quality of accompanying tourist content is on significantly lower level. This leads to the conclusion that substantial effort should be made to improve quality of catering offer, transport, and particularly the promotion of this tourist event. Female visitors graded these elements significantly lower. The grades of examinees did not differ significantly by age.

Taking into consideration the results of the analyses of participants' behaviour in sports-tourist event of small and medium scale Gibson et al., 2012; Veltri et al, 2009; Wilson, 2006; Daniels & Norman, 2003), it can be concluded that this sports-recreational event can bring significant benefits to local community, especially through catering services and destination shopping. Organizers should provide food and beverage for all participants, as part of the event. Local restaurants and other stakeholders that cater should meet the needs, tastes and price level requirements of the event, and thus be a

part of the successful organizing body. Encouraging participants and their escorts to take part in additional activities such as sightseeing, educational workshops, lectures, shopping, parties, walking tours etc., could contribute to their overall impression, as well as enjoyment of the locals, contributing to their sense of pride and quality of life (Gibson H., 1998). Gibson`s study also confirms the claims that minor events, often with more competitors/participants than spectators, little media coverage and limited economic activity, are the most successful model for sustainable tourism development through sport tourism.

### **Conclusion**

This research confirmed that the participants of most tourist-recreational events that are organised in natural areas have very similar motives. *Entertainment* and *Relax*, then *Health* and *Gaiety* are determined as basic motives for participating in these sort of events. To utilize the chance for promotion of healthy lifestyle, sports-tourist manifestations should be more massive and with more quality content. Based on the perception of the participants of the marathon on Fruška Gora, it can be concluded that Fruška Gora national park has substantial natural potentials, but it is not utilized sufficiently in terms of tourism. The participants of the marathon graded natural environment significantly higher than the quality of accompanying tourist content. By contrast, in similar events that were analysed in previous research, the participants attributed far greater significance to organisational and material elements (access to the place of event, service quality during the event, quality of material resources, safety of the contesters etc.). This indicates that larger investments by local community and entrepreneurs would be justified and that they would contribute to the development of tourism in the region. This would surely contribute to the promotion of the marathon and attract a larger number of participants amongst whom are increasingly higher number of persons of middle and older age. For this category of tourists, the quality of services, safety and transport are significantly more important that for younger persons.

In the study used 9-item questionnaire to assess the services quality of outdoor sport events. All items had high internal concordance. The whole questionnaire was valid and proved that it can be used as a single scale. Two-component solution was obtained by factor analysis. The first factor was titled *Self-experience of Development Resources*, and the second one *Tangible Indicators*. This questionnaire can be recommended in future similar researches.

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