School of Business Administration
Department of Business Administration

Doctoral Thesis

Proposals for a strategic promotion of destinations through the exploratory analysis of running events: A mixed method approach of the factors that influence the mitigation of tourism seasonality

Sofia K. Gkarane

Principal Supervisor: Chris Vassiliadis, Professor
Co-supervisor: Nikolaos Stylos, Assoc. Professor
Co-supervisor: Anestis Fotiadis, Professor

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study is to gain a clear understanding of the factors related to sport (running) events that could contribute to the extension of the tourist season, leaving a sustainable imprint on the destination. The fulfilment of this objective is a necessity both for the planning of the marketing strategy for tourist destinations by organizations in charge of this task and for the proper management of the tourist product by local authorities.

Tourism seasonality is an issue of great importance in academic literature given that it is a phenomenon that affects the majority of tourism destinations. It is usually recognized as a problem or difficulty with negative economic and socio-cultural impacts during the non-peak season and negative environmental consequences during the peak season. The role of tourism in the Greek national and economic development is central; yet, the phenomenon of seasonality has slightly been approached. Although tourism seasonality will never be eliminated, various initiatives have been suggested by literature, one of which is utilizing events as a strategic approach to combat seasonality.

The extensive literature review of the current thesis identified a research gap in the area of small-scale sport events and their role in seasonality mitigation; although events are a common strategy to mitigate seasonality, in-depth and longitudinal research is needed to investigate their characteristics. Based on these issues, the writer of this thesis took the opportunity to propose a model which would focus on the identification and empirical documentation of factors that influence seasonality mitigation and expansion of the tourist season through the organization of small-scale running events.

In order to achieve this goal, the following methodological steps were implemented:

- The application of a systematic survey of the area of tourism seasonality was provided and the different approaches regarding its smoothing strategies were presented. According to the gaps detected in the results returned, special attention was paid to small-scale sport events as a tool to combat seasonality. Also, the basic concepts of sustainability were analyzed. The absence of a reliable theoretical model that would describe the elements and the factors which may influence tourism seasonality mitigation within the successful organization of a small-scale sport event was acknowledged.

- The perceptions of local professionals and running event organizers from all around Greece and some regions of Cyprus were analyzed; the findings drew attention to seasonality mitigation issues relating to road races. Emphasis was given on synergy with respect to sustainability in tourism. The outcomes of the qualitative research revealed five main themes (seasonality, road race, local professionals, synergy, sustainability) as the basis of the empirical research. A Delphi method approach was used to evaluate the results and ensure their reliability and validity.

- The research problem was delimited and the basic research hypotheses were formulated; the dependent and independent variables of the proposed theoretical model were identified.

- The quantitative research was based on the 'road races and extension of the tourist season' questionnaire which was distributed to the local authorities (332 Greek municipalities). The validity of the hypotheses was examined through the widely accepted PLS-SEM analysis; out of the 23 general hypotheses, 12 were finally accepted.

- A set of conclusions and management proposals resulting from the research effort were formulated

As a conclusion, the tourism seasonality phenomenon is experienced in almost all countries and destinations in the world. Since sport tourism industry has demonstrated its strength by maintaining a steady growth rate and by increasing its popularity among travelers over the past decades, despite the recent health crisis, it is becoming increasingly important to introduce special events during off-season in order to cover the gap.

This thesis has demonstrated that it is possible to understand the constructs that relate to a running event during low-season and the importance of identifying the attributes that influence the organization process of a sport event. There are currently no seasonality and small-scale events research publications and only a limited number of some journals have published issues that combine seasonality and (primarily) large events-related articles. This study has identified the need for future research that extends beyond the needs of the sports tourism industry.

This thesis has contributed to the theoretical basis for such research and has provided new tools and methods to support this endeavor. Hopefully, the present thesis will facilitate the continuing study of seasonality phenomenon on both a global and regional level, and will thus, contribute to shaping the future of the event tourism industry.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	=	Average Variance Extracted
CB-SEM	=	Covariance Based Structural Equation Modeling
CR	=	Composite Reliability
CTA	=	Confirmatory Tetrad Analysis
DMOs	=	Destination Marketing Organizations
HTMT	=	Heterotrait-monotrait
LOCALPRO (LP)	=	Local Professionals
PLS-SEM	=	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
RR	=	Road Race
SEM	=	Structural Equation Modeling
SMEs	=	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMTEs	=	Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises
SRMR	=	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual Value
SUS	=	Sustainability
SYN	=	Synergy
TSEA	=	Tourism Seasonality

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introductory Statement

Tourism industry in Greece is a major source of income for the Greek economy. In 2016-2019 Greek tourism increased both in terms of arrivals and in terms of overnight stays and receipts; even after the recent health crisis and despite the fact that the pace of recovery of tourism activity has remained slow and uneven across all regions in the world, the performance of inbound tourism in Greece (in terms of arrivals, overnight stays and receipts) is significantly better than that of other countries (INSETE, 2022).

However, the biggest problem which tourism industry in Greece has to face is seasonality. Despite the main two characteristics which make the country stand out from other destinations, that is the sun and the sea (main tourism products), their exploitation in order to attract tourist traffic can only take place during the summer months.

According to the action plan to strengthen competitiveness and structural adjustment of the tourism sector, the Greek tourism development strategy should focus on strengthening Greece's competitive position as a tourist destination by targeting the following main strategic priorities: strengthening the brand "Greece" and the spatial and temporal expansion of tourism activity, increasing the average daily expenditure, extending the average length of stay as well as enhancing penetration in existing established markets and opening new ones (Greek Tourism 2030 - INSETE, 2022). The reduction of seasonality and the extension of the tourist activity beyond the summer season are among the main strategic priorities for Greek tourism (Greek Tourism 2030 - INSETE, 2022).

The aforementioned action plan also refers to seven complementary products for further tourism development included in the post-COVID era (Greek Tourism 2030 - INSETE, 2022). The emergence of sport tourism, given the consumer shift towards health and well-being, experiential travel and contact with nature, has ranked the sector among these seven complementary products. Sports Tourism is a specialized tourism product that includes Adventure Tourism, Sports Events Tourism and Coaching Tourism (Greek Tourism 2030 - INSETE, 2022).

Following this introductory statement on seasonality and sporting events, there will be: a) the summary of the research needs along with the presentation of the main purpose and the corresponding research objectives, b) the summary of the research methodology, c) the definition of the basic concepts and d) a brief description of the structure of this thesis.

1.2 The research needs, main purpose and objectives

The aim of this study is to comprehensively explore the factors associated with sports events, particularly running events, that may aid in extending the tourist season and ensuring a lasting and sustainable impact on the destination. Achieving this objective is imperative for both designing effective marketing strategies for tourist destinations by relevant organizations and ensuring appropriate management of the tourist product by local authorities.

Tourism seasonality is an issue of great importance in academic literature given that it is a phenomenon that affects the majority of tourism destinations. It is usually recognized as a problem or difficulty with negative economic and socio-cultural impacts during the non-peak season and negative environmental consequences during the peak season. The role of tourism in the Greek national and economic development is central; yet, the phenomenon of seasonality has slightly been approached. Although tourism seasonality will never be eliminated, some initiatives have been suggested by literature; one of them is the development of events as a strategic tool to combat seasonality.

The extensive literature review of the current thesis identified a research gap in the area of small-scale sport events and their role in seasonality mitigation; although events are a common strategy to mitigate seasonality, in-depth and longitudinal research is needed to investigate their characteristics. Based on these issues, the writer of this thesis took the opportunity to propose a model which would focus on the identification and empirical documentation of factors that influence seasonality mitigation and expansion of the tourist season through the organization of small-scale running events.

In order to achieve this goal, it is proposed to implement a series of individual sub-goals, which can be summarized as follows:

- An application of a systematic survey of the area of tourism seasonality and its different approaches regarding its smoothing strategies was provided. According to the gaps detected in the results returned, special attention was paid to small-scale sport events as a tool to combat seasonality. Also, the basic concepts of sustainability were analyzed. The absence of a reliable theoretical model that would describe the elements and the factors which may influence tourism seasonality mitigation within the successful organization of a small-scale sport event was acknowledged.

- The perceptions of local professionals and running event organizers from all around Greece and some from Cyprus were analyzed; the findings draw attention to seasonality mitigation issues relating to road races. Emphasis was given on enhanced collaboration (synergy) with respect to sustainability in tourism. The outcomes of the qualitative research revealed five main themes (seasonality, road race, local professionals, synergy, sustainability) as the basis of the empirical research. A Delphi method approach was used to evaluate the results and ensure their reliability and validity.

- The research problem was delimited and the basic research hypotheses were formulated; the dependent and independent variables of the proposed theoretical model were identified.

- The quantitative research that followed was based on the 'road races and extension of the tourist season' questionnaire which was distributed to the local authorities (Greek municipalities). The validity of the hypotheses was examined through the widely accepted PLS-SEM analysis; out of the 23 general hypotheses, 12 were finally accepted.

- A set of conclusions and management proposals resulting from the research effort were formulated; also, limitations and implications were mentioned.

As a conclusion, the phenomenon of tourism seasonality is experienced in almost all countries and destinations in the world. Since sport tourism industry has demonstrated its strength by maintaining a steady growth rate and by increasing its popularity among travelers over the past decades, despite the recent health crisis, it is becoming increasingly important to introduce special events during off-season in order to cover the gap.

This thesis has demonstrated that it is possible to understand the constructs that relate to a running event during low-season and the importance of identifying the attributes that influence the organization process of a sport event. There are currently no seasonality and small-scale events research publications and only a limited number of some journals have published issues that combine seasonality and (mainly) large events-related articles. The current study has identified the need for future research that extends beyond the needs of the sport tourism industry.

This thesis has contributed to the theoretical basis for such research and has provided new tools and methods to support this endeavor. Hopefully, the present project will facilitate the continuing study of seasonality phenomenon on both a global and regional level, and will thus, contribute to shaping the future of the event tourism industry.

1.3 Summary of General Methodology

This study was based on and followed the principles of scientific research, which refers to a step-by-step, logical, organized and rigorous process of identifying problems, collecting data, analyzing them and drawing conclusions. More specifically, the hypothetico-deductive method was followed, one of the most basic methods of scientific research, which is a systematic approach for generating knowledge; it involves seven steps (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016):

1. Identify a broad problem area
2. Define the problem statement
3. Develop hypotheses
4. Determine measures

5. Collect Data

6. Analyze Data

7. Interpret data.

A research is conducted through a set of principles and guidelines, which is called research methodology (Jennings, 2010). A plethora of equally valid methodologies in the tourism research exists which creates the need for a case-by-case determination of the choice of quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods techniques (Walle, 1997). Therefore, tourism researchers must consider the most suitable approach among the qualitative, the quantitative or the mixed methods for their study.

-   *Qualitative Research Methodology*

Qualitative Research Methodology seeks in-depth information and elements about how things work in particular contexts, despite the challenges and the great deal of effort that may be needed (Mason, 2017). As regards tourism, the qualitative research methodologies that have been widely used are the free elicitation/open ended questions, the focus groups, the in-depth interviews and the discussions with tourism experts (Gallarza et al., 2002). In order to enhance the validity of the measured variables, it is proposed that a panel of experts examines all the components of the questionnaire (Delphi method) and depending on the categories of these elements, a number of round reviews are decided (Clayton, 1997).

-   *Quantitative Research Methodology*

In most surveys of academic and nonacademic tourism research, the application of quantitative research methodology has prevailed (Dwyer et al., 2012; Pike, 2002), characterized by increasing complexity (Provenzano et al., 2019). The literature review in the current thesis also denotes this fact; seasonality in tourism has been mostly studied with the use of quantitative methods. The current thesis aims at the quantitative approach of the research hypotheses that emerge from the theoretical framework, and will be analyzed in the next chapters.

- *Mixed Methods Research*

Mixed methods research is an approach with an increasing acceptance from the research community; in mixed methods approach both qualitative and quantitative methods are combined into a single study to meet the research objective (Almeida, 2018).

As far as tourism research is concerned, mixed methods have been widely used, mainly in exploratory studies which apply qualitative and quantitative methods; however, scholars continue to make appeals for even more mixed methods in tourism (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2019), such as explanatory or exploratory sequential designs (Mariani & Baggio, 2020).

The strengths of applying mixed methods approaches may be the minimization of the weaknesses of a single method and the increase in the validity of the data (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2019); also, the use of mixed methods research framework is more likely to lead to a better understanding of the real attitudes of the respondents (Flick, 2018).

For the needs of this project, and since a guiding framework was not available, an exploratory mixed methods study was chosen. Exploratory design, where the qualitative data is the primary source of information, is among the four specific mixed methods designs that Creswell & Clark (2017) propose. In social sciences, and mainly in tourism research, when the mixed methods approach is included and there is a lack of guidance, exploration is the first step in this long research process (Mason et al., 2021).

Besides, tourism areas all around the world have encountered great challenges, from terrorist attacks and natural disasters to pandemic diseases, like the recent covid-19. This dynamic framework also includes technological changes, exchanges between nations and several other complicated economic, social, political challenges, which need to be identified. Thus, this kind of information can be obtained through exploratory research approaches (Von Bergner & Lohmann, 2014).

For the current thesis, the sequential exploratory design was selected, which is an approach where qualitative data is collected first followed by quantitative data collection (Almeida, 2018).

As a result of all the above, the method proposed by Sekaran & Bougie (2016) was adopted with some adjustments. The adaptations made to this methodology were necessary so that it would be applicable and compatible with the particular circumstances for the conduct of this thesis.

The research approach followed in this thesis is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 1.1:

STAGES	**RESEARCH PROCESSES**
Literature Review	• Tourism Seasonality • Small-scale Sport Events - Sustainability • Road Races
Elicitation Study	• Initial Sample of Qualitative Research *(Local Professionals)* • Qualitative Research on Running Events *Organizers* • Confirmation on Measurement Items (Delphi method)
Initial Questionnaire Development	• Literature Review Results • Elicitation Study Results • Delphi Method (panel of 7 experts)
Pilot Study	• Sample of 4 respondents (tourism executives)
Final Questionnaire Development	• Results of the Pilot Study • Questionnaire (5 main themes - 36 questions)
Data Collection	• 332 Greek municipalities
Data Analysis	• PLS-SEM Analysis • 23 general hypotheses/12 accepted

Figure 1.1
Research Approach
Source: Adapted from Huang (2009).

After the necessary adjustments, a general research methodology of 10 steps (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016) was formulated (Figure 1.2), which includes:

1. *Observation*, which concerns the planned recording and analysis of tourism seasonality

2. *Preliminary Data Gathering,* through the collection and analysis of the primary data; literature review of the basic concepts and interviewing of stakeholders in order to introduce some factors which will be the component parts of the thesis model

3. *Problem Definition*, the most critical part in the research process where the research problem is delineated

4. *Theoretical Framework*, where the foundation of hypothetico-deductive research is developed

5. *Generation of Hypothesis,* through the formulation of the basic research hypotheses and the identification of the dependent and independent variables

6. *Research Design*, which is the plan for collection, measurement and analysis created to answer the research questions of this thesis

7. *Data Collection,* through questionnaires which were administered to local authorities in order to collect primary data

8. *Quantitative Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing*, where the hypotheses are tested with the use of the appropriate statistical technique (PLS-SEM)

9. *Deduction,* in order to establish the substantiation of the hypotheses

10. *Discussion and Conclusion,* where the findings, the conclusion, the limitations and the recommendations are presented
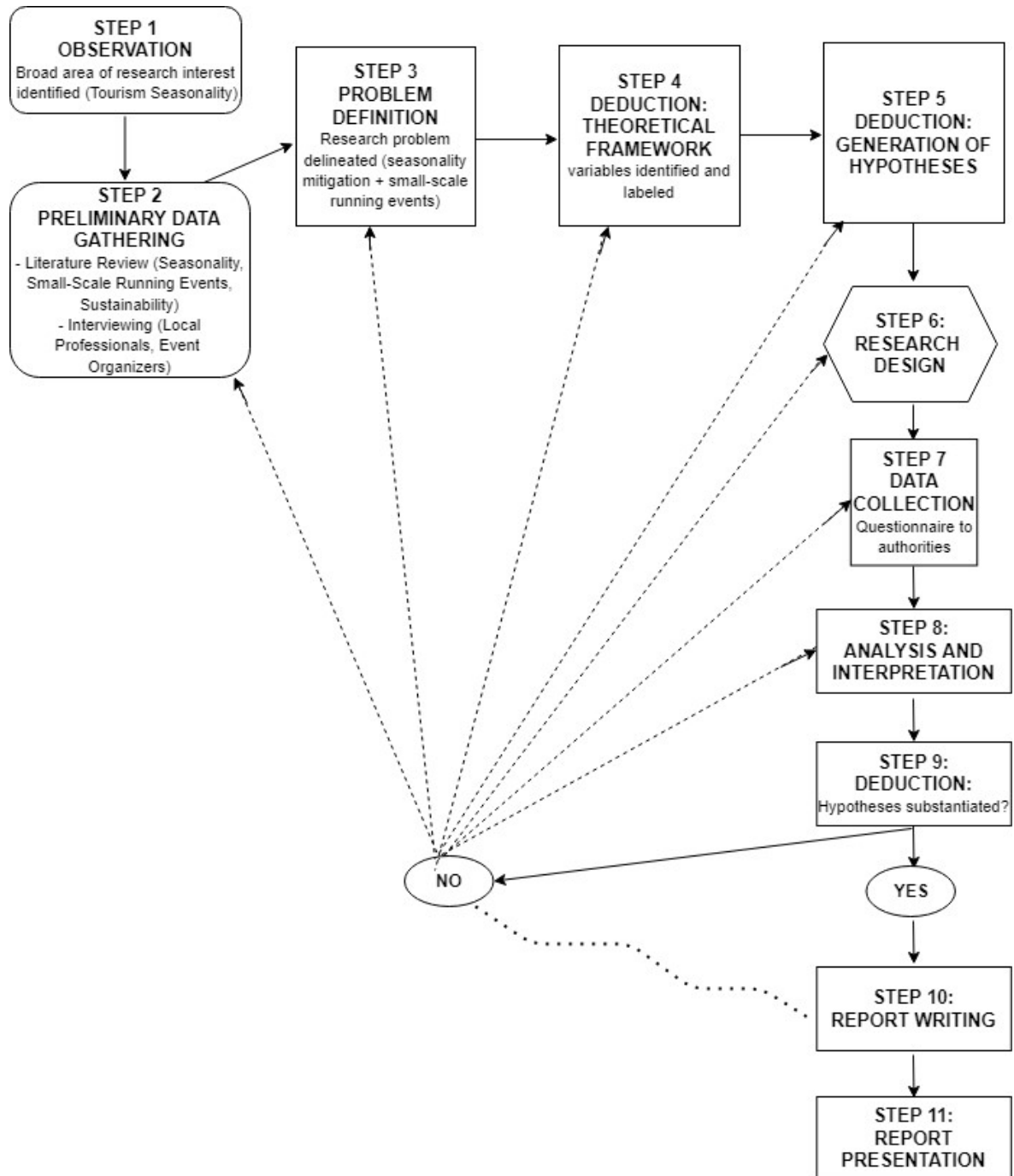
Figure 1.2
Research Design
Source: Adapted from Sekaran & Bougie (2016)

1.4 Definition of basic concepts

The following definitions used throughout this thesis are essential for a better understanding of the concepts and the corresponding observed and unobserved variables:

Active Sport Tourism: In the past it was associated with participating in sport while on holiday/vacation; then it also focused on the general 'sport lover' who chose to participate in sport while on vacation (Gibson et al., 2018:1).

Collaboration in Tourism: Collaboration involves relationships between stakeholders when those parties interact with each other in relation to a common issue or 'problem domain'. "Each stakeholder controls resources, such as knowledge, expertise, constituency and capital, but on their own they are unlikely to possess all the resources necessary to achieve their objectives and to plan effectively for their future in relation to a significant tourism development issue" (Bramwell & Lane, 2000:4).

Destination Management Organizations (DMOs): DMOs, which have actively contributed globally to tourism development are concerned with the "selling of places" (Pike, 2007). Morrison (2018) describes them as teams of tourism professionals that lead and coordinate all tourism stakeholders. They should be official representative of tourism in the community playing roles which include leadership and coordination of destination management, team building, education to the locals about the positive impacts of tourism, local community relations and involvement, visitor management, product development, and marketing and promotion (Morrison, 2018a; Morrison, 2018b).

Event: "Events are gathering of people for a purpose. They are opportunities to celebrate and inspire. Their purpose can be to promote knowledge, to showcase excellence, to entertain, to compete, to inspire community pride, celebrate culture and enhance social cohesion" (Jones, 2014:3). The word "event" has its origins in the Latin word "eventus" that means "outcome, result, success", (Damm, 2011).

Event Management: "A fast-growing professional field in which tourists constitute a potential market for planned events and the tourism industry has become a vital stakeholder in their success and attractiveness", (Getz, 2008:403). Getz (2008) also explains that not all events have to be tourism oriented.

Event Tourism: "An important and rapidly growing segment of international tourism…. generally recognized as being inclusive of all planned events in an integrated approach to development and marketing", (Getz, 2008:405).

Gini Coefficient: "A seasonality measurement method which evaluates the whole year and can make comparisons among the years" (Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010:209). If G=0, the distribution of arrivals is uniform across the season or does not differ significantly from season to season. G=1 implies that the distribution of the arrivals is highly volatile across season or that arrivals differ significantly from season to season (Kulendran & Wong, 2005).

Hallmark Events: "Major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short and/or long term. Such events rely for their success on uniqueness, status, or timely significance to create interest and attract attention" (Ritchie, 1984:2).

Mass Participation Events: "Athletic events with numerous participants at one period of time (for example, marathons, one-half marathons, and other long-distance running events, bicycle rallies and races; Nordic events, multisport events such as triathlons; "iron-man" triathlons; and walking rallies)" (Davis, 2005:29).

Mega Events: Large and most significant events, which by way of their site generate very high levels of tourism, media coverage, prestige or economic impact for their host community (Getz & Page, 2019; Taks, 2013) and as such, they have a special appeal and they are viewed as promotional tools (Getz & Page, 2019).

Non-Peak Seasonality: "It occurs mostly in urban destinations where there is not a seasonal pattern of tourism" (Vergori, 2012:917) for example, countries like Singapore

and Hong Kong, where seasonality indices of peak to non-peak visitations of less than 1 to 1.2 have been recorded (Butler, 2001).

One - Peak Seasonality or Single Peak Seasonality: "It occurs when the seasonal pattern of the origin region matches that of the destination region" (Vergori, 2017:4), and it tends to produce extreme seasonality, for instance in some places in the Mediterranean where tourist traffic in high season in summer may be more than ten times higher than that in winter (Butler, 2001).

Passive Sport Tourism: "Tourism associated with spectating at sport events from the Olympic Games, through to regular season football matches" (Gibson et al., 2018:1).

Peak season: It is the intense concentration of visitors at a given time (Chen & Pearce, 2012) and it is typical for coastal areas which present an intense peak of tourists during summer (De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017).

Season: "The common term to mark the annual period of time when tourists are most noticeable" (Hartmann, 1986:25)

Seasonal Index: "It indicates the degree of seasonal variations; it shows increases and decreases of demand comparing them to the average during the season" (Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010:196).

Seasonality in Tourism: "A temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism which may be expressed in terms of dimensions of such elements as number of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on highways and other forms of transportation, employment and admissions to attractions" (Butler, 2001:5).

Shoulder Season: "A minor peak which falls between the high and the off season, usually determined by specific tourist segments which are more likely to visit the destination out of the peak periods" (Ferrante et al., 2018:221).

Small-Scale Events: "Minor events where competitors may outnumber the spectators, they are often held annually, with little national media interest and limited economic activity compared to the large-scale events" (Gibson et al., 2012:162). Wilson (2006:68) through an addition to the existing typology for events, described small-scale events as "Minor competitor/spectator events, generating very limited economic activity, no media interest and part of an annual domestic cycle of sporting events (e.g. local and regional sporting events in most sports)".

Special Event: "A one or infrequently occurring event of limited duration that provides the consumer with a leisure and social opportunity beyond everyday experience. Such events, which attract, or have the potential to attract tourists, are often held to raise the profile, image, or awareness of a region" (Jago & Shaw, 1998:29).

Sport Tourism: It refers to sport-based travel away from the home environment for a specific period of time" (Higham, J., & Hinch, T. (2018), it is a recent but rapidly growing niche of tourism for earning income (Mollah et al., 2021) and it is defined as "all forms of active and passive involvement in sport activity, participated in casually or in an organized way for noncommercial or business/commercial reasons, that necessitate travel away from home and work localit" (Standeven & Knop, 1999:12).

Sport Tourism Events: Those sports activities that attract tourists of which a large percentage are spectators. Furthermore, these sports tourism events have the potential to "attract non-resident media, technical personnel, athletes, coaches and other sports officials" (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2003:44). This type of events may attract "significant numbers of visitors to a host community as many participants are often accompanied by a small entourage of family and friends" (Lamont & Dowell, 2008:257).

Stakeholder: "Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, 2004:46).

Sustainable development: From the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (Imperatives, 1987:16) sustainable development is described as paths of human progress that "meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

In the same report, it is explained that sustainable development is a process of (painful) changes. In his book about Sustainable Event Management, Jones (2014) characterizes sustainable development as "global, cross-border and cross-generational equity and endurance".

Tourism Demand: The number of persons who travel, or wish to travel, to use tourist facilities and services at places away from their places work and residence (Mathieson & Wall, 1982).

Triple Bottom Line: "The construct was coined by Elkington and expresses the expansion of the environmental agenda in a way that integrates the economic and social lines…and has been referred to as the practical framework of sustainability" (Alhaddi, 2015:8)

Two - Peak Seasonality: It occurs when there are two seasons, most frequently a major summer and a minor winter season, indicating two seasons of attractiveness, for instance both summer and winter tourists may visit a mountain region (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001; Butler, 2001; Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010)

1.5 Structure of the thesis

In its 7 chapters, the current thesis addresses three main research questions: If sport events could contribute to seasonality mitigation, if there are factors related to sport (running) events that could contribute to the extension of the tourist season and which these factors are. The content of the 7 chapters is summarized below:

In the Introductory Chapter 1, the subject of the study is briefly presented. This part also briefly describes the theoretical gap that led to the direction of conducting this study, the main purpose, the individual objectives, a summary of the general methodology followed and the structure of this thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly and substantially delineate the general framework for the implementation of the study.

Chapter 2 is the first part of the preliminary data gathering of this thesis and provides an overview of the literature relevant to its topic. Specifically, this part consists of the application of a systematic survey of the area of tourism seasonality and its different approaches regarding its smoothing strategies. According to the gaps detected in the results returned, special attention is paid to small-scale sport events as a tool to combat seasonality. Emphasis is given on running events. Also, the basic concepts of sustainability are analyzed. The absence of a reliable theoretical model that would describe the elements and the factors which may influence tourism seasonality mitigation within the successful organization of a small-scale sport event is acknowledged.

Chapter 3 is the second part of the preliminary data gathering of this study. In this part, we deal with the perceptions of local professionals and running event organizers from all around Greece and some of Cyprus; the findings draw attention to seasonality mitigation issues relating to road races. Emphasis is given on stakeholder collaboration (synergy) with respect to sustainability in tourism. The outcomes of the qualitative research reveal five main themes (seasonality, road race, local professionals, synergy, sustainability) as the basis of the empirical research. A Delphi method approach is used to evaluate the results and ensure their reliability and validity.

In Chapter 4, the research problem is delimited based on the findings of the preliminary data gathering. After drawing the key research gaps, the basic research hypothesis is formulated and the dependent and independent variables of the proposed theoretical model are identified.

The research instrument as a method of collecting data for this thesis is presented in detail in Chapter 5. Based on the principles that Sekaran and Bougie (2016) suggest for the questionnaire design, and after the necessary pilot testing, the final (road races and extension of the tourist season) questionnaire is designed and distributed to the local authorities.

Chapter 6 is the analysis and interpretation part of the quantitative research. The modeling of the conceptual structures is carried out using data which was collected by the Municipalities of Greece (authorities) during 2021. The validity of the hypotheses is examined through the widely accepted PLS-SEM analysis, as suggested by recent studies. Firstly, the validity and reliability of the measurement model is assessed and then the significance of the hypothesized relationships of the structural model is ascertained.

In the final Chapter 7, the present research effort is summarized and the results along with the final proposed theoretical model are evaluated. Also, the theoretical and empirical contribution of this thesis is presented, limitations are identified and future research directions are provided.

After the end of Chapter 7, in the form of an Annex, there shall follow the interview guides for local professionals and organizers, the questionnaire, the codebook and photographic evidence of the study.

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PRELIMINARY DATA GATHERING

Literature Review Introduction

This chapter includes the bibliographical review of the basic concepts, which constitute the main object of the current thesis. In particular, the term tourism seasonality is defined, as it is approached in various ways in literature. Different views about its understanding and its consequences and different approaches regarding its smoothing strategies are presented.

In addition, special reference to small-scale events is made as a tool to combat seasonality. This chapter also focuses on the sustainable effect of small-scale sport events (and especially running events) on seasonality mitigation since these issues highly concern this thesis.

The necessity of an empirical research is documented based on the aforementioned issues.

Figure 2.1:
The research process and the step that Chapter 2 corresponds to
Source: Adapted from Sekaran & Bougie (2016)
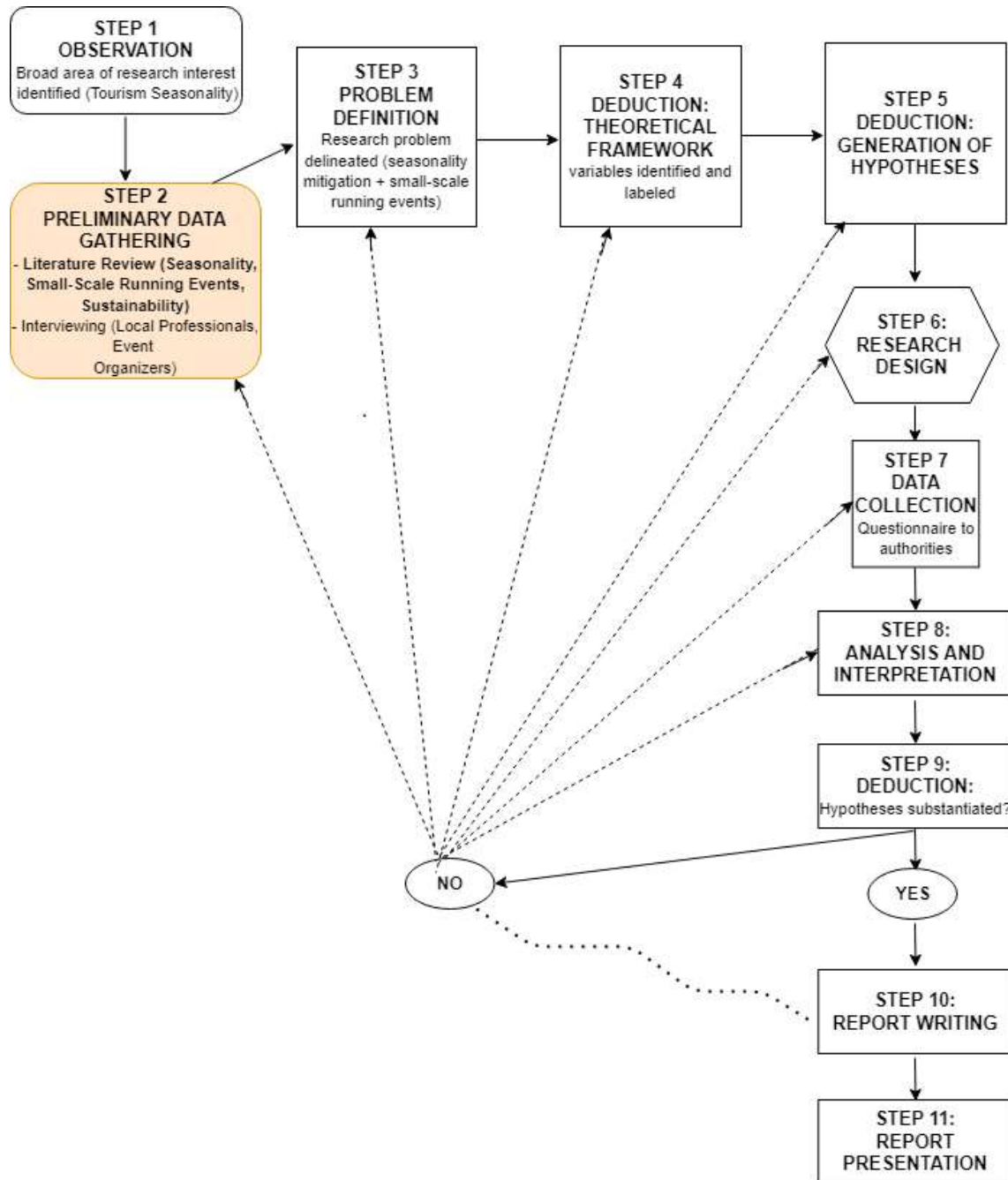
2. Seasonality in Tourism Overview

2.1 Definition of seasonality in tourism

Seasonality in tourism is regarded as an essential and well-studied topic in academic literature. It was BarOn (1975) that first published a comprehensive and repeatedly quoted study about tourism seasonality. Since then, several researchers have been dealing with the various aspects of this issue. Although this prominent feature of tourism has been long investigated, it remains one of the least understood (Corluka et al., 2016; Higham & Hinch, 2002; Jang, 2004; Jönsson, & Lewis, 2014). It is also a multidimensional (De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017) and a complicated task to analyze (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001; Butler, 2014; Cisneros-Martínez & Fernández-Morales, 2015; Connell et al., 2015; Ferrante et al., 2018; Vergori, 2017).

The idea of season has its origins in the French word 'saison', which represents an ideal business period, derived from the Latin word 'satio", that means time of the sowings (Bender et al., 2005). Apart from tourism, the issue of seasonality exists in various business, manufacturing, agricultural, fishing and forestry sectors (Butler, 2014; Cannas, 2012; De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005; Magno et al., 2017) and it is neither a new nor a static concept (Pegg et al., 2012).

Tourism seasonality is a phenomenon that affects the larger part of tourism destinations (Vergori, 2017) with repeated variations in natural phenomena (Ridderstaat et al., 2014) and with changes only on pattern and degree (De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017). Generally, it means "*special annual dependence*" (Bigović, 2011) and in fact, it is ubiquitous (Lee et al., 2008), that is a phenomenon that almost all destinations around the globe experience (Koc & Altinay, 2007).

A general definition of seasonality is provided by Hylleberg (1992:4) who describes the phenomenon as following: "*Seasonality is the systematic, although not necessarily regular, intra-year movement caused by changes in the weather, the calendar, and timing of decisions, directly or indirectly through the production and consumption decisions made by the agents of the economy. These decisions are influenced by the endowments, the expectations and the preferences of the agents, and*

the production techniques available in the economy". BarOn (1973:53) states that seasonality "*implies an incomplete and unbalanced utilization of the means at the disposal of the economy, and this is similar to the imbalance of the business cycle, where the economy is either overheated or running under full potential at different phases of the cycle*".

There is not a general acceptance of definition of seasonality in tourism (Koenig & Bischoff, 2005) but numerous efforts have been made in order to interpret the seasonal variations with reference to tourism. For example, Butler (2001:5) describes seasonality as "*A temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism, which may be expressed in terms of dimensions of such elements as numbers of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on highways and other forms of transportation, employment and admissions to attractions.*" Bender et al. (2005:303) underline that seasonality "*refers to the existence of unevenness or fluctuation during the course of the year, which occurs in relation to a specific season*". According to Chung (2009:84) "*seasonality is a global tourism phenomenon caused by temporary movement of people*". Another definition is attempted by Bigović (2011:17): "*seasonality in tourism is a temporal imbalance, expressed in different ways, which can be 1) strong (i.e., pronounced) and constant, 2) strong and non-constant, 3) weak and constant or 4) weak and non-constant*", a definition that stresses the issues of strength (seasonality level or degree) and dynamics (variations over time) of seasonality.

It is a phenomenon that may differ between a new tourism destination and a mature one (Cuccia & Rizzo, 2011). Systematic variations usually characterize the tourism destinations throughout the year, with a general dramatic peak during summer (Higham & Hinch, 2002) and unevenly distributed tourist flows over the year (Vergori, 2017). According to Butler & Mao (1997) the three different types of seasonality are one-peak, two-peak and non-peak. The one-peak pattern characterizes the coastal Mediterranean destinations by a pronounced peak season during summer, the two-peak pattern involves a peak season and a shoulder season (that is a minor peak between the high and the off season) and the non-peak one refers to non-seasonal tourism, with tourism activities happening all the year round with partly low tourism related time-series fluctuations, a characteristic of cultural cities (Ferrante et al., 2018; Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010; Vergori, 2017). Ferrante et al. (2018) refer also to a fourth type which presents two main peaks, typical of mountain resorts, which generally involves summer and winter seasons.

2.2 Causes

Butler (2014) points out that the general cause of seasonality is the fact that the earth moves around the sun; according to Butler (2014), there are two main dimensions of seasonality, the natural (physical) and the institutional (social and cultural) ones.

The natural factors refer to the destination's climate and include variations in the weather conditions (hours of daylight and sunshine, temperature, wind, snow, rainfall etc) whereas the institutional "follow an established social calendar" (Hartmann, 1986) and include public, religious, school or industrial holidays, associated with human conventions, like Christmas, Easter, Ramadan, etc. (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001; Bigović, 2011; Butler, 2001; Cannas, 2012; Chung, 2009; Kulendran & Dwyer, 2012). Recent studies, like the one of Zvaigzne et al. (2022), distinguish the factors among natural, anthropogenic, institutional and economic.

 - As regards the natural factors, tourist demand cannot control them (Corluka et al., 2016). Every country's climate attributes are different, which implies that there are changes in the definitions of the seasons (peak, shoulder and off-peak) (Kennedy, 1999). Climate and tourism highly interact, namely the tourist's destination choice is greatly determined by the weather (Amelung et al., 2007; Bender et al, 2007; Ridderstaat et al., 2014). The geographical location (for example alpine region, coastal areas etc) of a destination brings on seasonality (Banki et al., 2016). For instance, the ski resorts will face seasonality in summer whereas the seaside ones during winter (Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010) and the polar zones will confront different seasonality than the tropical ones (Hartmann, 1986). Another example is the world's extreme cold-water islands which may experience intense tourism seasonality because of their remote locations and cold climates (Baldacchino, 2006). The majority of tourism destinations are affected by seasonality (Vergori, 2012) but the island destinations experience it more severely, for a number of reasons like accessibility and distance from urban areas (Andriotis, 2005; Baum & Hagen, 1999).

Unavoidably, the climatic changes, like global warming, will influence the natural tourism seasonality (Butler & Mao, 1997) resulting in several environmental issues, like rising sea levels, fires, flooding, etc. (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005).

Therefore, the role of the climate in the marketing of holiday tourism is crucial considering that a change in the mean value of variables like the temperature or the rainfall, may affect the holiday visits (Kulendran & Dwyer, 2012). In addition, domestic tourists are more sensitive to climatic changes and can alter their decision for travelling during a particular weekend (De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017). Weather conditions may attract tourists but they can also be a limitation, for destinations that depend on important outdoor facilities (Ćorluka & Matošević Radić, 2014; De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017), like the coastal areas (Andriotis, 2005; Cannas, 2012).

  - Concerning the institutional seasonality, public holidays are the most frequent form with a growing influence for the tourism field (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001; Butler, 2001; Cannas, 2012; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). Industrial holidays also highly affect tourism seasonality, in countries like France and Italy (Cannas, 2012). For example, city center hotels confront seasonality in weekends (Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010). The institutional causes are known, predictable and to a certain degree they are under the control of the decision makers (Ćorluka & Matošević Radić, 2014; Corluka et al., 2016; Cuccia & Rizzo, 2011). Also, these causes are more stable compared with the natural ones (Kulendran & Dwyer, 2012).

Additional causes, which may fall under the institutional category if regarded within a broad sense, include social pressure or fashion, tradition/inertia (for example pressure to take part in particular activities at specific destinations) during a certain season of the year (Amelung et al., 2007; Baum & Lundtorp, 2001; De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005) or involve sporting seasonality (Chung, 2009). A large number of people may behave this way and, thus, belong to this broad category, a situation that leads to inability to change or reduce seasonality (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001). Andriotis (2005) further explains that some special-interest groups choose to travel during particular periods of the year to get involved in certain seasonal activities (like hunting or fishing). Besides, past trends among the higher social classes have also divided the year in seasons, for instance winter was spent in towns and later in spas and summer in the countryside (Bender et al., 2007).

2.3 Impacts

Literature research on the impacts of tourism seasonality is extensive. These impacts are complicated and vary considerably from location to location (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005).

The greatest part of researchers highlights seasonality as a problem or difficulty and refers to its several characteristics (Andriotis, 2002; Banki et al., 2016; Bender et al, 2005; Bender et al., 2007; Berjozkina, 2022; Butler, 1998; Butler, 2001; Butler, 2014; Cannas, 2012; Cisneros-Martínez & Fernández-Morales, 2015; Chung, 2009; Ćorluka & Matošević Radić, 2014; Croce & Wöber, 2010; De Cantis et al., 2011; De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017; Duro, 2016; Gasmi, 2013; Getz & Nilsson, 2004; Grobelna & Skrzeszewska, 2019; Hartmann, 1986; Higham & Hinch, 2002; Krakover, 2000; Kennedy, 1999; Pegg et al, 2012; Rosselló & Sansó, 2017; Turrión-Prats & Duro 2018; Vergori, 2012; Xie, 2020).

For instance, Yacoumis (1980) recognizes tourism seasonality as a *universal* problem that should be analyzed at three different levels, national, regional and sectoral. Coshal et. al. (2015) and Connell et al. (2015) regard it as a *protracted* problem for the tourism sector. Vergori (2017) states that it is a problem with far more negative effects than benefits, effects that need to be addressed. Manning & Powers (1984) describe the uneven temporal distribution of use as a *traditional* problem in tourism. Baum & Lundtorp (2001) recognize that it is seen as a problem that needs to be addressed at three levels, policy, marketing and operational. Higham & Hinch (2002) describe it as an *inescapable* aspect of tourism and a *barrier* to development. Jurdana, & Zmijanovic (2014) maintain that for protected areas it engenders a *different* kind of problem. Rantala et al. (2019) within their study in Arctic consider seasonality as a problem in economic, social and environmental terms from the part of the local communities, with several investment, human resources and ecosystem pressure issues. So, it seems that seasonality may put the sustainable development of tourism at risk (Martín et al., 2020) since only few destinations are unaffected (Higham, 2018).

- *Economic impacts*

As regards the economic impacts, literature refers to those which usually occur during the off-peak season and mainly include effects on the profitability and the job market. Inefficient use of available facilities, higher prices during the peak season, difficulties in reliable tourist demand forecasting with negative effects on the relevant economic activities (De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017; Ferrante et al, 2018; Sáez-Fernández et al., 2020; Vergori, 2012; Vergori, 2017) along with unstable labor market, employment difficulties, insufficient quality rooms during the high season (Chung 2009; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005) and negative effects on the share of high-growth firms, capital underutilization, revenue instability, and sensitivity to external shocks (Stojčić & Vizek, 2022) are some of the main economic effects.

The sudden change and the instability in terms of demand and revenues that seasonality creates (Krakover, 2000; Martín et al., 2014) and the negative consequence on service quality (Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010) imply higher risk in economic performance (Butler, 2001; Figini & Vici, 2012) and declining returns on investment during off season (Boffa & Succurro, 2012) resulting in a continuous financial loss (Butler, 1998) and in considering tourism as a non-viable economic activity in many areas (Cannas, 2012). It is the small tourism enterprises that mainly come up with the adverse impacts of seasonality (Kastenholz & Lopes de Almeida, 2008) like small family businesses which are negatively affected in terms of profitability and sustainability (Getz & Nilsson, 2004). The high degree of under-exploited capacity and relevant fixed costs during the off-season is an adverse effect for private stakeholders (hotels, restaurants etc) (Cuccia & Rizzo, 2011).

What's more, seasonal jobs involve not only limited protection and unemployment periods (Cuccia & Rizzo, 2011) but also lower qualified staff (Martín et al., 2020) and influence investments in human resources (Turrión-Prats & Duro, 2018) let alone the fact that they are considered as an inferior job opportunity because of their limited career progression and security (Pegg et al., 2012). Given the high challenges of hiring that seasonality of employment in tourism incurs, Martins et al. (2022) suggest the development of a digital platform for seasonal jobs.

- *Socio-cultural impacts*

The negative socio-cultural effects are related with the community (Ferrante et al, 2018) and may generate a lower quality of life for the inhabitants (Martín et al., 2014) during the high season. Specifically, there may be issues pertinent to access to commercial services problems and long queues that may lead in increase in the costs of goods along with crime impacts and are likely to create discomfort from the part of the locals (Cannas, 2012), anti-tourism feelings or even aversion (Pegg et al., .2012) towards tourists and their activities.

Dissatisfaction for tourists and residents may be also provoked because of overcrowding, environmental overuse, lack of parking, shortage of services or increase in local services costs and related issues (Chung, 2009; De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017; Duro, 2016; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005) resulting in a general intervention in residents' lifestyle (Martín et al., 2020), which sometimes may lead to the rejection of tourism by the locals (Rico et al., 2021).

- *Environmental impacts*

The gathering of tourists in a destination during the peak season involves mainly negative environmental impacts. Environmental pressure (Butler, 2014; Cuccia & Rizzo, 2011), traffic congestion, tourist destination overcrowding, wildlife disturbance, disposal and rubbish problems (Cannas, 2012; Chung, 2009; Ćorluka & Matošević Radić, 2014; Martín et al., 2014; Martín et al., 2020; Vergori, 2012), damage to flora and disturbance to fauna (Ferrante et al., 2018), natural sources pollution, exhaustion and plundering of natural landscapes (Bender et al, 2005; Rico et al. 2021) and heavy usage of carrying capacities during the peak season (Kastenholz & Lopes de Almeida, 2008; Manning & Powers, 1984) are mentioned in the literature. Through the consumption of inputs, these effects influence the environment both directly and indirectly (Duro, 2016).

- *Other impacts:*

On the other hand, seasonality is not always damaging for all, as Murphy (2012) declares and under the sociological and ecological perspective, some positive repercussions are highlighted (Chung, 2009) during the off-season for human and non-human inhabitants where the tourism pressure is limited (Butler, 1998). Hartman (1986:31) states that: "it should be wrong to evaluate tourist seasonality in economic terms only and to isolate a regional tourist service system from its social environment and its ecological base. Tourism should be for the good of the whole region" and expresses a distinctive point of view: "dead seasons are the only chance for a social and ecological environment to recover fully".

Indeed, this break of tourism (Vergori, 2012) could have a positive influence on local community mainly in sociological and ecological terms (Petrevska, 2015) and can help societies maintain their way of life (Baldacchino, 2006). It may provide a chance of recovery for the natural resources, a replacement of facilities and a chance of preservation of the local community identity (Banki et al., 2016; Bigović, 2011; Butler, 2014) like maintenance work on building or attractions (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). Recent researchers recognize the potential positive effects of seasonality calling it a "necessity" for example for the Arctic communities (Rantala et al., 2019). This mainly concerns the tourist destinations which do not rely exclusively on tourism (Vergori, 2012). Therefore, some stakeholders certainly desire a rest season instead of the year-round tourism (Butler, 2014). Last but not least, and with respect to the employment, some categories like students, farmers or artists may enjoy an additional income thanks to the seasonal work during peak season (De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017).

2.4 Issues of Supply and Demand

Seasonality phenomenon is attributed to both demand and supply factors (Fernández-Morales et al., 2016). Vergori (2012) agrees that these factors determine seasonality, through their very close relationship (Cannas, 2012); the destination managers and tourism enterprises represent the supply side and the tourists the demand one (De Cantis

& Ferrante, 2017). Indeed, to a great degree, seasonality differentiates tourism demand and supply for a region and brings about diversified visitors' spread during the year (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2014).

The examination of both the supply (characteristics and causes) and demand (characteristics that cause seasonality phenomenon) factors is essential in order to organize strategies to tackle seasonality (Cannas, 2012) and actions from both sides have to be undertaken in order to enhance the possibility of success (Butler, 2014). However, the tourism literature has mainly focused on the demand-side perspective despite the importance of the supply-side one (Sáez-Fernández et al. 2020).

Seasonality affects all supply side tourism characteristics, including marketing, employment, finance and management (Baum, 1999; Baum & Lundtorp, 2001). Regarding demand side the analysis of Fernández-Morales et al. (2016) shows that effective marketing strategies that combat seasonality could be designed through targeting those types of tourists that are less prone to seasonality.

2.5 Spatial and temporal dimensions

The spatial and temporal aspect of seasonality is underlined by several researchers; spatial and temporal variations of demand through the year and the world round characterize seasonality (Cannas, 2012). Although seasonality characterizes tourism in general, it substantially differs from location to location (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001).

The negative implications of seasonality are numerous especially for those local communities that are located in surrounding areas and mainly depend on tourism (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001; Cannas, 2012). Those communities usually experience higher degree of seasonality than large cities, which tourism facilities and attractions (like museums, theatres) are indoors and protected from meteorological conditions (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Because of access difficulties, remote regions will probably experience higher seasonality than more central ones. To this end, small island destinations, like Cyprus, should develop a sustainable framework for tourism, including activities for people with disabilities, in order to provide opportunities during the limited tourism season (Liasidou et al., 2022b).

Butler 's (1998) study in Scotland supports the hypothesis that there are spatial dimensions to seasonality with remote areas facing greater seasonality than accessible ones. Remote locations usually face access difficulties where more time is required to reach them, let alone the fact that transportation and relevant services are limited since they are used by few visitors (Butler, 2001). Banki et al., (2016) also maintain that remote or peripheral destinations confront higher seasonality than more centrally located ones. Vergori (2012) points up that urban areas and central destinations present lower seasonality than tourist resorts from the same country, for accessibility, transport and other services reasons. Croce & Wöber (2010) assert that cities may use various attractions but actually they are not immune to seasonal fluctuations. Different routes to holiday destinations or different transport ways are some strategies for altering the spatial demand during the peak season (Cannas, 2012). A study in Estonia verifies that seasonality can generate different tourism spaces, with coastal areas used for summer tourism and inland ones used for winter tourism (Ahas et al., 2007).

The destinations that less depend on climate and offer a stable or diversified product around the year, will experience lower seasonality (Martín et al., 2017). Destinations that depend less on climate conditions experience greater stability (Martín et al., 2017). Baum & Hagen (1999) indicate the labor market as a constraint to temporal extension of the main season.

2.6 Geographical distribution of seasonality tourism research

Seasonality is documented in the global tourism literature and several studies have been conducted internationally; however, the research is mainly concentrated in Europe (Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2020). For example, rural regions in the region of Andalusia, Spain, are examined in recent papers (Martín et al., 2020; Martín & Fernández, 2022). Spain is also present in other studies (Cisneros-Martínez & Fernández-Morales, 2015; Duro, 2016; Guzman-Parra et al., 2015; Martín et al., 2014; Sáez-Fernández et al., 2020; Turrion-Prats & Duro, 2017; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2014). Seasonality in the island of Cyprus is also recently studied (Berjozkina & Garanti, 2022; Garanti, 2022; Liasidou et al., 2022a).

Rantala et al. (2019) opt for the Arctic for their report and Stupariu & Morar (2018) examine the seasonality in the spa resorts in Romania. Þórhallsdóttir & Ólafsson (2017) choose lowland destinations within easy reach from the capital area of South and West Iceland and Fernández-Morales et al. (2016) collect data regarding the visits of international tourists in UK. Banki et al., (2016) examine micro tourism businesses in Nigeria, Ruggieri (2015) analyses data from four European islands which are in different climatic zones, Ridderstaat et al., (2014) estimate the effects of seasonal patterns of climate in Aruba and Pegg et al., (2012) study the impact of seasonality on Australian alpine tourism businesses. Chen & Pearce (2012) examine monthly arrivals in Asian destinations, Bigović (2011) quantifies seasonal variations in the number of tourist arrivals in Montenegro, Kastenholz & Lopes de Almeida (2008) make a survey in the rural tourist market in North Portugal and Garau-Vadell & de Borja-Solé (2008) study golf tourism and seasonality in Mallorca. Mitchell & Hall (2003) study the seasonality in New Zealand wine tourism, Koenig & Bischoff (2003) look at different types of domestic tourism demand in UK, Kennedy (1999) studies the seasonal distributions of arrivals in Ireland and Yacoumis (1980) examines the case of Sri Lanka.

2.7 Measurement

Seasonality is a measurable characteristic of tourism (Ćorluka & Matošević Radić, 2014) which requires the use of techniques in the category of time series analysis (De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017). Its measurement is important in order to determine its dimensions and estimate the seasonal demand (Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010) and covers both the simple scalar and the more complicated statistical techniques (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2010).

The regularity of seasonal fluctuation is one of the main characteristics of seasonality (Ferrante et al, 2018). The basic statistical analysis units that define seasonality are the tourists' arrivals, the overnight stays and the average stay (Butler, 2014; Stupariu & Morar, 2018). There are other physical or financial units like the length of stay or the tourist expenditure (Bigović, 2011) but the basic one is the number

of visitors (Ćorluka & Matošević Radić, 2014; Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010; Lundtorp, 2001). These units need to be measured daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly (Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010) in order to better understand seasonality (Lundtorp, 2001).

The main indicators are the seasonality ratio, the seasonality indicator, the Gini coefficient and the seasonality index (Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010); however, the widespread tourism literature recognizes the prevalence of the Gini coefficient (Rosselló & Sansó, 2017).

2.8 Policy strategies to address seasonality

Seasonality is a phenomenon that will never be completely eliminated (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). However, there are great many ways to smooth it. Hence, it is important firstly to understand it better and then undertake some initiatives to extend the season. Yet, a research gap on the detailed examination of the effects of policies and strategies is identified, with a lack of longitudinal studies (Cannas, 2012).

- *Understanding the phenomenon*

Since seasonality is a very important issue for tourism stakeholders (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2010), important research has been conducted on the topic of seasonality policy (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). Researchers have used different words when dealing with it, such as:
- to "*address*" the effects or problems of seasonality (Chung, 2009; Connell et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2008)
- to "*alleviate*" it (Witt, 1991; Yacoumis, 1980)
- to "*combat*" it (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Connell et al., 2015; Corluka et al., 2016; Halpern, 2012; Turrión-Prats & Duro; 2018)
- to "*tackle*" it (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Cannas, 2012; Chung, 2009; Connell et al., 2015; Croce & Wöber, 2010; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2010; Rosselló & Sansó, 2017; Turrión-Prats & Duro; 2018; Yacoumis, 1980)

- to "*lessen*" it (Boffa & Succurro (2012)
- to "*reduce*" it (Butler, 1998; Butler, 2001; Cisneros-Martínez & Fernández-Morales, 2015; De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017; Ferrante et al, 2018; Ghadban et al, 2019; Jurdana & Zmijanovic, 2014; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005)
- to "*manage*" it (Fernández-Morales et al., 2016; Hinch & Jackson, 2000; Spencer & Holecek, 2007)
- to "*mitigate*" it (Corluka et al., 2016; Chung, 2009; Jang, 2004; Spencer & Holecek, 2007; Vergori, 2017)
- to "*de-seasonalize*" (Boffa & Succurro, 2012; Cuccia & Rizzo, 2011)
- to "*smooth*" it (Figini & Vici, 2012)
- to "*counteract*" it (Cannas, 2012; Figini & Vici, 2012)
- to "*overcome*" it (Andriotis, 2002; Andriotis, 2005; Baum & Lundtorp, 2001; Cannas, 2012; Connell et al., 2015; Cuccia & Rizzo, 2011; Higham & Hinch, 2002; Vergori, 2012)
- to "*counter*" it (Andriotis, 2005; Vergori, 2012)
- to "*fight*" it (Garau-Vadell & de Borja-Solé, 2008)
- to "*modify*" it (Xie, 2020) and other phrases like
- "to *develop counter-seasonal strategies*" (Halpern, 2012).

For the needs of the current thesis, all terminologies are accepted and applicable; however, more emphasis will be given on the term "mitigation".

Seasonality is "a difficult phenomenon to overcome" (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001). Since only few destinations have managed to ensure a year-round tourism and in order to avoid "*wasting resources in fighting the inevitable*", it would be more reasonable to see how seasonality can be "adapted" or "mitigated" rather than eliminating or trying to "overcome" it (Butler, 2014). Rarely do destinations aim to entirely overcome it (Rantala et al., 2019). Indeed, given the climate conditions, overcoming seasonality is not a realistic target; the extension of tourist season into shoulder ones is a more common practice (Vergori, 2012; Vergori, 2017).

The most crucial step is to *understand* the phenomenon (Koc & Altinay, 2007), which is connected both with the destination's characteristics and the type of the

involved travelers (Sainaghi et al., 2019). To start, and before undertaking any actions to reduce seasonality, relevant research is requisite in order to examine the success possibility and even to accept seasonality as a fact instead of a problem (Butler, 1998). Besides, as a study in Turkey shows, there are different seasonality measurement methods which complement each other because none of them is better than the other; therefore, the destination managers should apply various methods when approaching the seasonality problem (Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010).

Seasonality causes capacity (hotels, restaurants, attractions) problems for the suppliers, this is why the latter try to expand the season (Lundtorp, 2001) but many managers/owners lack the proper knowledge or tools to try to deal with it (Pegg et al., 2012). But it is important to remember that one of seasonality's characteristics is that it is predictable and generally occurs at the same time every year in contrast with other tourism characteristics like natural disasters, epidemics or war (Butler, 2014). Thus, the forecast of seasonal tourism demand may lead to successful marketing strategies (Shen et al., 2009) through more effective and efficient plans (Goh & Law, 2002) in order to adjust to any negative consequences (Lee et al., 2008). Forecasting is also an important tool for tourism stakeholders such as airlines, hoteliers and tour operators (Kulendran & Wong, 2005) in order to help them realize what to expect (Getz & Nilsson, 2004). Through the identification of the tourist profiles in the high and non-high seasons, the proper tools will be established to reduce it (Xie, 2020).

Nonetheless, most efforts to reduce seasonality have failed because they have focused to some extent on the supply or destination side and not on the demand side of tourism (Butler, 1998). Seasonality confrontation may be based either on the demand or the supply side (Cuccia & Rizzo, 2011). Cuccia & Rizzo (2011) explain that policy instruments like the taxation or the regulation could be adopted for the demand side whereas tourism support through the destination qualities and the promotion of different kinds of tourism (cultural, religious etc.) during the shoulder or off-season could be followed for the supply side. The largest obstacle to reduce seasonality is the traditional summer school holidays (Butler, 2001; Cannas, 2012), a tradition that stems from the past, when children stopped school to provide their help during the agricultural harvest (Lim & McAleer, 2001). But even in case this impediment was removed, still

seasonal fluctuations in tourism would remain for several reasons (Butler, 2001). Butler (2001) explains that some people are used to travelling in specific times, others may find the off-season weather unattractive and even the host communities may be against the season lengthening at non-traditional periods.

- ***Mitigation Issues***

Karamustafa & Ulama (2010) assert that the application and success of some of the suggestions regarding the mitigation of seasonality depend on the factors:
- *availability of various tourism attractions*
- *governmental support to encourage domestic tourism*
- *skilled planners and policy makers*

The issue of tackling seasonality is a common target for destination marketing organizations, tourism companies and the public sector (Sainaghi et al., 2019) and more heed should be paid to the role of the public sector (Ferrante et al, 2018). Public and private initiative mainly gives emphasis to the "extension of the existing tourist season into shoulder periods or the creation of new seasons of tourism activity", (Andriotis, 2005:210).

A potential way to mitigate seasonality is the establishment of additional seasons that would allow more reliable tourism demand forecasts with respect to the supplying of public and private tourism facilities (Vergori, 2017). Moreover, combating seasonality effectively requires united support both from the means of transport and from the accommodation system (Butler, 2014).

"*Destination areas often attempt to reduce seasonality, particularly by attempting to stimulate greater activity in the shoulder seasons. They do this by reducing prices, attempting to attract visitors, such as senior citizens who have more flexible schedules, and by developing special events. Most of the effort so far has been placed on manipulating the supply side in an attempt to make destinations more attractive in off-peak periods*", (Wall & Mathieson, 2006:58). Other techniques include off-season discounts on airfares, hotels and package tours (Lim & McAleer, 2001). But even with these initiatives, it is not possible to eliminate seasonality completely (Andriotis, 2005; Wall & Mathieson, 2006) and, as a matter of fact, many attempts to reduce it, fail (Getz & Nilsson, 2004).

In order to fight seasonality, destination stakeholders may apply mitigation strategies through the establishment of complementary new tourism products, which supplement the traditional ones, like cycling tourism, senior tourism or rural tourism (Garau-Vadell & de Borja-Solé, 2008). But the most important strategy may be to try to live with seasonality in a sustainable manner; and to try to get a stable and loyal tourist, who will have specific characteristics, during the low season (Kastenholz & Lopes de Almeida, 2008).

- *Communities role*

"*The ability to adopt a strategy and to extend the season or to introduce a second season is largely dependent on the location and competitiveness of the destination, whereby remote and peripheral areas may encounter difficulties to develop all-season tourism product*", (Ćorluka & Matošević Radić, 2014). Moreover, Butler (2001) clearly states that policy makers and tourism developers should bear in mind that the support of destination area communities is requisite in their efforts to reduce seasonality. Figini & Vici (2012) place emphasis on the consideration of the local residents' attitude towards tourism; they underline that the local managers who include the residents' views into their tourism development programs are more likely to succeed.

On the other hand, local authorities do not seem to recognize their role in the elimination of seasonality, they mainly care for local development issues and do not undertake innovative strategies for the problem (Andriotis, 2002). Andriotis (2005) concludes that entrepreneurs in the island of Crete, for example, are rather busy with their day-to-day activities than considering the future and taking actions to reduce seasonality. Through the establishment of networks and cooperatives, the community members could develop relationships with some special tourism organizations in order to promote their unique characteristics and market their off-season packages (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2010).

Multi diversification strategies need to be applied by destinations in order to successfully fight seasonality (Garau-Vadell & de Borja-Solé, 2008). Seasonal markets present differences whose understanding may lead to the creation of more successful and sustainable destination strategies, which will target to "*spatially and/or temporally*

distinct offerings directed at distinct target segments" (Kastenholz & Lopes de Almeida, 2008:13). Emphasis should be given on those tourism enterprises that remain open through the year round instead of encouraging the closed enterprises to remain open all the year (Andriotis, 2005).

For economies which have experienced great volatility in the previous years because of the economic crisis, like the Greek one, and where the tourism sector positively contributes to the recover, alternative forms of tourism could be applied, like rural tourism or ecotourism in order to minimize seasonality issues (Giannakis & Bruggeman, 2017).

2.9 The case of Greece

Tourism is one of the main pillars of the economic growth of Greece, which is a country that faces intense seasonality problems, like most coastal areas of the Mediterranean (Krampokoukis et al., 2018; Medina, et al., 2022). For several decades, Greek tourism has been mainly characterized by its massiveness (mass tourism), concentrated on the utilization of sea and sun (Polyzos & Saratsis, 2013). This fact was rather a weakness of Greek tourism since it comprised an economic activity that could be provided during summer months, resulting thus in severe seasonality (Polyzos & Saratsis, 2013).

There is a plethora of studies on Greek tourism; yet, few researchers attempt to analyze the phenomenon of seasonality. The older ones are those of Drakatos (1987) who checks the numbers of arrivals of tourists, of Andriotis (2002) and Andriotis (2005) who investigates seasonality on the island of Crete. Recent studies are those of Tsiotas et al. (2020) who develop a principal component analysis to classify the seasonal patterns of tourism demand of the Greek prefectures into regional groups. The Research Institute for Tourism conducted a study to thoroughly analyze the problem and identify potential policies for the extension of the tourist season: emphasis is given on silver tourism and on alternative forms of tourism ("Seasonality of Greek Tourism - Ι.Τ.Ε.Π.", 2020). Similarly, Polyzos & Tsiotas (2012) claim that there is an untapped field of tourism development in the country through the establishment of alternative forms of tourism and the utilization of resources that are located outside the coastal areas.

2.10   Tourism Seasonality Analysis

In the current thesis and in order to delineate the most frequent seasonality mitigation policies where the academic research has focused on until now, a systematic literature review based on seasonality tourism is performed, listed in a chronological order, with the method of content analysis.

A systematic review process is applied with the aim of identifying, assessing and summarizing all the pertinent seasonality tourism studies in a transparent and reproducible manner (Tranfield et al., 2003) and content analysis, a broadly used qualitative research technique, is carried out in order to interpret meaning of the content of text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Content analysis is a research technique that clearly describes the objective, systematic and quantitative subject of communication, Berelson 's (1952) early definition emphasizes. Another attempt for its definition is presented by Downe-Wamboldt (1992) who articulates that through this research procedure valid conclusions, which stem from verbal, visual, or written data, are provided to explain and quantify particular phenomena and can be used for various purposes. It provides a substantial methodological structure for carrying out thorough, systematic and replicable literature reviews (Wilding et al., 2012).

In the present thesis, the four main steps of content analysis suggested by Wilding et al. (2012) are followed. Specifically:

i.   Material collection

The objective is to apply a variation of the systematic review that includes the evaluation based upon the results returned by the keywords: "seasonality tourism", "seasonal tourist" and "off-season tourism". No time boundaries were placed on the time of the article publication and a total of 123 articles were returned. The articles were gathered from academic bases including Emerald, Science Direct, Taylor & Francis and Google Scholar. Only papers printed in English-speaking books and journals were kept and thus 94 articles remained that were published between 1974 and 2020. The content analysis stopped in 2020 to allow the research to continue to the next

stage. It was not possible to download all the articles published in 2019 and 2020 because of the delayed online publishing.

ii.   Descriptive analysis

An analysis was implemented in order to verify if the various articles were suitable for the purposes of the research based on the aim of the research.

iii.   Category selection

Researchers design category schemes in order to create knowledge and to increase understanding of a specific phenomenon (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). The main categories in this thesis are the author/year, the methodology used, the discrimination between qualitative and quantitative type of analysis, and the conclusions/suggestions that each article provides.

iv.   Material evaluation

Each article has been analyzed according to the aforementioned main categories in order to provide a guidance for tourism researchers on seasonality.

2.10.1 Reliability and validity issues

Methodical accuracy checks of coding have been implemented during the process. As the process progresses, the familiarity with the data increases and interpretations may alter (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). The data structure obtained from the previous phases was revisited by the author and the supervisors to safeguard the reliability and validity of the proposed framework. Also, validity of content analysis is considered by getting back to the authentic texts in order to find out examples of categories or by asking the opinions of experts (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992); for the present thesis, validity was confirmed by analyzing the articles again in detail and it was determined that the studies were conducted within the context of mitigation of tourism seasonality and the themes were revealed by determining the concepts emphasized in the articles.

2.10.2 Findings

The bibliographical references on which the theoretical analysis is based are ranked in chronological order in Table 2.1, which provides an overview of the used sources and presents data about the distribution of seasonality policies or strategies that the studies contain.

Table 2.1

Summary Table of (94) Selective Key Studies in Seasonality Tourism

Author (Year)	Method	Type of Analysis	Conclusions/Suggestions
Martín et al (2020)	Measurement of various facets of seasonality with the use of a DP2 synthetic indicator, in the region of Andalusia, Spain	Quantitative	Seasonality in rural tourism should not be evaluated generally due to differences among rural destinations
Sáez-Fernández et al (2020)	Assessment of the radial efficiency of selected hotels in the Balearic Islands, Spain, through data envelopment analysis	Quantitative	The hotels that do not close down their operations are noticeably more efficient than those who do
Xie (2020)	Estimation of how economic factors affect tourism seasonality, with the use of Japanese and Chinese tourists in Norway destination	Quantitative	The mitigating effect of economic growth on tourism seasonality is parallel to the level of development. Tourists' responses to economic change in peak seasons differ from those in off-peak seasons

Duro & Turrión-Prats (2019)	Analysis of the temporal concentration of tourist demand on a worldwide level for the period 2008-2013	Quantitative	Mediterranean countries present the highest (and increasing) seasonality
Ghadban et al (2019)	Online questionnaires distributed to visitors of Lebanese ski resorts	Quantitative	Validation of the relationship between place attachment and annual visitations
Sainaghi et al (2019)	Analysis of daily data on a large sample of Milan hotels during Milan Expo 2015	Quantitative	The **events** have the ability to change seasonality
Wang et al (2019)	A quantitative approach based on the hedonic price model with the use of the online dataset of hotels in Sanya, China	Quantitative	Hotels with higher prices are less sensitive to seasonality. For mid and low-priced hotels, the online user rating plays an important role through the mitigation of negative seasonal effects
Ferrante et al (2018)	Analysis of the pattern of seasonal swing, as a preliminary step for the assessment of seasonal amplitude in overnight stays across European countries between 2005 and 2016	Quantitative	There is a strong connection between seasonal patterns and the spatial distribution throughout European countries
Gil-Alana & Huijbens (2018)	Analysis of tourism in Iceland with the use of fractional integration	Quantitative	Exogenous shocks that impact inbound tourism tend to disappear relatively fast

Stupariu & Morar (2018)	A statistical analysis of the basic indicators of seasonality in the spa resorts in Romania	Quantitative	There is slight difference between the spa resort and the national level seasonality in Romania
Turrión-Prats & Duro (2018)	An empirical implementation of three methodologies that measure and analyze seasonality for the period 2000-2014 in Spain	Quantitative	A better understanding of the economic factors of seasonality can be useful for destinations marketing
De Cantis & Ferrante (2017)	Literature Review	<u>Qualitative</u>	1. Off-season promotion (through pricing, tax and product-mix policies) 2. Shoulder or off-season promotion (through cultural initiatives, festivals, events and attracting specific segments like business tourists, seniors etc) 3. Reducing demand in peak season (through several taxes or transportation strategies)
Magno et al (2017)	Seasonality measurement through the transportation cost approach with data selected through 5 European countries	Quantitative	Proposition of a cost matrix based on the cyclical distance between time periods
Martín et al (2017)	Analysis of seasonality's intensity in Spanish rural destinations	Quantitative	Destinations with lower seasonality level do not match with

			those that welcome a larger number of visitors
Þórhallsdóttir & Ólafsson (2017)	Analysis in the number of tourists in lowland destinations in Iceland with Gini coefficient	Quantitative	Analyzing seasonality at destinations is an important tool for tourism planning
Rosselló & Sansó (2017)	The entropy and relative redundancy measures as alternative seasonality indicators in the Balearic Islands	Quantitative	The entropy measure is appropriate and captures seasonality almost in the same way as the Gini, and should be considered as an alternative to the Gini coefficient
Turrion-Prats & Duro (2017)	Analysis of monthly concentration of tourist demand in Catalonia, Spain for the 2000-2014 period	Quantitative	The cyclical situation of the economies should be considered before designing the policies to combat seasonality
Vergori (2017)	Analysis of monthly tourist overnight stays in Austria, Finland, Portugal and the Netherlands between 1990-2014	Quantitative	The stronger the seasonality is, the less reliable the forecasts are
Fernández-Morales et al., (2016)	Seasonality analysis in UK with the use of the decomposition of the Gini index combined with biplots	Quantitative	A sufficient disaggregation is essential in the design of counter seasonal strategies

Banki et al., (2016)	Semi-structured interviews with family members in micro tourism businesses in the host communities of Obudu Mountain Resort in Nigeria	Qualitative	A cost benefit analysis is required before deciding to stay open outside peak season. Those businesses that use family members will face limited effects of seasonality than those who use non-family staff or rent shops
Corluka et al., (2016)	Tourist season classification in coastal tourist destinations regarding hotel occupancy rates in Croatia	Quantitative	The researched classification of tourist season will help better understand the phenomenon of tourist seasonality
Duro (2016)	Analysis of the seasonal concentration of tourist activity for the period 1999-2012 in Spain	Quantitative	General conclusions should not be based on a single index
Cisneros-Martínez & Fernández-Morales (2015)	Tourist segment separation and application of the additive decomposition of the Gini index and the relative marginal effect (RME)	Quantitative	Cultural tourism contributes to the reduction of seasonality on the Andalusian coastline
Connell et al., (2015)	An empirical study in Scotland through questionnaires	Quantitative	**Events** are a strategy frequently used by visitor attractions, particularly those directed towards families and children. The periodicity of events has a key role in engaging visitor markets

			throughout different points in the off peak
Coshall et al., (2015).	Disaggregation of quarterly numbers of overnight stays by trip purpose, with the use of GC and AR	Quantitative	VFR tourism is less seasonal than vacation tourism; more effective marketing strategies of vacation tourism are required
Guzman-Parra et al., (2015)	Time-series analyses of seasonal variations affecting tourism in Spain	Quantitative	Rural tourism can provide stable regional growth and therefore sustained economic development
Ruggieri (2015)	Comparison of tourism flows in four European islands, Cyprus, Sicily, Madeira and Hiiumaa	Quantitative	The more intense the seasonality, the lower the level of sustainability of the tourism industry
Butler (2014)	Literature Review – Conference Paper	Qualitative	Extending the season Offering different attractions out of season Revamping the destination Making the destination unique and prestigious Adding a second main season Adding non-conventional tourist attractions
Ćorluka & Matošević Radić (2014)	Application of seasonality ratio (to identify monthly deviations from annual average) and of Lorenz curve	Quantitative	The use of tour agents who are able to organize arrangements in low season periods, Targeting specific

	(to identify seasonal concentration of tourist flows) in Adriatic Croatia		markets with diversified tourist offers, Price Diversification
Jurdana & Zmijanovic (2014)	Examination of the seasonal pattern of visitation of national parks of continental Croatia, Plitvice Lakes and Krka	Quantitative	It is required to develop suitable forms of tourism activities that alleviate the negative impact of seasonality on the protected areas
Martín et al., (2014)	Estimation of tourism seasonality with the use of Gini index in the region of Andalusia Spain according to destination category (coastal capitals, coastal areas, inland capitals, inland areas)	Quantitative	It is necessary to analyze the seasonality by distinguishing among the areas that make up the region of a tourism destination
Ridderstaat et al., (2014)	Analysis of seasonal patterns in Aruba, through panel data unit root testing, panel data regression and Euclidean distance calculation	Quantitative	Climate is an important pull and push factor affecting tourism demand
Vargas-Sánchez et al., (2014)	An explanatory model regarding the residents' attitude towards tourism development in the province Huelva, Andalusia, Spain	Quantitative	Residents express negative attitudes towards tourism during the high season

Gasmi (2013)	Presentation of different techniques of seasonality detection and of various methods of treatment of seasonality in Tunisia	Quantitative	It is the TRAMO-SEATS method the one that provides the best forecasting approach
Vilchez (2013)	Analysis of destination and seasonality valuation in hotel price with the use of quantile regression in the Mediterranean coast	Quantitative	The effect of seasonality is mainly constant along the hotel price distribution
Boffa & Succurro (2012)	Exploration of how online booking affects seasonality through testing on a sample of 18 European countries, between 1997-2007	Quantitative	There is positive relation between online booking and seasonality
Cannas (2012)	Literature review	Qualitative	Product and market diversification, **Events and festivals**
Chen & Pearce (2012)	Examination of monthly tourist arrivals at five key Asian destinations and four top Chinese tourist areas	Quantitative	Identification of six seasonality patterns
Figini & Vici (2012)	Investigation of the cultural offer of Rimini, in Italy, on a sample of 800 off season tourists	Quantitative	Cultural tourism can become a tool for smoothing seasonality in the intermediate season

Halpern (2012)	Investigation of the seasonal concentration of demand for tourism in Norway between 1999-2011 with the use of Gini coefficients	Quantitative	The decomposition technique used in this study could be used to identify and, then, to target markets that reduce seasonal concentration
Kulendran & Dwyer (2012)	Modelling and forecasting seasonal variation with the use of climate variables	Quantitative	The seasonal variation in holiday tourism demand depends on climate variables, whose effects vary by country
Pegg et al., (2012)	Semi-structure interviewing with hospitality managers of the alpine region of New South Wales, Australia	<u>Qualitative</u>	The issue of seasonality pressured the managers to make changes to their operations
Vergori (2012)	Analysis of tourist arrivals in the province of Lecce, southern Italy	Quantitative	Encouragement of new forms of tourism
Bigović (2011)	Investigation based on data concerning the number of tourist arrivals in Montenegro	Quantitative	Only one quantifying method of measuring is enough
Chan & Lim (2011)	Spectral analysis of the seasonality in New Zealand tourism demand	Quantitative	Analysis of disaggregated data rather than aggregated data alone

Cuccia & Rizzo (2011)	Examination of tourism seasonality in different destinations in Sicily, according to their cultural attractiveness, based on a regression analysis approach	Quantitative	Long-term planning of cultural supply and complementary initiatives between superstars and minor heritage for a more even distribution of demand
De Cantis et al., (2011)	Investigation of the accommodation sector in Sicily	Quantitative	It is mainly the institutional causes and not the natural ones, those that determine the tourism demand
Karamustafa & Ulama (2010)	Literature review	<u>Qualitative</u>	The appliance of different methods of seasonality measurements is suggested
Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff (2010)	An empirical quantitative research of the serviced accommodation industry in Wales	Quantitative	Recognition of the heterogeneity of businesses' perceptions when tackling seasonality
Chung (2009)	Literature review	<u>Qualitative</u>	Measuring seasonal fluctuations accurately, Promoting a pricing differentiation model, **Variation of the product mix such as organizing festivals and sport events**
Shen et al, (2009)	Econometric and time-series models in forecasting seasonal tourism demand by	Quantitative	The forecast accuracy can be improved by the pre-test of seasonal unit roots

	UK residents to seven destination countries		
Garau-Vadell & de Borja-Solé (2008)	Personal interviewing with golfers	<u>Qualitative</u>	Development of multi-product diversification strategies to fight seasonality
Kastenholz & Lopes de Almeida (2008)	A large-scale survey at tourists staying in rural areas in North Portugal	Quantitative	The distinction among seasonal market segments would assist in a more effective strategic planning and better services for each tourist group
Lee at al. (2008)	A technical report that focuses on Australia (literature review and semi-structured interviews)	<u>Qualitative</u>	Pricing to attract a target market Creation of attractions and special **events** Market diversification Facilitation by the state (government or tourism agencies)
Ahas et al. (2007)	Analysis of the seasonality of foreign tourists' space consumption in Estonia with the use of mobile positioning roaming datasets	Quantitative	There are different, even opposite, tourists' space consumption patterns due to seasonality in Estonia
Amelung et al. (2007)	Combination of scenarios climate change with the Tourism Climatic Index	Quantitative	The effects of the climate change will depend on the flexibility that institutions and tourists will develop during their reaction

Koc & Altinay (2007)	An analysis of seasonal variations in monthly per person tourist spending in Turkish inbound tourism	Quantitative	The seasonal pattern in per person tourist spending data is stochastic
Spencer & Holecek (2007)	A telephone survey of households in the Great Lakes region	Quantitative	Better understanding of the fall tourism market through identification of its specific segments
Andriotis (2005)	Questionnaires to tourism enterprises designed to investigate seasonality issue on the tourism development of Crete	Quantitative	The efforts to expand the season should firstly centered on the increase of the turnovers for the hotels that are already open in the off-season and on strategies that will regard the urban centers of Crete
Bender et al. (2005)	Tourism data from territories of Germany and Austria	Quantitative	Monitoring seasonality in tourism regions through a more specifically defined method
Higham (2005)	The Case of Rugby Union in New Zealand	<u>Qualitative</u>	Sports may function as tourism attractions and influence tourism demand
Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff (2005)	A review of tourism seasonality		1.Increase demand outside peak season (**events** and festivals the most common strategy) 2.Redistribute demand (seasonalized pricing)

			3.Reduce demand in the peak season (like price increase)
		Qualitative	4.Increase supply in the peak season (new facilities creation or external resources utilization)
			5.Reduce supply (tourism enterprise closure in the low season)
			6.Redistribute or restructure supply (product diversification to attract different consumer segments)
Kulendran & Wong, (2005)	Measurement of seasonal variation in holiday, VFR, business and total visits to describe the characteristics of seasonal variation in different types of visits	Quantitative	Seasonal variation in different types of visits is not similar but varies according to the type of visit
Getz & Nilsson (2004)	Interviews and questionnaires with family business owners of Bornholm, Denmark	Qualitative	Family businesses either cope with seasonality or combat it through several strategies (stay open all year, develop other tourist segments, develop export products, increase the product's appeal or add value to the product)
Jang (2004)	Quantitative approach – financial portfolio model	Quantitative	A mix of tourism segments that fall along the Frontier given a demand-risk target and provide quantifiable information

Koenig & Bischoff (2004)	Seasonal Variations in occupancy rates for the accommodation sector in Wales based on principal components and cluster analysis combination	Quantitative	Different marketing strategies for the various clusters identified, including web-presence, attraction of business tourists and out-of-season discounts for accommodation businesses
Jolliffe & Farnsworth (2003)	Examination of seasonal tourism employment in Canada	Qualitative	A model of different HR practices (embrace or challenge) to manage seasonality in tourism employment
Koenig & Bischoff (2003)	Examination of the seasonal pattern for different types of domestic tourism demand in Wales, compared with other UK regions, notably Scotland	Quantitative	A basis on which macro-level policies for extending the tourism season can be evaluated
Mitchell & Hall (2003)	A national study on wine tourism with the use of questionnaires to visitors of New Zealand's wine regions	Quantitative	Target to less seasonal in their preferences markets
Andriotis (2002)	A survey on local authorities in the island of Crete through interview questionnaires	Qualitative	Reconsideration of actions and more initiatives taken by the local authorities
Goh & Law (2002)	Tourist arrival series of ten countries to Hong Kong	Quantitative	Paper regarding seasonality forecasting

Higham & Hinch (2002)	A case study analysis of the professional development of Rugby Union in New Zealand	Qualitative	Changing the seasonal aspect of sports
Butler (2001)	Book	Qualitative	1. Try to lengthen the main season 2. Establish additional seasons 3. Diversify markets 4. Use differential pricing and tax incentives 5. Encourage the staggering of holidays 6. Encourage domestic tourism in off-seasons 7. **Provide off-season attractions such as festivals** and conferences
Lim & McAleer (2001)	Analysis of international tourist arrivals (from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore) to Australia	Quantitative	The estimation of seasonal variables is important for the marketing and promotional efforts of Australia
Hinch & Jackson (2000)	The adoption of a leisure constraints framework to examine tourism seasonality	Qualitative	Leisure constraints approaches as a tool to understand tourism seasonality
Ashworth & Thomas (1999)	Seasonality in tourism employment in UK with the use of econometrics	Quantitative	Change in the product mix such as development of festivals and of off-season conference trade, market diversification such as attracting retired people

Bar-On (1999)	Hotel occupancy for 16 countries and seasonal patterns of tourism by air to Israel	Quantitative	Among others: 1. Staggering of school and other vacations. 2. Attracting tourists from countries with suitable outbound seasonality 3. Building year-round attractions 4. **Low season events** 5. Higher prices in peak seasons, lower in off season 6. Attracting price-elastic overseas tourists 7. Short city-trips
Baum & Hagen (1999)	A field research in several locations in the British Isles, Scandinavia and Canada and an analysis of various local responses to the seasonality challenge	<u>Qualitative</u>	The main forms of initiatives in peripheral locations are: 1. **Events** and festivals 2. Market diversification 3. Product diversification 4. Structural and environmental response
Jeffrey & Barden (1999)	Principal components analysis of seasonality from the monthly occupancy time series of 279 English hotels	Quantitative	Coordinated marketing initiatives based on the understanding of the nature and extent of seasonal fluctuations in occupancy levels
Kennedy (1999)	Analysis of seasonality in Irish tourism	Quantitative	There is a lack of an effective governmental approach to tourism seasonality problem
Sørensen (1999)	A univariate econometric modelling of seasonality of hotel nights in Denmark by country and nationality	Quantitative	A paper regarding the seasonality of holiday accommodation in Denmark

Butler (1998)	Examination of a specific area of Scotland with the aim of exploring if there has been spatial variation of seasonality over time	Quantitative	The more remote the locations are, the greater seasonality they experience
Owens (1994)	An analysis of the all-season-resort in Canada	<u>Qualitative</u>	Diversification of the product, Exploiting marketing opportunities, Market Segmentation
Donatos & Zairis (1991)	Estimation of the seasonal tourism patterns in Greek islands on nights spent	Quantitative	Focus on high-income tourists, especially German and Scandinavian
Witt (1991)	A general tourism in Cyprus study with data taken by the Cyprus Tourism Organization	Quantitative	Development of specialized forms of tourism including conference tourism, special interest tourism and silver tourism
Ball (1988)	Investigation of Seasonal Workers in Hotel Industry in north and north-west Wales	Quantitative	Paper regarding the Tourism Labor Market
Phelps (1988)	Distinguish of tourist destinations and recreation resources in terms of seasonal partners using the case of Country Park in England and a resort on a Spanish island	<u>Qualitative</u>	Attention be given to the functions of resources in terms of what they provide

Drakatos (1987)	Data referring to the number of arrivals of tourists at Greek frontiers	Quantitative	A redistribution of the total number of tourists among the particular nationalities of tourists arriving in Greece
Soesilo & Mings (1987)	Examination of the seasonal behavior of tourism in sales tax collection data for Scottsdale, Arizona	Quantitative	Paper exploring how particular types of businesses respond to seasonality
Hartmann (1986)	Examination of Various Aspects of Seasonality in Recreational Travel and Tourism	Qualitative	An economically oriented policy stresses a more evenly-spread tourist seasonality
Sutcliffe & Sinclair (1980)	Tourist Arrivals in Spain	Quantitative	Development of forms of tourism such as cheap off-season holidays for the elder, **holidays based on cultural events,** tours of historic sites and sports and the promotion of business tourism through international conferences etc.
Yacoumis (1980)	The Case of Sri Lanka	Quantitative	Market and Product Diversification with the right balance of accommodation between the west and east coasts of Sri Lanka

Ritchie & Beliveau (1974)	Research on Quebec Winter Carnival	Quantitative	Development of **Hallmark Events**

1.1.1 Focus of the studies analyzed

It seems that seasonality has drawn considerable attention in tourism literature. The first remarkable point is that the majority of papers that refer to seasonality tourism are quantitative representing the 77,65% of all studies. This indicates that the results of seasonality tourism research may be generalized.

Table 2.2.

Geographical distribution of research areas chosen by seasonality tourism studies.

Region	Number of studies
Europe	54
Australia	7
America	6
Asia	6
Africa	3
Middle East	2

Another critical finding is that the research on seasonality mainly focuses on Europe destinations, although there are international publications (Table 2.2). Although seasonality is intense in Mediterranean countries, the number of publications on tourism seasonality in other regions except Spain and UK is limited. The remaining studies relate with literature review or research conducted in different countries.

It seems that there is a need for research at a pan-European and at an international level in order to compare the results and to advance knowledge of seasonality tourism.

Moving forward the content analysis of the various articles, Figure 2.2 displays the results of the representations of 100 words mentioned in the articles, as presented in Table 2.1. The words that most stand out are Seasonality, Tourism, Season-al, Destinations, Demand and other secondary level words like Spain, European, Gini that give an indication of the content of the articles.

Figure 2.2.
Representation of the 100 words most quoted in Table 2.1.
Word cloud: Result of the categorization analysis criteria

Table 2.3 recapitulates the strategies that literature has proposed to combat seasonality.

Table 2.3.
Strategies to address tourism seasonality

Strategy	Author
Off-season Development of Events and Festivals	Ashworth & Thomas, 1999; Baum & Hagen, 1999; Bar-On, 1999; Butler, 2001; Cannas, 2012; Chung, 2009; Connell et al., 2015; De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017; Higham; 2005; Higham & Hinch, 2002; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005; Lee at al.,

	2008; Ritchie & Beliveau, 1974; Sainaghi et al., 2019; Sutcliffe & Sinclair, 1980
Off-season Promotion and Special Offers	Bar-On, 1999; Butler, 2001; Chung, 2009; Ćorluka & Matošević Radić, 2014; De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017; Jang, 2004; Jeffrey & Barden, 1999; Koenig & Bischoff, 2004; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005; Lee at al., 2008
Business Tourism	Ashworth & Thomas, 1999; Butler, 2001; Koenig & Bischoff, 2004; Sutcliffe & Sinclair, 1980; Witt 1991
Cultural Tourism	Cisneros-Martínez & Fernández-Morales; 2015; Figini & Vici, 2012
Off-season Attractions	Bar-On, 1999; Butler, 2014; Higham; 2005
Other Market and Product Diversification	Ashworth & Thomas, 1999; Bar-On, 1999; Baum & Hagen, 1999; Butler, 2001; Chung, 2009; Ćorluka & Matošević Radić, 2014; Donatos & Zairis, 1991; Garau-Vadell & de Borja-Solé, 2008; Kastenholz & Lopes de Almeida, 2008; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005; Lee at al., 2008; Owens, 1994; Sutcliffe & Sinclair, 1980; Witt 1991; Yacoumis; 1980

Table 2.3 denotes that the development of events is a common strategy to mitigate seasonality. However, considerable gaps exist in literature, where seasonality is not investigated in depth and the characteristics of events are not examined. For example, Higham (2005) explores the three essential characteristics of a sport tourism attraction. Cannas (2012) claims that the efficacy of an event strategy is determined by the spatial characteristics of destinations. Higham & Hinch (2002) call for more research on the understanding of sport and tourism seasonality at local levels. Connell et al. (2015) explore how visitor attractions for events respond to seasonality. It seems that studies based on empirical methods are needed, in order to evaluate the outcomes of the proposed strategies (Corluka, 2019). Corluka (2019) also suggests more in-depth and longitudinal research that will link the proposed strategies with destination profile.

The next section deals with the development of events as a strategy to mitigate tourism seasonality and delves into sport events which will be the particular concern of this thesis.

2.11   Sport events as a strategy to mitigate seasonality in tourism

2.11.1 Events and seasonality

The strategic role of the events in seasonality mitigation has long been discussed. From hallmark events in the early study of Ritchie & Beliveau (1974) to special events (Connell et al., 2015), events and festivals seem to be the prevailing strategy to tackle seasonality (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Cannas, 2012). Indeed, the establishment of various attractions and events as a means to overcome seasonality is mentioned in several studies (like Connell et al., 2015; De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017; Getz, 2008; Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010; Rogale-Homika & Gunare, 2021) as a means to promote sustainable tourism development (Zhang et al., 2022). Some authors highlight the crucial role of event management in managing seasonality (Getz & Page, 2016a; Sainaghi et al., 2019) because events can create a demand during an off-season time (Saayman & Saayman, 2004).

Getz & Page, (2016a:19) add: *"The roles of events in tourism and development constitute the core propositions that created and delimit this sub-field. They are: (1) events attract tourists (to specific places, and to overcome seasonality); (2) events contribute to place marketing (including image formation and destination branding); (3) events animate attractions and places, which essentially means that anyone with a park or facility is almost automatically in the events business; and (4) events can act as catalysts for other forms of development or improved capacity to attract tourists through infrastructure gains and more effective marketing".* Vergori 's (2017) perspective for the events' role in seasonality mitigation is worthwhile to mention. Specifically, Vergori (2017) recognizes that the events cannot create an alternative season on their own, since they have a limited duration, but they can attract tourists during the off-season and enhance the perception of the destination as an attractive place. Events, like sport ones, may create new job positions and volunteerism and

mitigate seasonality (Jönsson & Lewis, 2014). Active sport event tourism can be used to offset seasonal variations (Gibson et al., 2012). Lundtorp (2001) maintains that events, along with other marketing activities, may influence the season. Vergori (2012) agrees and alleges that a combination of two or three initiatives may be used to counter seasonality in peripheral areas. Hallmark (such as Olympic Games) or small-scale (regional) events, mainly sporting ones, are increasing being organized around the world in order to combat seasonality (Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018). Andriotis (2005) insists that the extension of the existing tourist season into shoulder periods may be accomplished through the product mix change, mostly through the organization of events and festivals. Connell et al. (2015:285) suggested: "*As Getz argues, the strategic development of events and festivals at a destination level has an important role to play in attracting visitors, contributing to place marketing and expanding the economic impact of tourism. Within this positive frame, events are widely positioned as a strategic tool to assist in combating seasonality*".

A strategic event approach is needed though, according to the literature. The event stakeholders, who constitute a diversified and fragmented group (Wäsche et al., 2013), should strategically and collaboratively organize special events in order to take the maximum of them (Olberding & Olberding, 2014; Sparvero & Chalip, 2007). Strategic planning is necessary both before and after the event in order to establish the host city as a tourism destination (Xing & Chalip, 2006). As Pereira et al. (2015) argue in their nautical small-scale events study, it is of paramount importance to apply a strategic approach to leverage a portfolio of events in order to take the highest benefit of the events. In order to avoid problems, a smooth event strategy should be established with reference to the wider destination tourism environment (Baum & Hagen, 1999). Getz (2003) alleges that the precondition for an event to sell, is to be qualitative, with a right price, attractive to specific target segments and integrated with other tourism services; he also adds that the events should be designed to meet the needs of travelers apart from the competitors' needs and the local community preferences. For example, through a suitable blueprinting design system, their needs would be better understood and more efficient services provided (Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2016; Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2017). Project management and relevant organizational skills are required

from the part of the organizers (Fotiadis, 2020). Attention should be paid to the marketing process and the thorough examination of every stage of the planning process (Beede, 2020; Yuruk-Kayapinar, 2020). Fotiadis (2020) and Mombeuil (2020) are in line that the SMART principle be abided by sport event managers; that means that specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound targets be followed. In addition, small scale events depend on their success to attract sponsors (Vassiliadis et al., 2020).

When attempting to mitigate seasonality through events, the scale of the event must be taken into account in order to avoid several issues that may emerge (Jönsson & Lewis, 2014). As regards special events, they may provide a distinct experience opportunity for visitors, engender economic benefits and expand the tourism season for the host communities (Huang et al., 2010). Small-scale sporting events seem to facilitate repeat visitation and be able to smooth seasonal peaks (Lamont & Dowell, 2008). Therefore, to mitigate seasonality, it is important to arrange events, mainly sport ones (Chen & Pearce, 2012). Furthermore, attention must be paid to the satisfaction of the event volunteers through the coverage of the needs (mainly of the most suitable and needed volunteers) and the building of long-term relationships with them (Bang & Ross, 2009).

2.11.2 Categories of Events

Throughout history, events have been well documented; from the Bible (where people were gathering together to participate in events) to the Ancient Olympic Games with many athletic competitions (Olberding, 2016). Events have been continuously growing and being expanded globally but there have been changes that regard their frequency, theme and location (Kwiatkowski & Oklevik, 2017; Saayman & Saayman, 2004). So nowadays, events of every shape and size are organized; from business to community events and from cultural to sporting ones (Jones, 2014). Their concept includes a diversity of meetings, sports, social meets and shows (Damm, 2011; Vassiliadis, 2020). The events study is a rather recent phenomenon (Draper et al., 2018) but despite the frequent reports and studies, there are no statistics on the number of the events (Getz &

Page, 2016b). There is also an uncertainty of concept categorizations and varieties of events (Vassiliadis & Fotiadis, 2020).

In Figure 2.3, a typology of the main categories of planned events (the academic field that event studies deal with) is presented, based on Getz (2008). Getz (2008) explains that planned events, are all created for a reason; some of them are organized for public celebration, others for business, fun or socializing.
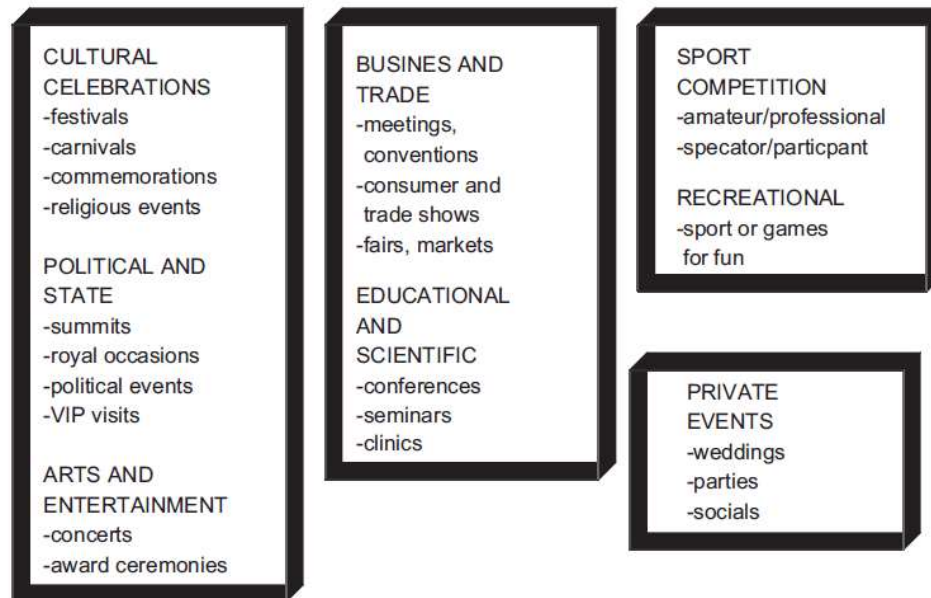
Figure 2.3.
Typology of planned events
Source: Getz, 2008

Fotiadis (2020) classifies them by type as following:

- *corporate events*

- *cause-related and fundraising events*

- *exhibitions, expositions and fairs*

- *entertainment and leisure events*

- *government and civic events*

- *marketing events*

- *meeting and convention events*

- *social/life – cycle events*

- *sports events*

Events may contribute to the creation or change of the image of a region or a country and even build destination loyalty, through the publicity that the destination may gain and thanks to the experiences the events provide (Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018). They are instruments of public policy (Getz, 2012) and seem to have progressively drawn the attention of tourist destinations (Bazzanella et al, 2019). Getz (2008:403) declares that "*events are an important motivator of tourism, and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations*". But they should be regarded as tools in the general marketing strategy, instead of "interventions" (Taks et al., 2014). Destinations should try to create events for specific target markets or redesign the marketing mix of the existing events, in order to acquire a competitive advantage (Getz, 2008).

Events are divided in several categories. Jago & Shaw (1998) have proposed a nomological structure for them. The relationship among the various categories of the events is represented on Figure 2.4. According to the suggestion of Jago & Shaw (1998), special events include minor, festival and major events. Special events, like sporting, cultural, political, religious or business, provide favorable chances for memorable experiences for the attendees and for an extra income for governments through the increased tourism activities (Hede & Kellett, 2011). Sport events, specifically, are a large but unquantified part of special events (Getz, 1997).
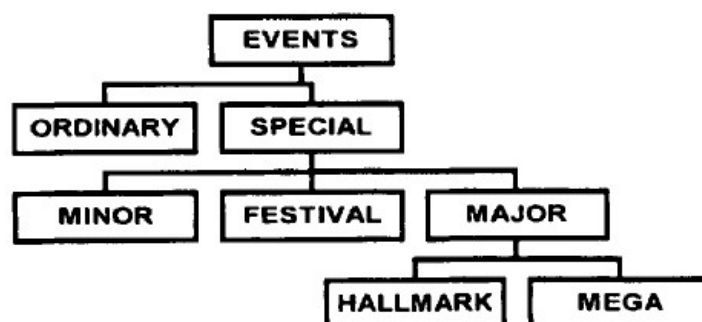
Figure 2.4.
Event framework
Source: Jago & Shaw, 1998

2.11.3 Small-Scale Events

Most events globally are small scale and local (Damm, 2011) but the literature has mainly focused on hallmark or mega events at the expense of smaller ones, despite the latter 's recognized central role in the viability of host communities (Hallmann et al., 2010; Priporas et al., 2018; Ritchie, 2004; Wicker et al., 2012; Yuruk-Kayapinar, 2020). Gibson et al. (2012) inform that small-scale events are minor events with more competitors than spectators, they are organized every year and incur less economic activity than large-scale ones, attracting little national media interest. In small-scale events, the local community is involved through the organization of volunteerism activities (Della Corte et al., 2020) and despite they have a lower national impact and less publicity compared to mega events, they have the potential to attract tourists (Wafi et al., 2020). If repeated every year, they may spawn more long-term effects, fairly distributed, compared with large events (Aureli & Graziano, 2020).

Yet, there is tourism development potential in small-scale events; people may visit a city that in other case they would probably not visit (Veltri et al., 2009). Also, if the active sport tourists had been positively impressed by the host community, they are likely to re-visit it in future (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010). Small-scale events are essential for the local economies as they attract visitors and money to a region for the reasons of participation (Gibson et al., 2012; Priporas et al., 2018). Through small-scale events, destinations may improve their image; they seem important for local societies (Fotiadis et al., 2016b; Priporas et al., 2018; Vassiliadis & Fotiadis, 2020).

The characteristics of small special events are the following (Jago & Shaw, 1998:28-29):

1. *Attract tourists or tourism development*
2. *Being of a limited duration*
3. *Being a one-off or infrequent occurrence*
4. *Raising the awareness, image, or profile of a region*
5. *Offering a social experience*
6. *Being out of the ordinary*
7. *Having a theme*
8. *Involving a celebration*

2.11.4 Sustainability of small-scale events

All forms of tourism development challenge and are challenged by the concepts of sustainability (Hinch et al., 2016; Moyle et al., 2018). The analysis of sustainability in tourism is important given that not all its impacts are positive (Jiménez-García et al., 2020). Many local communities promote sport, tourism and leisure in order to fully exploit their facilities and benefit their economy (Walo et al., 1996). Also, governments are morally obliged to endeavor to ensure sustainability in any activity they develop (Fredline, 2005).

Sustainable development has been a continuing concern for tourism and sport academics (Hinch et al., 2016). Everyone should regard the sustainability objectives as important; after the relevant introductory Brundtland report (Brundtland et al., 1987), Elkington (1998) coined the term triple bottom line and clearly placed this concept on the global agenda (Alhaddi, 2015; Fredline, 2005; Henriques & Richardson, 2013; O'Brien, 2007). The triple bottom line approach in the context of sustainability is often discussed in the extant literature (Taks, 2013). It goes beyond the economic benefits and includes the social and environmental outcomes along with their durability (O'Brien & Chalip, 2007). The integration of economic, social and environmental pillars is expressed through the aforementioned triple bottom line (Alhaddi, 2015). These three pillars are inextricably connected (Jones, 2014). Although some scholars call for a broader approach of sustainability, including issues like politics and technology (Cohen et al., 2014), it is the traditional triple bottom line that is dominant, with emphasis being given on economic studies (Hinch et al., 2016).

Literature widely acknowledges that small sport events like local marathons can potentially generate a sustainable impact (Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2019; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2010; Wafi et al., 2020) and may provoke more favorable outcomes for the host community than large events (Agha & Taks, 2015; Baade et al. 2011; Gibson et al., 2003; Gibson et al., 2012; Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2019; Hasana & Swain, 2022; Koo et al., 2014; Lamont & Dowell, 2008; Matheson, 2006; Ziakas & Costa, 2011). Large or hallmark events may generate negative impacts that are ignored (Hiller, 1998) and incur high indirect or hidden costs (like indirect subsidies for

infrastructure) (Hall, 1992). Agha & Taks (2015) underline that if an event exceeds the capacity of a city, the costs will diminish the economic impact. On the other hand, small special events operate within the existing infrastructure of a local economy (Daniels & Norman, 2003; Gibson et al., 2012; Higham, 1999; Lamont & Dowell, 2008; Walo et al., 1996). Walo et al. (1996:104) add that small local events create a tourist activity that can be settled from the existing resources and note that: "*through supporting local industries and encouraging participation within community sporting and volunteer groups, a local special event can generate value to the hosts, not just the visitors or the tourism industry. This enhancement of the host population's way of life, economy, and environment is possibly the most significant difference between local special events and large-scale events held in capital cities*".

Several other studies emphasize the sustainability of small-scale events. A small-scale sport event may not bring substantial economic benefits but it will not have the same level of social disruption and environmental detrimental effects in comparison with a large one (Fredline, 2005). The study of Gibson et al. (2012) on six events suggests that a small-scale sports event portfolio compatible with the infrastructure of a community may operate as a viable form of sustainable tourism development. Tzetzis et al. (2014) accentuate that such events can be organized and managed easier than large ones. Besides, large sporting infrastructure involves the risk of being deserted in future, therefore some regions turn to the organization of smaller events which do not require expensive facilities (Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018).

It is necessary that event organizers adopt sustainable practices that contribute to a socioeconomic and environmental balance (Vassiliadis, 2020).

- ▪ Economic Impacts

The economic impacts of smaller events are usually positive (Hasana & Swain, 2022; Higham, 1999) with benefits outweighing the costs (Gibson et al., 2012). Employment, income, output, investment increases (Walo et al., 1996), little to no burden on public funds (Daniels & Norman, 2003), more manageable logistics (Shonk et al., 2012) and relevant economic contributions (Deery et al., 2004; Mackellar, 2015) are mentioned. These contributions stem from the expenditures of the event participants, that is from

active and passive sport tourists alike (Gibson et al., 2012) who will spend money on food services, accommodation and shopping activities (Gibson et al., 2003; Pereira et al., 2015).

- <u>Socio-cultural Impacts</u>

Events offer more than economic benefits; the social value that they can create (like energy, enthusiasm and communitas for hosts and attendees) needs further attention since it may enrich the social lives of the communities (Chalip, 2006). Special events, like a marathon, seem to positively affect the social assets of a destination, like enhancement of social networks and interactions, local pride and support of social causes (Olberding & Olberding, 2014). Community well-being, sense of pride (Deery et al., 2004; Hasana & Swain, 2022), tighter social networks, high opportunity for personal growth (Taks et al., 2015), an active lifestyle (Veltri et al., 2009), formulation of durable networks and reciprocal relationships and improvement of quality of community life (Taks, 2013) are indicated in the literature. Co-branding encouragement with the tourism services in the region that the small-scale event is organized is also referred (Hallmann et al., 2010).

Other tangible (better redistribution of public funding) and intangible (sense of community belonging) consequences (Djaballah et al., 2015) are mentioned. Indeed, the reports on community belonging and development are common in literature. For example, Taks et al. (2015) refer to the sense of community development (for example, through volunteering) for local residents. Walo et al. (1996) discuss about the growth in community spirit and cooperation and the cost-free services of the volunteers, which all add value to the community. Kerwin et al. (2015) refer to the social bonding opportunities among local volunteers which create a sense of community. Della Corte et al. (2020) highlight the impact of small-scale events on the social cohesion and identity of the community and their role in the strengthening of sense of community and tradition. Gkarane (2020) refers to the sense of fulfilment and community that the volunteers of small-scale events experience.

Such events have the power to motivate spectators to be more active in sport

(Ramchandani et al., 2015). They also have the potential to inspire participation through the opportunities they provide for the athletes to interact with the locals (Taks et al., 2014). Locals may benefit because of their involvement either as participants or as spectators (Higham, 1999).

The problems that the literature refers may include crime, prostitution, violence, vandalism and moral values change (Jönsson & Lewis, 2014).

- ▪ Environmental Impacts

The environmental aspects of sustainability are mainly related to the preservation of environmental resources (Sáez-Fernández et al., 2020). Small-scale events present less crowding and infrastructural congestion compared with large events and seem to have a lower carbon footprint in the community (Gibson et al., 2012).

2.12. Sport Tourism and small-scale sport events

2.12.1 Sport tourism

Sport and tourism are in a complicated relationship, both exerting significant influence on the globe (Bason, 2022; Bjeljac et al., 2017). The linkage between them has greatly increased over time (Lamont & Dowell, 2008) and they both involve the travel element (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2010; Weed, 2005). All through history, sport has been a great stimulus for travel and tourism (Hudson, 2003). Sport and tourism are connected in terms of practice; namely, tourists take part in sports during their travels and spectators and athletes travel for new opportunities as regards their sporting passions (Higham, 2018). Sport is considered as the largest social phenomenon in the world, while tourism will probably become the world's largest industry, so the term "*sport tourism*" has been created to better understand the use of sport as a touristic activity (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2003). In sport tourism, it is either sport or tourism the most important activity or reason to travel (Ritchie & Adair, 2004). Actually, sport tourism is an important sector of the

tourism industry (Bull & Weed, 1999; González-García et al., 2022) and one of its rapidly growing market segments having significant economic, social and environmental impact on destinations (Hritz & Ross, 2010; Tzetzis et al., 2014, Vegara-Ferri et al., 2020).

In recent years, sport tourism has experienced a remarkable growth (Pischedda et al., 2020) and has attracted the special attention of the tourism field (Gibson, 2003; Gibson, 2004; Gibson et al., 2003; Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2019; Melo et al., 2021b). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was one of the fastest growing tourism sectors with significant impacts on the host community (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021). Researchers, governments and non-governmental organizations have been dealing with it nationally and globally (Ritchie & Adair, 2004). In general, the repercussions of sport tourism in a number of countries are positive compared with other commercial investments in terms of community pride and economic and social renaissance of the area (Weed & Bull, 2012). It has been recognized as an important strategy in the revival of tourism destinations (Hinch et al., 2016) and a fertile ground towards economic prosperity (Seraphin & Korstanje, 2020).

Sport tourism has significantly developed and is a typical sample of contemporary trends in tourism development (Higham, 2018). However, travelling for watching or participating in sports is not something new; throughout history, from ancient Greeks back in 900 BC who moved from place to place in order to join or watch the Ancient Greek Games to the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, travelling for sport is noticeable (Gibson, 1998). In their chapter for the early association between sport and tourism, Weed & Bull (2012) confirm that the Olympic Games which date from 776 BC are the first documented example of sport tourism and plenty spectators travelled not only to provide support for the athletes but also for their city's status.

Weed & Bull (2012) add that sport tourism has evolved during the years and has been influenced by many factors like the democratization, the fact that sport and tourism have become essential aspects of people's lives and the development of mega sports tourism events, factors that significantly impact commercialization and globalization. Indeed, in recent decades, globalization and democratization along with several technological advances, have notably influenced sport tourism development (Higham, 2018). Currently, sport tourism reflects needs and lifestyles and has been evolved into a mega-trend, constantly evolving (Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018).

2.12.2 Sport events

The relationship between sport and tourism has been increasing for various reasons, one of which is the variety of sport events through the year round, that facilitate both the spectators and the participants (Gammon & Robinson, 2003). Events are a substantial element of sport tourism, and possibly the most important in reference to tourist numbers and economic impact (Getz, 2003). Sport tourism is sport event tourism; it gives emphasis on competitive sports like football and athletics not on recreational activities like for example scuba diving (Deery et al., 2004). Sport event tourism is internationally recognized as a market of considerable importance and desire (Getz, 2003) and *a globally competitive form of special interest tourism*", (Getz, 1997; 61). It is beyond the operation of large events; it regards specific sport and tourism related services and experiences for the consumer (Gammon & Robinson, 2003). Besides, sport events are considered as an important factor of sustainable development (Hugaerts et al., 2021).

Sport events are included as a significant type of sport tourism in tourism literature (Weed & Bull, 2012), they can vary in size and may have a certain meaning in the mind of sport tourists (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2010). Fotiadis (2020:4) describes them as: "*the types of competitive contests or recreational activities that involve physical efforts and skills and are also governed by a set of rules*". Fotiadis (2020) states further that they are regularly added in the agenda of tourists. Sport events are classified in five typologies (Table 2.4); the categories from A to D have the common phrasing "major", implying the major events or their major implications while the E category considers the minor events with local repercussions (Duglio & Beltramo, 2017). In fact, it was Wilson (2006) that developed this classification and added the category E, through a relevant description for small-scale events.

Small-scale event sport tourism "*includes minor events where competitors may outnumber the spectators, they are often held annually, with little national media interest and limited economic activity compared to large-scale events*", (Gibson et al., 2012:162) and for the current thesis, we accept this definition. Small-scale sport events are a growing category of sport events (McKercher, 2016).

Table 2.4.
Typology of sport events
Source: Duglio & Beltramo, 2017.

Type A	Irregular, one-off, major international spectators events generating significant economic activity and media interest (e.g., Olympics, Football World Cup, European Football Championship)
Type B	Major spectator events, generating significant economic activity, media interest and part of an annual domestic cycle of sports events (e.g., FA Cup Final, Six Nations Rugby Union Internationals, Test Match Cricket, Open Golf, Wimbledon)
Type C	Irregular, one-off, major international spectator/competitor events generation limited economic activity (e.g., European Junior Boxing Championships, European Junior Swimming Championships, World Badminton Championships, IAAF Grand Prix)
Type D	Major competitor events generating limited economic activity and part of an annual cycle of sport events (e.g., National Championships in most sports)
Type E	Minor competitor/spectator events, generating very limited economic activity, no media interest and part of an annual domestic cycle of sports events (e.g., Local and regional sport events in most sports.)

Sport events are attractive to everyone; they are events for every spectator irrespective of gender, age or physical ability (Getz, 2003). They fulfill the need to experience strong emotions (for sport tourists) and to build a sense of community (for hosts) (Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018). Sport events may have accompanying character, being part of an entertainment or ethnographic tourism event (Bjeljac et al., 2017) and their impact on the local society of a destination is multidimensional (Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022).

The organization of sport events is a way to bring visitors to a destination that otherwise they would probably not visit (Daniels & Norman, 2003). Many authorities have applied small-scale sport tourism event development as a diversification strategy against global pressures like industrialization and urbanization (Lamont & Dowell, 2008). Although the literature agrees on the positive boost of the local sport tourism events in the host community, there is not enough research on the type of the event that would benefit the community and help tourism managers decide (Daniels & Norman, 2003). Higham (1999:89) presumes that it is probably essential to understand deeply the tourism potential of sporting events and emphasizes that: "*from the perspective of local/provincial governments, it is important to recognize the need to attract or develop sporting events that complement the scale, infrastructure and resourcing capacities of the host city*". Through the consideration of three issues: a) the age group represented at the event, b) the availability and accessibility of complementary attractions, and c) the distance travelled and length of stay of sport tourists, Daniels & Norman (2003) suggest that a multi-sport event approach be used by event organizers in order to get the maximum potential from them for the host destinations.

Indeed, the host city may gain several benefits from sport events; its visitors will spend money for accommodation, food sightseeing while the media coverage will make it recognizable as a host destination (Xing & Chalip, 2006). Sport events are tourist attractions (Hallmann et al., 2010) and have been identified as having a positive effect on the marketing of destinations (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). They are one of the best ways of a differentiation of a location from competitive ones (Koo et al., 2014) and extend tourism seasonality (Pischedda et al., 2020). Through his study on swimming events in UK, Wilson (2006) characterizes sports events as "catalysts" for economic expansion, which may engender substantial gain for host communities. Besides, sport events may have a positive effect on the local economy and on the quality of life of the local residents alike (Fotiadis et al., 2016a). They ameliorate the position of a region in the market, increase the total number of its visitors and reduce seasonality (Chalip & McGuirty, 2004). Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa (2019) supplement that through sport events the destination brand awareness and the economy may be developed. Sport events play a principal role in place marketing; tourists' regions are thus highly promoted among fans and athletes (Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018). They increase the sense that the host destination is an active locale (Xing & Chalip, 2006) and may be used to expand tourism and offer job opportunities (Djaballah et al., 2015). "*Sport events and the tourism they generate make up a core component of the destination marketing mix*", (O'Brien & Chalip, 2007:318). Specific types of sport events may engender some special favorable circumstances for smaller, geographically isolated, cities (Taks, 2013). Rural areas or small towns can rely on sport events for ensuring some tourism benefits (Getz, 2003). Destinations try to create sport events where athletes will be motivated not only to participate but also to use local services and facilities (Fotiadis et al., 2016b). Moreover, the establishment of sport events like triathlons or running ones, may engender positive results to several stakeholders, such as sponsors or business (Mackellar, 2015).

"*Sport tourism development takes the form of sport events, active participation or sport heritage activities*", (Moyle et al., 2018:1). The types of behaviors associated with sport tourism are three:

1. Active Sport Tourist (actively taking part),
2. Event Sport Tourist (spectating) and

3. Nostalgia Sport Tourist (visit or pay homage) (Gibson, 1998; Gibson et al., 2018; Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018; Ritchie, 2004), which means that three main behaviors, participating, watching and visiting are included (Deery et al., 2004). The active sport tourists travel to participate in a competition, the spectators have the characteristic of "fan" and the nostalgia-based sport tourists travel to see famous sport places for events, museums or personalities (Duglio & Beltramo, 2017). Sport tourism involves travel to take part either in a passive or in an active sport holiday; sport events and museums are included in the passive holiday and cycling or golf are examples for the active holiday (Ritchie & Adair, 2004).

As regards seasonality, and since there is riskiness of climate change related to sport and tourism, it seems that the way sports moderate or may even change seasonal patterns of visitation is more crucial than ever (Higham, 2018).

2.13 Small-Scale Running Events

Almost every tourism region has included sports related experiences, as a result of the global requirement for various types of sport tourism (Wäsche & Woll, 2013). "*Events related to the heritage of the sport of a given region and other smaller-scale sporting events, including mass-sports and recreation events (e.g., marathon running) provide an alternative to homogenized, commercial, and very expensive sporting events in the world*", (Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018:15). Sport events like running races may be considered as a critical tool for the development of local communities (Goulas, 2020) given the long-term benefits they entail (McKay et al., 2019).

Mass sporting events encompass, among others, marathons, half-marathons, bicycle rallies, walking rallies and triathlons (Davis, 2005; Hallmann & Wicker, 2012), are rather consumer-driven than spectator-driven (Wicker et al., 2012) and seem to be important in sports tourism development (Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018). Thus, local authorities should encourage the organization of such events (McKay et al., 2019). During the last decade, marathons and other running-related activities have increased to a large extent (Koo et al., 2014; Ridinger et al., 2012; Shipway & Jones, 2007; Wicker et al., 2012) as one of form of physical and leisure activity with an immense

growth during the previous years (Ridinger et al., 2012). Running tourism is considered as one of the fastest growing sectors within the sport tourism industry worldwide (Rheenen et al., 2021b) contributing to local sustainable development (Melo et al., 2021a). Running events are categorized in mountainous routes (mountain), in non-mountainous routes (road) and multiple sports (multi-sports) (Vassiliadis, 2020).

The literature on running events gives emphasis on mega events (Larsen & Bærenholdt, 2019). Or, it mainly concentrates on athletes themselves; for example, Hallmann & Wicker (2012) search for consumer profiles that are based on runners' behaviors at marathon races and for the factors that determine their decision to revisit the race. Nowak & Chalimoniuk-Nowak (2015) evaluated the extent of participation of Polish athletes in street runs. Rheenen et al., (2021a) propose a comparative method of analyzing small-scale sport tourism events to evaluate the impacts of half-marathons on the local community. Other studies investigate the psychological characteristics of the athletes, like identity (Griffin, 2010), motivation (Funk et al., 2011) and involvement (McGehee et al., 2003; Ridinger et al., 2012), the consumer expenditure and intention to revisit (Wicker et al., 2012) or the athletes' preferences with reference to the event product attributes (Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2019; Fotiadis et al., 2016a) and even the sex and age differences in half marathon runners (Navalta et al., 2018).

Events like marathons are known as "good events" and thanks to them some host communities have made a reputation as "good locations" for tourism (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010). Their contribution to the sustainable development of tourist regions is mentioned (Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018). Running events are non-elite sporting competitions (Hallmann et al., 2010). Spectators may be motivated to watch a running event in order to support a participant, like a spouse or a family member, but participants often outnumber the spectators (Kruger & Saayman, 2012). They are usually annual events which entail a stable revenue source for the host region (Wicker et al., 2012); in fact, they represent a recognized tourism field and a strategy for the economic development of a region (Nowak & Chalimoniuk-Nowak, 2015; Perrin-Malterre, 2018). Provided they are efficiently and effectively organized, marathons may induce positive economic outcomes (Papanikos, 2015).

Running movement in Greece has significantly grown in the last 30 years and hundreds of running events were organized annually in the country until 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic (Maditinos et al., 2021).

Given the number and significance of running events, the relative dearth of studies assessing the implications of small-scale running events on seasonality mitigation is surprising.

Conclusion

In the current chapter, the basic concepts of tourism seasonality, sustainability and small-scale sport events have been presented and thoroughly analyzed through the systematic literature review. Emphasis was placed on small-scale running events. The results that have arisen will be used in the next chapters. An important element that has emerged is the fact that tourism seasonality is a phenomenon that has been studied for years and several policy strategies have been suggested.

On the other hand, the absence of a reliable theoretical framework-model that would describe the elements and the factors which may influence tourism seasonality mitigation within the successful organization of a small-scale event is a main disadvantage but also it is a challenge.

In the next chapter, the second phase of the preliminary data gathering follows, which includes the interviewing process.

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PRELIMINARY DATA GATHERING

Interviewing

This chapter is the second part of the preliminary data gathering and it presents the collection and the analysis of the primary data. Specifically, perceptions of local professionals and running event organizers from all around Greece and some destinations of Cyprus are explored; knowledge emerges as regards seasonality mitigation issues relating to small-scale events (road races). Emphasis is given on the output of synergy (working together) with respect to sustainability in tourism. This chapter focuses on the introduction of the factors that will be the component parts of the thesis model which will be presented and tested in the next chapters.

Figure 3.1:
The research process and the step that Chapter 3 corresponds to
Source: Adapted from Sekaran & Bougie (2016)
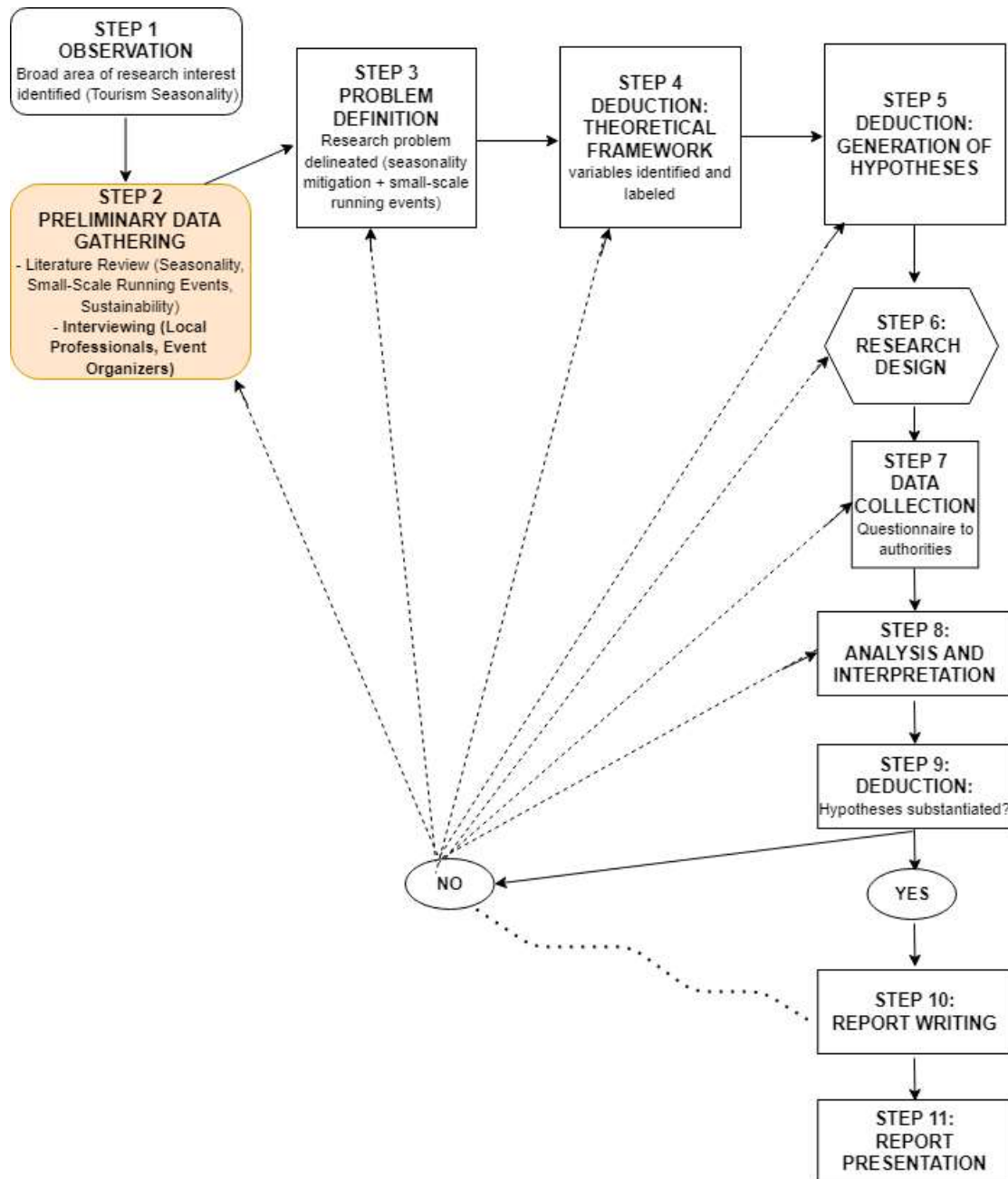
3. Synergy in Tourism and Events.

Tourism has been described as a multidisciplinary field of research (Papathanassis & Beckmann, 2011) and, according to Faulkner & Goeldner (1998) it includes three broad aspects, which are the tourist or demand side, the tourism industry or supply side and the social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism along with their implications (Larsen & Bærenholdt, 2019).

Bramwell & Lane (2000) argue that tourism is an assembly process, where there is limited entire control for the tourism product by one company or an organization. The effective management of all components of the tourist system is important in order to succeed under a competitive tourism environment (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Jesus & Franco, 2016). With many marketing activities to be considered, it is important to develop partnerships between tourism stakeholders, in the public and private sector (Cox & Wray, 2011). So, it is essential to include many and various stakeholders in tourism planning and management (Bramwell & Lane, 2000) on the grounds that the collaborations among these stakeholders include the latter's different knowledge and expertise that may lead to competitive advantages (Kotler et al. 1993) and to sustainable development for the destinations (Beritelli, 2011) through the creation of a qualitative product and recognizable destination image (Krce Miočić et al., 2016). Indeed, the economic, social and environmental impact of tourism on communities is deep (Ruhanen, 2009); therefore, stakeholder collaboration is crucial to sustainable tourism planning (Ma et al., 2020).

Collaborations and partnerships have been extensively recognized as important factors of the success of a tourism destination (Baggio, 2011). "Cooperation" means "working together" or "synergy"; the latter term stems from the Greek word synergos (Bednarczyk & Wszendybył-Skulska, 2014). In the current thesis, the interorganizational aspect of synergy will be taken into account; this aspect encompasses collaboration among bodies with no capital or organizational or legal connections (Bednarczyk & Wszendybył-Skulska, 2014).

Bramwell & Lane (2000) imply that a wide range of stakeholders should be involved in the decision-making process since their interests are influenced by tourism development issues. Local support is considered essential for the sustainable development of the tourism industry (González-García et al., 2022).

The potential benefits may include increase in social acceptance of policies, less adversarial attitudes, creative synergies, skills development, sustainability awareness and encouragement of non-tourism activities as well (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). On the other hand, the potential problems may include exclusion of those stakeholders with less power, coercion by threatening to leave from some of them, creation of cartels because of the power of some stakeholders and financial costs because of the naïve and unnecessary resident participation (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Ruhanen, 2009).

Despite the several issues and challenges that emerge, it is imperative for the stakeholders in tourism destinations to collaborate (Beritelli, 2011) under the coordination of a certain organization (Krce Miočić et al., 2016). The competition among tourist destinations is intense and only through the collaboration among all stakeholders a destination may succeed (Krce Miočić et al., 2016). Differentiation should be reassured along with partnerships development between private and public stakeholders (Buhalis, 2000). The strategic targets of all stakeholders and the safeguarding of local resources sustainability should be balanced by the marketing of destinations (Buhalis, 2000).

Stakeholders in tourism may include: authorities (international, national, regional and local), tourism entrepreneurs, tourism industry operators, intermediaries, interest groups and the community (Buhalis, 2000; Ruhanen, 2009). The management of all stakeholders, though it is a challenging and difficult task where conflicts easily emerge, yet it is the answer to long-term success (Buhalis, 2000).

As regards event development, cooperative strategies seem to yield good results but it is needed to adopt a coordinated and holistic approach during the host of an event (Connell & Page, 2005). The several stakeholders should not act individually but collaboratively in order to enrich the experiences of the visitors (Vassiliadis, 2020). For example, local businesses such as museums, gas stations and accommodation should coordinate so as to be able to serve the needs of the organizers and the visitors (Connell & Page, 2005). This coordination will result in the dispersal of benefits, like tangible economic effects, for an area which expands wider than that of the center that hosts the event (Connell & Page, 2005). Through the events, the efforts of local authorities to highlight the tourist aspect of a region are improved (Vassiliadis, 2020).

And through the actions of the event organizers, common consciousness is developed among the locals, which leads to active or volunteer participation on the event (Vassiliadis, 2020).

It is the private sector organizations that predominate the tourism industry and which mostly seek economic gain; however, the public ones are greatly engaged in sport tourism for the common good (Wäsche et al., 2013) among a range of actors with heterogeneous viewpoints in sport event industry (Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2019).

Several event researchers have commented on the importance of local community networks and the involvement of local stakeholders in the event hosting process. In particular, Misener & Mason (2006) explore the building of community networks during the hosting of a sport event as an opportunity for community development. Reid, (2011) stresses that the engagement of stakeholders during the event process will probably provide a competitive advantage to the event and ensure a sustainable event organization. Perić et al. (2016) accentuate the inter-community organization among stakeholders so as to ensure long-term and sustainable outcomes. Djaballah et al. (2015) investigate the perceptions of local governments on non-mega sport events' social impacts. Tsekouropoulos et al. (2022) draw attention to the local community as a factor which plays an important role in the success of sporting events.

However, there is a noticeable absence of scholarly findings regarding small-scale running events and local stakeholders' perceptions on seasonality mitigation. Studies that relate with running events call for further research on the involvement of local stakeholders and the way they could cooperate to promote sport (Perrin-Malterre, 2018). Studies that relate with seasonality and locals' perceptions address issues like the impacts of seasonality on family or other tourism and hospitality businesses (Banki et al., 2016; Getz & Nilsson, 2004; Pegg et al., 2012). Last but not least, Freeman (2010) emphasizes on the different strategies for the multiple issues that affect the different stakeholders and suggests the use of diversified concepts and processes according to the interests of each stakeholder group.

From the aforesaid, it becomes clear that in the context of this chapter it is attempted to adopt the method that will allow the researcher to collect various data from respondents within a primary data collection method. Therefore, the interviewing qualitative method will be applied as a means of understanding underlying reasons and local stakeholders' perceptions with respect to seasonality mitigation and sustainable small-scale events.

3.1 Qualitative Study – Interview Guide Design

3.2 First Step - Local Professionals

COVID-19 has been a challenge which reinforced the need for sustainable tourism strategies and applications that would focus on the local residents (Weaver et al. 2022). The success of tourism is built around the support of the local community (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). As regards sport tourism events, local residents play a significant role for their success (Jönsson & Lewis, 2014; Vassiliadis, 2020). The perceptions of residents, as part of the local community, may differ in terms of how tourism development affects their professional activities (Hanafiah, Jamaluddin, and Zulkifly, 2013); therefore, their opinions and perceptions should be measured and taken into account. This is because the visitors' pleasure and next visits are determined by the hospitality provided by the local community (Andriotis, 2005a).

Several researches refer to the importance of local stakeholders during a small-scale sport event. For successful small-scale sporting events, Bazzanella et al. (2019) maintain that it is imperative to involve local stakeholders in the decision-making process and this initiative should be adopted by event managers. A local community that encourages and supports an event, will probably lead to a commercially successful event (Fredline, 2005). Jönsson & Lewis (2014) accentuate the importance of the support of local residents to an event with respect to the event's increase in its negative aspects. As regards running events, like marathons, Papanikos (2015) claims that a lot of stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process.

Within tourism context, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) prevail tourism and hospitality business (Chang, 2011). As regards the role of SMEs in tourism, the academic discussion is limited with slow development; but also, the SME sector seems to underestimate the desired benefits from tourism (Thomas et al. 2011). The role of tourism SMEs in the economic growth of Greece and, also of other Mediterranean countries, is crucial; at times of financial difficulties, economic growth will be developed through differentiated tourism packages (Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2019). Small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs) are often the most frequent businesses at many destinations (Sigala, 2009).

Several academic works are related to the perceptions of tourism stakeholders in Greece; for instance, Sigala (2009) refers to their perceptions about the competitiveness of destination management systems in the Greek tourism industry, Trakolis (2001) discusses the lack of local community participation in the decision-making process of the Prespes Lake Greek National Park and Fotiadis et al. (2013) examine the perceptions of small-hotel Greek entrepreneurs as regards sustainable development.

This part illustrates local professionals' (LP) perceptions with reference to seasonality mitigation and sustainable running events.

3.2.1. Qualitative Research – Interviewing LP

The exploratory nature of the study calls for a qualitative research methodology through the incorporation of semi-structured interviews as the most suitable option. Denzin & Lincoln (2011:3) define qualitative research as following: "*Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self*". But exploration involves not only study, examination and analysis but also familiarity with something (Stebbins, 2001).

Through interviewing, in-depth information related to participants' experiences and opinions of a specific topic is provided (Turner, 2010). Participants' perceptions, experiences or behaviors are investigated in order to generate thorough explanations of the research problem (Salmons, 2015). Semi-structured interviews are flexible and may provide a deeper understanding of the research question let alone the fact that they may be used for the discussion of sensitive topics (Fylan, 2005). The contributors provide as much detailed information as they desire, allowing the researcher to search deeper with the use of probing questions (Turner, 2010). Semi-structure interviewing is an entertaining and interesting way to gather together facts by finding out what people think, feel and have experienced on the issue that the researcher is interested in and wants to find out "why" instead of "how many" or "how much" (Fylan, 2005).

While this interview method will be a complicated process for the researcher to code the data from all the interview responses (Turner, 2010), yet researcher's biases are reduced (Gall et al, 2003).

3.2.2 Rationale for the study

The main interest is to evaluate professionals' opinions regarding the running event and its sustainability, to examine their willingness to support it and assess the event's effectiveness on seasonality mitigation. Moreover, this part aims to gain a greater appreciation of the problems linked with seasonality issues with respect to the organization of small-scale events. In order to investigate the aforementioned, and based on the literature review of Chapter 2, the guiding research questions were compiled as following:

A. How does the business sector perceive tourism seasonality?
B. How does the business sector perceive sustainability issues with respect to seasonality and small-scale running events?
C. What does the business sector deem about the organization of small-scale running events in low season-period?

3.2.3   Interview Guide Development

The interview was initially designed according to the practical guide for novice investigators and the suggestions that Turner (2010) recommended which include: (a) the preparation for the interview, (b) the selection of participants, (c) the pilot testing and (d) the implementation of interviews. Then, it was based on the framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide (Kallio et al., 2016), which is also suggested by other researches as a means for the construction of an interview guide (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The framework of Kallio et al. (2016) suggested five inter-related and inseparable phases that were followed in the present thesis (Figure 3.2):

1. Identify the prerequisites for using semi-structured interviews

2. Retrieve and use previous knowledge

3. Formulate the preliminary semi-structured interview guide

4. Pilot test the interview guide

5. Present and complete semi-structured guide
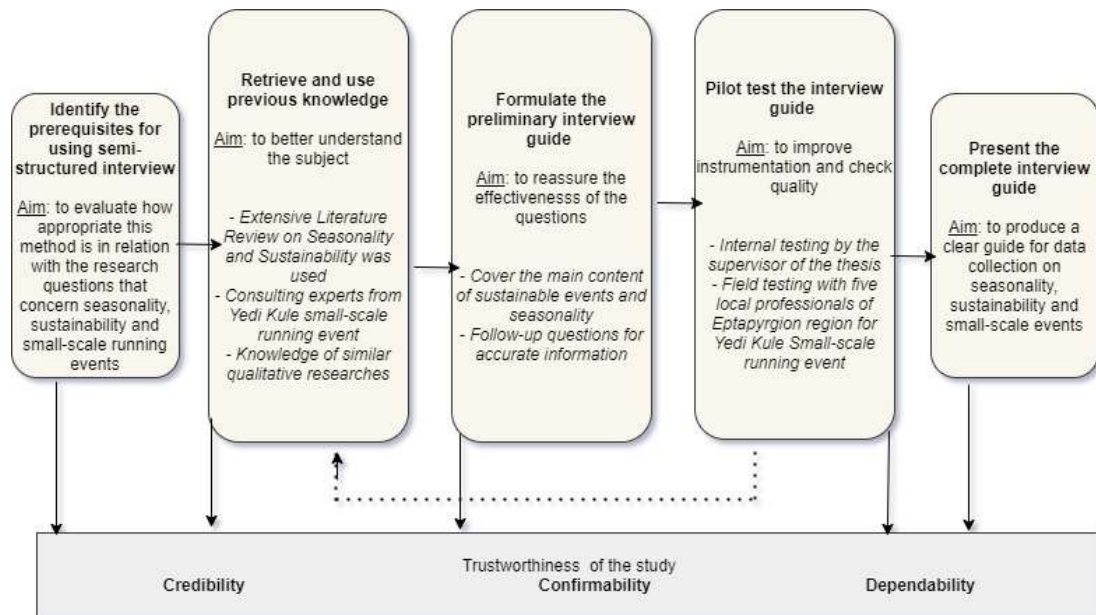
Figure 3.2:
The primary framework for the development of the
semi-structured interview guide for local professionals
Source: Adapted from Kallio et al. (2016)

▪ *Identification of the prerequisites for using semi-structured interviews*

The appropriateness of the use of semi-structured interviews as a rigorous data collection method with respect to the three guiding research questions was assessed in this phase. Longhurst (2003:143) defines semi-structured interview as "*a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions…semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important*".

This method was selected as the most suitable because of the need to select local professionals in the tourism sector who had a wide range of experience and, thus, could provide useful feedback. Besides, semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity to center on issues that are important for the participants, who are different people with diverse experiences (Cridland et al., 2015). Corresponding seasonality tourism researches have applied semi-structured interviews, like Banki et al. (2016) and Pegg et al. (2012) during their study on family-owned micro tourism businesses and on tourism and hospitality operations, respectively.

- *Previous knowledge retrieval and usage*

The need for collecting previous knowledge, through the use of extensive literature review (Barriball & While, 1994) was highlighted during this phase in order to allow the researcher fully comprehend the essential part of the research (Kallio et al., 2016). The extensive literature review was used to derive the important dimensions of seasonality and small-scale running events. In addition, and based on the advice of Rabionet (2011), consultation from experts in the field was sought. Specifically, feedback and guidance from two of the organizers of Yedi Kule Monuments Run small-scale running event was provided. These two experts do not only coordinate the Yedi Kule event but they also do business in the area where the road race is held. Through their wide range of experience, useful information was given to the research team.

- *Preliminary semi-structured interview guide formulation*

The formulation of the preliminary semi-structured interview guide to reassure the effectiveness of the questions through some follow-up ones was the third phase. An interview guide is a list of questions which intend to generate spontaneous and in-depth answers from the participants (Kallio et al., 2016). The main issue here was to investigate the local professionals' perceptual experience and to collect the data that would reflect their perceptions of sustainable events and seasonality.

Therefore, three main parts consisted the preliminary interview guide, that is Seasonality, Sustainability and Events:

- Regarding the first part, *Seasonality* (A), it was based on the studies of Andriotis (2005b); Baum & Hagen (1999); Corluka et al. (2016); Getz & Nilsson (2004); Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff (2010) and Pegg et al. (2012).

- Regarding the *Sustainability* (B) part, the suggestions of Gibson et al.'s (2012) study were much taken into account. This part (B) was also based on the studies of Butler (2014); Getz (2009); Jönsson & Lewis, 2014 and O'Brien (2007).

- Regarding the *Events* (C) part, the questions were based on the following bibliography: Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Burgan & Mules, 2001; Gibson, 2003; McDowall, 2010; Veltri et al., 2009.

The back-translation method was the approach to the translation process that was applied. Based on Sperber's (2004) suggestions, the guide was drafted in English and then one translator translated it into Greek as the target language. Then an independent translator translated the survey instrument back to English; finally, the guide was given to a bilingual professor of tourism to assess it in order to validate its translation (Sperber, 2004).

- *Interview guide pilot testing*

Pilot test is a common policy for distinguishing possible researcher biases, for testing how qualitative an interview guide is (Chenail, 2011) and for improving instrumentation (Rabionet, 2011). Based on Chenail (2011), ambiguities were identified, unnecessary questions were discarded and some were re-worded. Field-testing with five potential study participants (local professionals) was implemented (Kallio et al., 2016) in Eptapyrgion area of Thessaloniki city for the running event Yedi Kule Monuments Run in March 2019.

- *Complete semi-structured interview guide presentation*

After some revisions that mainly regarded the session B (Sustainability) where more general questions were chosen, the finished semi-structured interview guide was presented, composed of the main and the follow-up questions (Table 3.1 and Annex 1).

The main questions covered the central content of the study and the follow-up ones were used in order to help the respondent understand the subject and gain accurate feedback. The transcripts were prepared in Greek and in English, according to the native language of the interviewees and the Greek transcripts were later verbatim translated in the English language. Based on Creswell (2014) the following components were used: heading, instructions, basic and follow-up questions, spaces to record the responses and a thank you note.

Table 3.1.
Key points of discussion in the local professionals' interview guide

Topics	Questions	Answer Categories
A Seasonality	1. Does your destination confront seasonality? To what degree?	…Yes, No Degree 0=Not at all, 1=Minimum, 2=Minor, 3=So and So, 4=Large, 5=Very Large, [Comment: Fill in a reply]
	2. Which are the main effects of seasonality on Your business? The destination?	[Fill in reply]
	3. Which is the high, medium and low season for your business?	...High: From...until... ...Medium: From…until... ...Low: From…until...
	4. Do tourists or visitors come to the destination during low season?	..Yes, because... ..No, because...
	• For which reason do they come?	
	• In case of a positive answer, are they local or international visitors?	[Fill in reply]

	5. How does your enterprise respond to seasonality?	...I cope and close the business during the low season part of the year
		...I combat and make several actions like [....] to survive
		...I capitulate. I decided to sell, shrink, terminate the business because [...]
	6. Do the local authorities support you?	[Fill in reply]
	• What do you think that the local authorities should do to help your business?	[Fill in reply]
B Sustainability	1. How does tourism seasonality affect the	
	• economic	...Regarding the economic sector [...]
	• socio-cultural and	...Regarding the socio-cultural sector [...]
	• environmental sector of the area?	...Regarding the environmental sector [...]
	2. How does the running event affect the	
	• economic	
	• socio-cultural and	
	• environmental sector of your area?	[Fill in reply]
C Events	1. Do you believe, that small-scale events, such as the running event of your area, contribute to seasonality smoothing?	..Yes, because...
		..No, because...
	2. Is the existent area infrastructure (access, accommodation, attractions) enough in order to develop a remarkable event strategy in your area in low-season?	..Yes, because...
		..No, because...

<table>
<tr><td>3. How can the organization of an event, like the running-event in your region, contribute in the area tourism development?</td><td>[Fill in reply]</td></tr>
<tr><td>4. Apart from events, which other measure/initiative would you suggest in order to mitigation tourism seasonality on products and services demand in your area?</td><td>[Fill in reply]</td></tr>
</table>

3.3 Local Professionals Data Collection

3.3.1 Research design

As it is mentioned above, in order to discover the perceptions and experiences of local professionals of different regions, the semi-structured interview guide was used as a research instrument. The focus was the identification and description of the effects of sustainable running events on tourism seasonality from the part of the local professionals. All the questions that had been formulated were open-ended and were dealing with professionals' perceptions on seasonality and the small-scale running event. Since the set of questions had been created for general guidance, the interview went far beyond them in some cases.

Different locations were selected to conduct the interviews; specifically, the facilities of every professional were chosen in order to ensure a smooth and convenient process. As Denzin & Lincoln (2011:3) advocate *"...qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them"*. Creswell & Creswell, (2017) also indicate that the qualitative researchers go to the place of the participant to carry out the research, and thus, they are able to get involved in the participants' experiences. Moreover, qualitative researchers are concerned about how the participants understand themselves and their environment (Lune & Berg, 2016) and therefore they should be curious, fascinated, bewildered and enquiring about the world around them (Mason, 2017).

3.3.2 Selection of the sample

The sample consisted of several local business professionals of tourism sector. Respondents were active in several sectors. A total of 178 individuals were invited to participate. Twenty-three of them declined taking part either because of lack of knowledge about the subject or because of lack of time. Finally, a total of 155 documents about the professionals' perceptions were collected. In terms of location, the chosen destinations present high tourism seasonality while low season sport events are organized in months with low tourist traffic. Destinations are well-defined geographical areas, like an island or a town, or they can even be perceptual concepts, and they offer a synthesis of tourism products and services (Buhalis, 2000). Buhalis (2000) develops a destination typology and classifies destinations as urban, seaside, alpine, rural, authentic third world and unique-exotic-exclusive.

For the current thesis, urban (Thessaloniki, Katerini, Tyrnavos), seaside (Paralia Katerinis), alpine (Agia Larissa) and rural (Skydra, Krokos) Greek destinations were chosen. The locations are depicted in Figure 3.3. A purposive sampling technique was selected as the most suitable for this thesis. This strategy is "*a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants…the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience*" (Etikan et al., 2016:2). This technique is usually used in qualitative studies and focuses on individuals with specific characteristics who will be better able to serve for the research (Etikan et al., 2016).

Moreover, in qualitative research, during purposive sampling the researcher selects those potential participants that would be most informative (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The majority of the local professionals interviewed were in fact residents of the area under investigation. In regions where extreme seasonality appears, businesses may encounter both financial and personal difficulties; they are obliged to work hard during the peak season resulting in limited leisure and social life, whereas they may face dire financial straits because of the costs connected with staying open in the low season (Getz & Nilsson, 2004).
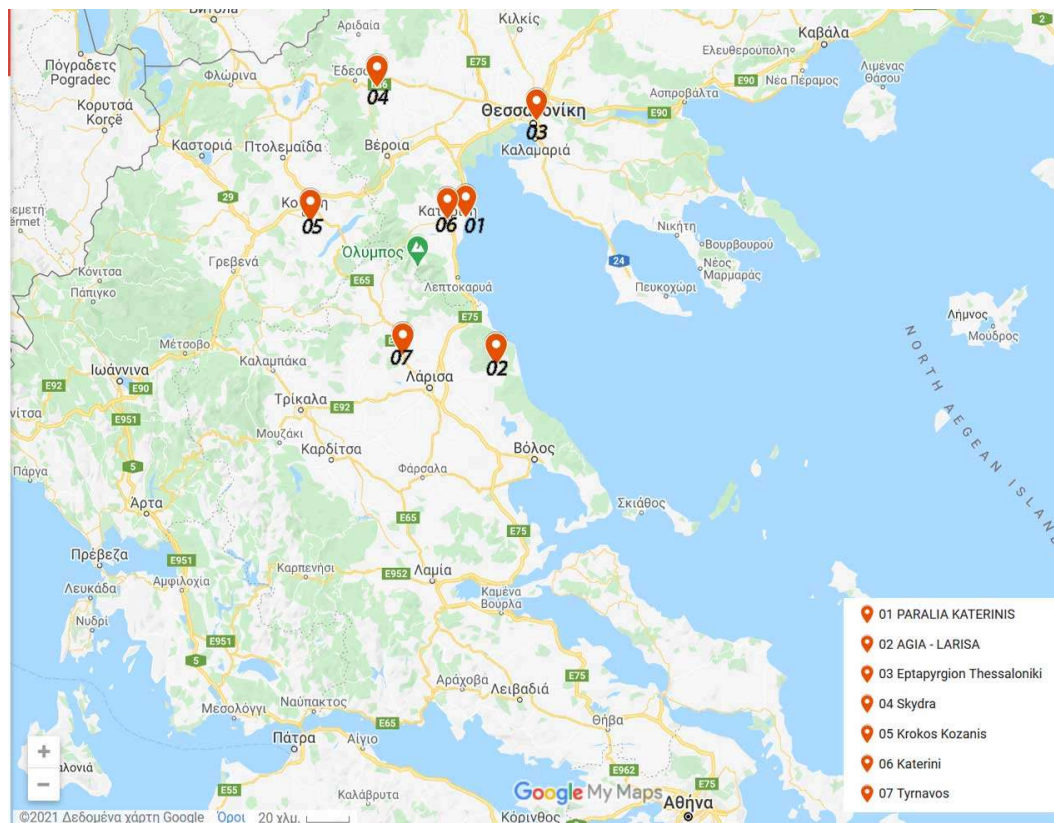
Figure 3.3:
Map of Greece showing the location of the 7 destinations studied
Source: Google maps and author's modification

The running events portfolio for the interviews of the local professionals is depicted on Table 3.2. The interviewees represented a full variety of tourism local professionals: accommodation providers; food service and bar operators; vehicle rentals; travel and booking agents; provision shops; recreation services; private attractions and rest.

Table 3.2.
Running Events Portfolio (Local Professionals Interviews)

A/A	Name of Event	Location	Year of Establish ment	Month of conduct	Type	Online Information	Number of respondents
1	AlmiraMAN	Paralia Katerinis	2014	May	Triathlon	https://www.almiraman.gr/english/almiraman_en.html	24
2	Kissavos Marathon Race	Agia Larissa	2016	April	Mountain Race	http://www.agiarunners.gr/p/blog-page_17.html	25
3	Yedi Kule Monuments Run	Eptapyrgion Thessaloniki	2016	June	Race	http://www.yedikule.gr/	21
4	Race of Mavrouvouni Skydras	Skydra Pella	2018	February	Hill Race	http://run-pozar.blogspot.com/	14
5	Ioakeim Lioulias Race	Krokos Kozanis	2019	July	Race	http://www.runningnews.gr/item.php?id=40145	25
6	Katerini Run	Katerini Pieria	2009	March	Race	www.zeusrunnersclub.gr	34
7	Half-marathon Tyrnavos Larissa	Larissa Thessaly	2002	December	Race	https://www.segas-thessalias.gr/	12

3.3.3 Qualitative interviews

The process lasted for around three months between May 2019 and the period of 15th October 2019 to 15th December 2019. The research force consisted of a total force of 19 people (seniors and this thesis writer), who were divided into groups of two, according to a specific program that would evenly distribute the workload. The 18 seniors who volunteered for the research project were initially interviewed in order to decide on the distribution of the research responsibilities in a beneficial manner.

The interview process of the seniors resulted in the following actions: 1) answers to respondents' potential questions 2) prediction of needs for the movement procedure and for the points of researchers' presence 3) prediction of needs for the necessary materials (interview guides, pens, clipboards) 4) regular communication with the research responsible (thesis writer) on the progress of the work and decision on informing her about potential unforeseen emergent issues and situations.

As regards the sampling process, the main points were the following:

- The interviews of the event AlmiraMAN were taken on the day of the event (12th May) and the rest interviews during the rest aforesaid months.

- For a proper data collection, each semi-structured interview was recorded by note-taking. Information from interviews is recorded by handwritten notes or

audiotaping or videotaping but it is suggested that notes are taken even when interviews are taped to avoid potential equipment fails (Creswell, 2014).

- All the respondents provided their consent before the interviews, which all were conducted in Greek.

- All the interviews were conducted on the premises of the local professionals' businesses and most of them lasted around 40 minutes, although there had been some variations in the length.

- Half of the teams concluded the process in one day, whereas the rest had to visit the research area the next day.

3.4 Local Professionals Data Analysis

An inductive analysis strategy was considered suitable for this thesis. Based on this kind of analysis, themes emerge from the data, so they are not determined before data collection and analysis (Quinn Patton, 2002). This analysis, commonly used in qualitative studies, allows the researcher to reduce and group data and organize sub-categories into main categories and themes (Kyngäs, 2020). Besides, it may be used when the phenomenon is not being discussed in previous studies (Kyngäs, 2020). Thus, inductive research gives emphasis to theory generation from data collection (Williams & Moser, 2019). During this step, the findings with the literature were compared and themes were categorized.

3.4.1 Results

The local professionals' perceptions with respect to seasonality, sustainability and small-scale events are described below.

A. How does the business sector perceive tourism seasonality?

The majority of the respondents acknowledge that tourism activities are seasonal in their region. Despite the fact that the peak seasons differ from region to region, their views are converging as regards their perceptions on tourism seasonality. Through some quotations from the interviews, the nature of seasonality problem is reflected and

the majority corroborates the view that seldom do tourists visit their region during the low season:

There is some tourist traffic in the region during the saffron harvest in October.
Visitors (both Greek and international, like Chinese) may also come as gastronomic
tourists for the saffron and just visit the Association
(Krokos Kozanis).

The region of Agia confronts severe tourism seasonality. There is no work for us and
there is not development. We have to do other jobs to survive, especially in the period
between February and May. Situation is difficult and some enterprises will close for sure
(Agia Larissa).

Our region is mainly rural and most visitors are business tourists, like traders, who visit
Skydra for meetings with the locals. Although it is near the ski center and Pozar Thermal
Baths, we face high tourism seasonality all the year round
(Skydra Pella).

The tourist season is really limited, maximum 3 months.
We survive during summer but in winter we suffer
(Katerini Pieria).

Tourists (domestic and international, like Turks) come in our region mainly for the
Carnival events. Some months, like November, are completely unproductive
(Tyrnavos Larissa).

We are under Mount Olympus, the home of Zeus and the Greek Gods, and we do not
take advantage of welcoming tourists all year round. Tourists from distant countries
like Japan and China visit our area in low season; yet, most of the enterprises are
closed because of seasonality. This situation must change
(Paralia Katerinis).

The village survives only because of summer tourism. There is work only during summer
thanks to tourists. Visitors keep coming during winter because of Olympus
but there is nothing to do in our village and almost everything is closed
(Paralia Katerinis).

Seasonality is a problem in our region but the authorities do not support us at all
(Eptapyrgion Thessaloniki).

Depending on the location of every region and its different needs and facilities, the peak season varies. For the urban areas (Thessaloniki and Katerini) the peak season is between June to September and the off-peak months are from October to April. For Tyrnavos, the peak season is mainly in February and March when the carnival festival is held. The respondents of the seaside resort (Paralia Katerinis) go along with the view that the peak season is between June and September whereas during winter there are no visits. As regards the alpine region (Agia Larissa) the peak season is from June to September, while in winter the respondents claim that the situation is terrible. For the

rural areas (Skydra, Krokos) the high season is in summer but there is also tourist traffic between October and December, when the rural activities are carried out.

The local professionals consider seasonality as the key factor that influences the decreased demand and performance of their business activities, which brings about negative results such as reduced employment and low-quality tourist attractions (Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2022). The limited winter facilities that seasonality incurs brings about non-functioning or under-functioning of their enterprises, which, in turn, creates a feeling of desolation in the area (Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2022).

The majority of the respondents confirm that tourism seasonality engenders generally negative results for their business and their region. As regards their business they refer that during low season there are fewer visitors, lower turnover, stock that they cannot sell whereas during the high season they have increased revenue, happiness, prosperity, they save money to make investments but they also face fatigue and pressure due to more and harder work. The effects on their region are quite similar as they mention that in low-season there is negative mood because many enterprises are completely closed.

According to a respondent:

When the turnover increases, we increase the staff, we cover expenses and sometimes we invest
in the improvement of our premises (changes on the decoration, painting, furniture).
But throughout the low-season we give breaks to our staff, we reduce the purchases of goods,
we have limited variety on our products
(Eptapyrgion, Thessaloniki)

The situation is more or less the same in other regions:

During how season, we purchase more raw materials of higher quality. In winter, only the family
runs in the business, our staff does not work
(Katerini Pieria)

As concerns their responses to seasonality, the majority tries to defeat it and adopts combatting strategies during the low season. Their comments on their combatting actions are the following:

We make events, offers and we use social media to attract customers. We are extremely polite with
them and we sometimes provide them with several gifts
(Krokos Kozanis).

We do everything we can to please the customers. We want them to come again so we are willing to
offer our best services, even if it means that we will have to satisfy every requirement they may have
(Paralia Katerinis).

We make cost reduction and try to save. We even save on the heating; we do not waste anything
(Skydra Pella).

Through internal lending, I try to keep the business open
(Agia Larissa).

There are some local professionals that accept extreme seasonality and adopt coping strategies. They commented:

I close my business and I often borrow money from my parents
(Agia Larissa).

I run another business during winter
(Katerini Pieria).

Very few respondents reported that they intend to capitulate and terminate or sell the business. A very small percentage did not reply to this question.

For most respondents, local authorities do not provide any support for them. Some are satisfied with the local authorities supporting while a very small percentage did not reply. Their recommendations include the promotion of the area, better infrastructure and the establishment of museums. Also, many of them asked for more events during the shoulder and the low season.

B. How does the business sector perceive sustainability issues with respect to seasonality and small-scale events?

- *Seasonality and Sustainability*

With regard to the *economic* impact of seasonality most professionals stated that they are facing significant losses in their turnover.

Thanks to tourists that come during summer, our local economy stays stable for the rest of the year.
Otherwise, the economy of Katerini would not be alive
(Katerini Pieria).

During winter, most enterprises are closed or underperform and it is difficult
to respond to our obligations
(Paralia Katerini).

However, in terms of seasonality impact on the *socio-cultural* sector, the majority of the respondents are positively affected within their community during the high season, which includes a better quality of life in terms of socializing and mind-broadening aspects, diversity, knowledge expansion, and personal life opportunities. For example, some locals reported that they had married the Balkans who visited Paralia Katerinis in the summer.

Nonetheless, the *environmental* sector is slightly affected during summer, but with manageable traffic congestion and pollution.

- *Events and Sustainability*

– *Economic sector*

A key finding of the study that goes along with the literature is that the organization of small-scale events (like running events) usually brings about positive economic results:

> *There is tourist flow during a period where visitors would not come; it is indeed a different Sunday*
> *(Katerini Pieria).*

> *Of course, the running race does good in my business, so many visitors come!*
> *(Krokos Kozanis).*

However, not all the local businesses take advantage of the event considering that the event is usually organized in day(s) that some of them are closed (weekends and mainly on Sunday). For example, they stated:

> *Kissavos Race takes place only on Sunday, a day that I am closed. The organizers should think the extension in days for the event*
> *(Agia Larissa).*

> *I do not benefit much because of the day (Sunday)*
> *(Tyrnavos Larissa).*

> *Extra effort is needed, one day is not enough*
> *(Katerini Pieria).*

Another reason that they do not benefit financially from the event is because the termination of the race takes place in another area, like the case of Tyrnavos Larisa:

*There is just a little increase in the consumption of soft drinks because
the visitors do not stay in our city.*

*Unfortunately, I do not benefit from the event because people go to
Larissa, where the termination is.*

— *Social sector*

Our findings reveal that most respondents believe that their social life is positively affected as a result of the running races in their region. To this end, three professionals responded:

*Local community participated, exercised and developed relationships with visitors.
Regardless of age, they got out of their house and participated
(Krokos Kozanis).*

*During the running race, there is a pleasant atmosphere, locals take part with
their children and they are all happier, in a good spirit
(Skydra Pella).*

However, there were some few comments of those stakeholders (older ones) that do not want visitors at all:

*I am bothered by tourists
(Agia Larissa).*

— *Environmental sector*

The findings are in line with those of literature review suggesting that the environment is slightly or not at all affected by the event. Indicatively:

*Every new activity like this is positive; the environment is positively touched,
for example, new trails are created
(Krokos Kozanis).*

*Environment is not affected given that the event organizers take care of this issue
(Katerini Pieria).*

*There is just some traffic and some rubbish in the center but everything is cleaned up quickly
(Agia Larissa).*

C. What does the business sector deem about the organization of small-scale events in low-season period?

- *Events and Seasonality Mitigation*

Despite some disagreements from the part of the respondents, who, in general, are disappointed with the economic situation, our findings indicate that the majority of them recognize the positive contribution of small-scale running events to the overall effort in mitigating the negative seasonality effects on local businesses owing to the promotion of their region even in the low season.

> *Even one tourist in our hotel is better than none at all. As long as the event is promoted,*
> *our village is promoted*
> *(Paralia Katerinis).*

> *Thanks to the event there are tourists during a period that no one visit our region*
> *(Katerini Pieria).*

> *Yes, the event is a way to help strengthen the local economy in a period with no tourists*
> *(Skydra Pella).*

> *One event is not enough, more events and other actions should be organized during the low season*
> *(Agia Larissa).*

- *Area infrastructure and events strategy*

The majority of the respondents were of the view that the area infrastructure is not sufficient. For them, it was vital to address the lack of infrastructure in order to create a remarkable event strategy in their region.

> *The improvement of the infrastructure is necessary; for example, cleanliness of the area and a museum*
> *with the local exhibits*
> *(Paralia Katerinis).*

> *Eptapyrgion is an abandoned place. The monument should be maintained and utilized. The roads are*
> *in a bad condition, the transportation is difficult and there is no route that would serve the area*
> *(Eptapyrgion, Thessaloniki).*

> *Of course, the infrastructure is not enough. Otherwise, the event's visitors would stay more time in our*
> *village. More restaurants and hotels are needed*
> *(Agia Larissa).*

> *It is crucial to establish the saffron museum as an attraction that would bring many visitors in our town*
> *(Krokos Kozanis).*

> *We do not exploit our spaces. For example, we should increase the number of pedestrianized areas and*
> *create a parking space to welcome the visitors that will arrive for the event*
> *(Skydra Pella).*

- *Running Event and Tourism Development*

The majority of professionals hold the view that several other actions should be applied along with the event organization in order to develop the tourism in their region. To support this claim, some interviewees remarked:

We would like to cooperate with the organizers and work together on the preparation. For example, we could prepare a special menu for the event participants based on the directions of the organizers. This could be an extra motive for the athletes to come
(Paralia Katerinis).

Yedi Kule Monuments Run is a very nice initiative of cultural character; yet, most entrepreneurs of our region may not even be informed about it, despite the fact that it is organized for some years. I suggest that the event be more advertised so as to make both it and the area more known in public
(Eptapyrgion Thessaloniki).

Along with the event, a general effort should be made in order to promote the brand name of Katerini. Exhibitions and other activities be organized in favor of small enterprises, so that the local products be promoted even during winter
(Katerini Pieria).

- *Initiatives to mitigate tourism seasonality*

Many respondents agreed that all kind of events, not only the athletic ones, are a solution to the mitigation of tourism seasonality.

Anything related to events in connection with our local products; apple, chestnut, olives, peaches. Famous personalities should be invited, more hotels and tavernas created, and the events last more than 1-2 days
(Agia Larissa).

More athletic events could be created like mountain bike races. We could also attract tourists by establishing events based on our local products (wine, tsipouro)
(Tyrnavos Larissa).

More cultural events and festivals that will have to do with our saffron and other local products. More athletic events, like canoe-kayak in the stream, because sport unites people
(Krokos Kozanis).

More events, like religious ones, should be organized during the shoulder season. We do not want events in July and August but mainly before or after these months
(Paralia Katerinis).

It is good that events like that are taking place but they must increase in number
(Eptapyrgion Thessaloniki).

The authorities should invest in natural environment: Olympus. More events and activities depending on the season along with something original, like a museum for the Gods of Olympus; no more cafes and restaurants, we are already filled with them
(Katerini Pieria).

The predominant opinion though was the general promotion of their region, as they reported:

We need a better tourist promotion; for example, connection of the mountainous areas with the beaches and promotion of our monuments and old mansions
(Agia Larissa).

It is a matter of mindset to respond proactively and make more efforts to highlight the region. Residents, enterprises and authorities could come together and find transparent solutions
(Tyrnavos Larissa).

I suggest advertising of Krokos on mass media, like television
(Krokos Kozanis).

Suitable tourist attractions should be created and a better promotion abroad applied
(Paralia Katerinis).

Our area must be more promoted in the aspect of archaeological tourism
(Eptapyrgion Thessaloniki).

More advertising and promotion of Katerini in all the media, even in the low season, so that visitors realize that our town is also a winter destination
(Katerini Pieria).

3.5 Conclusion of Local Professionals Qualitative Analysis

Small-scale sport events organized in urban, seaside, alpine and rural Greek destinations seem to be essential for achieving tourism development during periods of low-season tourist flows, bringing sustainable positive economic and socio-cultural impacts. In line with the literature, the majority of local professionals surveyed and interviewed recognize seasonality as a problem or difficulty and from their part they suggest several initiatives to counter seasonal concentration. The adoption of a common combating strategy which includes the incorporation of small-scale events is dominant in their opinions. In terms of the determination of the peak seasonality, it differs from region to region. The findings confirmed some harmonious perceptions among the participants as regards the negative consequences of seasonality on their region and their businesses. Survival issues were prevalent in their responses. Further insights into the scientific debate on seasonality and sustainability are provided, where emphasis is

given on the economic and social aspect. Also, there is a recognition that small-scale events contribute positively to mitigating tourism seasonality, although more initiatives are needed. Local professionals almost unanimously suggest the organization of more events, of all kinds, in order to boost the destination in periods of low season.

3.6 Second Step - Running Events Organizers

In the light of the analysis of synergy in tourism in the beginning of this chapter, the involvement and the awareness of the organizers, as part of the event stakeholders, need to be evaluated before staging an event which will be effective against tourism seasonality.

A research gap in the area of the event organizers study has been identified, mainly in the field of sports and especially running. For example, recent studies have attempted to check the validation of a mobile application water planning tool for road race event organizers (Cheuvront et al. 2019). Other academic works have developed an instrument to measure the event organizers' perceptions of the socio-economic impacts of the events on local communities (Gursoy et al., 2004) or solicit the organizers' perceptions of the attendees' motivations (Kim et al., 2001) or seek the challenges of ambush marketing for organizers of major global sporting events (McKelvey & Grady, 2008). Corresponding event tourism researchers recognize the need for engaging multiple stakeholders in the planning process and ask for more research from the part of event organizers/investors (Ruhanen, 2009). Seeing that the relationships between organizers and various stakeholders highly influence the quality of an event (Parent et al., 2012), since sport event organizers should draw attention to those paramount factors of the event that they can control (Kruger & Saayman, 2012) and given the gap in the field of running races, this part contributes to discussions of organizers' perceptions with reference to seasonality mitigation and sustainable running events.

3.6.1 Qualitative Research – Interviewing Organizers

Once again, the exploratory nature of the study calls for a qualitative research methodology. The incorporation of semi-structured interviews was chosen as the most appropriate option for the needs of the study, based on the referred literature in the previous paragraph (3.2.1) that concerns the local professionals.

3.6.2 Rationale for the study

In this second step of the interviewing (preliminary data gathering), the main interest is to evaluate running events organizers' opinions regarding tourism seasonality, sustainability issues and small-scale running events during the low or middle season period. Another objective is to examine organizers' perceptions towards local community issues in the event organization process. In order to investigate the aforementioned, and based on the literature review of Chapter 2 and the results of the local professionals' qualitative research, the guiding research questions were compiled as following:

A. How do the organizers perceive tourism seasonality?

B. How do the organizers perceive sustainability issues with respect to small-scale running events in low or middle season period?

C. What do organizers deem about the organization of small-scale running events in low or middle season period?

D. What is the organizers' opinion on local community issues?

3.6.3 Interview Guide Development

The interview was once more initially designed according to the practical guide for novice investigators and the suggestions that Turner (2010) recommended including (a) the preparation for the interview, (b) the selection of participants, (c) the pilot testing and (d) the implementation of interviews. Then, it was based on the framework for a qualitative *semi-structured interview* guide (Kallio et al., 2016). The five inter-related and inseparable phases that were followed for organizers interviews are presented in Figure 3.4:

1. Identify the prerequisites for using semi-structured interviews

2. Retrieve and use previous knowledge

3. Formulate the preliminary semi-structured interview guide

4. Pilot test the interview guide

5. Present and complete semi-structured guide
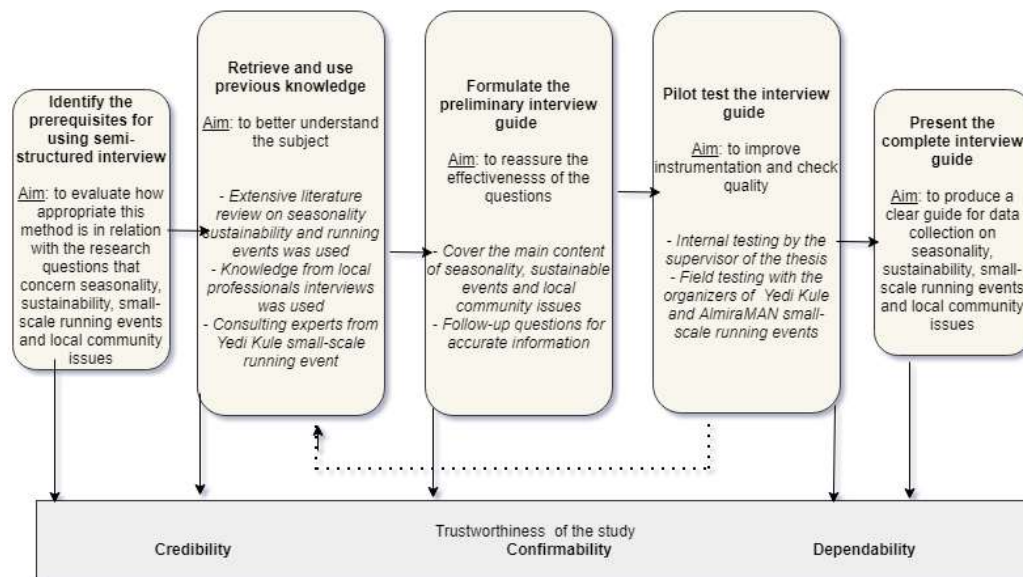
Figure 3.4:
The primary framework for the development of the
semi-structured interview guide for running event organizers
Source: Adapted from Kallio et al. (2016)

▪   *Identify the prerequisites for using semi-structured interviews*

Based on the referred literature in the paragraph (3.2.3) that concerns the local professionals, the appropriateness of the use of semi-structured interviews as a rigorous data collection method with respect to the four guiding research questions was once again assessed in this phase. This method was selected as the most appropriate because of the need to select highly experienced running event organizers in order to focus on important issues for them.

▪ *Retrieve and use previous knowledge*

As it is aforementioned, studies have largely been silent on running event organizers perceptions. In order to determine the relevant dimensions of seasonality, sustainability and running events, extensive literature review was used along with knowledge derived from local professional interviews. Once again, based on the admonition of Rabionet (2011), consultation from experts in the field was sought. In particular, feedback and guidance from the organizers of Yedi Kule Monuments Run small-scale event was provided and useful feedback was received.

▪ *Preliminary semi-structured interview guide formulation*

For the third phase, a preliminary semi-structured interview guide was prepared in order to lead to spontaneous and in-depth replies from the respondents (Kallio et al., 2016) with the view to investigating the running event organizers' perceptions of seasonality, sustainable events and local community issues. As a consequence, four main parts consisted the preliminary interview guide, that is Seasonality, Sustainability, Events and Local Community Issues and were based both on the literature review, the literature that is mentioned on local professionals' part and on the results of the interviews of the latter. Once more, the process of the back-translation method was applied based on Sperber's (2004) suggestions.

▪ *Interview guide pilot testing*

The pilot testing procedure followed for local professionals was applied for event organizers as well. The interview guide was tested and some points were corrected. The field-testing was implemented in Eptapyrgion area of Thessaloniki city for the running event Yedi Kule Monuments Run and in Paralia of Katerini city for the running event AlmiraMAN, both held in February 2020.

▪ *Present the complete semi-structured interview guide*

After some revisions that mainly regarded the session C (Events) where more specific questions were chosen, and some were omitted, the finished semi-structured interview guide was presented, composed of the main and the follow-up questions (Table 3.3 and Annex 2). The transcripts were again prepared in Greek and in English, according to the native language of the interviewees and the Greek transcripts were later verbatim translated in the English language. Once more, based on Creswell (2014) the following components were used: heading, instructions, basic and follow-up questions, spaces to record the responses and a thank you note.

Table 3.3.
Key points of discussion in the event organizers' interview guide

Topics	Questions	Answer Categories
A Seasonality	1. Why have you chosen this period to organize the running event?	[Fill in reply]
	2. How do you think that the road race contributes to alleviate the problems of seasonal tourism in the region?	[Fill in reply]
	3. Under what conditions would you organize the event at another time of the year?	[Fill in reply]
	4. What is your opinion regarding the extension of the event in days?	[Fill in reply]
B Sustainability	1. How does the running event affect the local businesses?	
	• economically	…Regarding the economic sector […]
	• socio-culturally and	…Regarding the socio-cultural sector […]
	• environmentally	…Regarding the environmental sector […]
C Events	1. What are the most effective strategies for organizing a successful running event in low or middle season?	[Fill in reply]
	2. How do you think that the organization of sport events, like this, can contribute to the	[Fill in reply]

		tourist promotion and development of the area?	
		3. What features are significant in the area in order to make the sport event even more successful in low or middle season?	[Fill in reply]
D	**Local Community Issues**	1. How would you involve the local professionals in the process of the event organization?	Yes, because……. No, because……..
		2. How do local professionals perceive and relate to the running event?	[Fill in reply]
		3. In what ways do the local tourist services cover the needs of the visitors/athletes of the event in low or middle season?	[Fill in reply]
		4. What actions should local authorities take to ensure a successful event in low or middle season?	[Fill in reply]

3.7 Organizers Data Collection

3.7.1 Research design

In order to collect in-depth information on issues regarding tourism seasonality and the organization of running events in the study area, a semi-structured interview guide was applied as a research instrument. The aim was to gain feedback from all event organizers through a similar process; qualitative based research designs are more appropriate than quantitative ones for the examination of details of tourism phenomena (Jennings, 2001). The questions were open-ended and, in some cases, the interview went far beyond these questions.

The process was designed in February 2020 and lasted for around two months between March and May 2020. However, this period found the researchers in unprecedented circumstances because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sport event

tourism sector turned to be extremely vulnerable to this kind of crises (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021). All the sporting events in Greece, including running races, were cancelled or postponed to protect the health of athletes, spectators and others involved (Maditinos et al., 2021). The researchers were suddenly challenged with several issues related to the pandemic and its aspects (lockdown, travel restrictions etc.). New ways to bridge these challenges and to continue the research within the expected dates were sought (Greeff, 2020). Despite the coronavirus great impact on professional and personal lives of the participants, new opportunities arose and online communication and collaboration in several channels were developed (Patel et al., 2020). Besides, internet has been proven as an attractive means to collect important data for a qualitative research (Evans et al., 2008) as it overcomes the obstacles of time and financial restrictions or the geographical dispersions (Janghorban et al., 2014). As regards online interviews, they generate information that in other respects it would be difficult or impossible to collect (Chen & Hinton, 1999).

3.7.2 Selection of the sample

The sample consisted of 29 small-scale running event organizers. The latter are active in the organization of sport events and their goal is to bring the man closer to nature, promoting the values of sport and ecological consciousness. Their common characteristics is the passion for sports and based on this legacy, they strive to create the best possible sport experiences for the athletes. In general, their aim is to highlight the beauties of their hometown and to establish a road race that will offer an additional incentive for sports and entertainment to the local community.

In terms of location, the chosen destinations are characterized by high tourism seasonality. During the months of the middle or low season, sport events are organized. Based on Buhalis (2000) destination typology, where the destinations are classified as urban, seaside, alpine, rural, authentic third world and unique-exotic-exclusive, the destinations chosen were the following (Figure 3.5): *urban* (Kalamata, Nicosia, Rethymno, Irakleio, Katerini, Lamia, Ioannina, Kastoria, Athens, Drama, Kavala, Lefkada), *seaside* (Zakynthos, Spetses, Agkistri, Serifos), *alpine* (Agia Larissa, Kavala, Souli, Krokos Kozanis, Paranesti, Olympus, Litochoro, Agios Ioannis Cyprus, Florina)

and *rural* (Mitsero Cyprus, Plastira Lake, Edessa, Giannitsa Pella). In addition, Cyprus was chosen as it is a similar destination to Greece. There have been made long-term efforts to alter the traditional sea and sun tourism product in Cyprus, and create alternative tourism products and services in order to smooth the severe seasonality phenomenon in the island (Garanti, 2022).
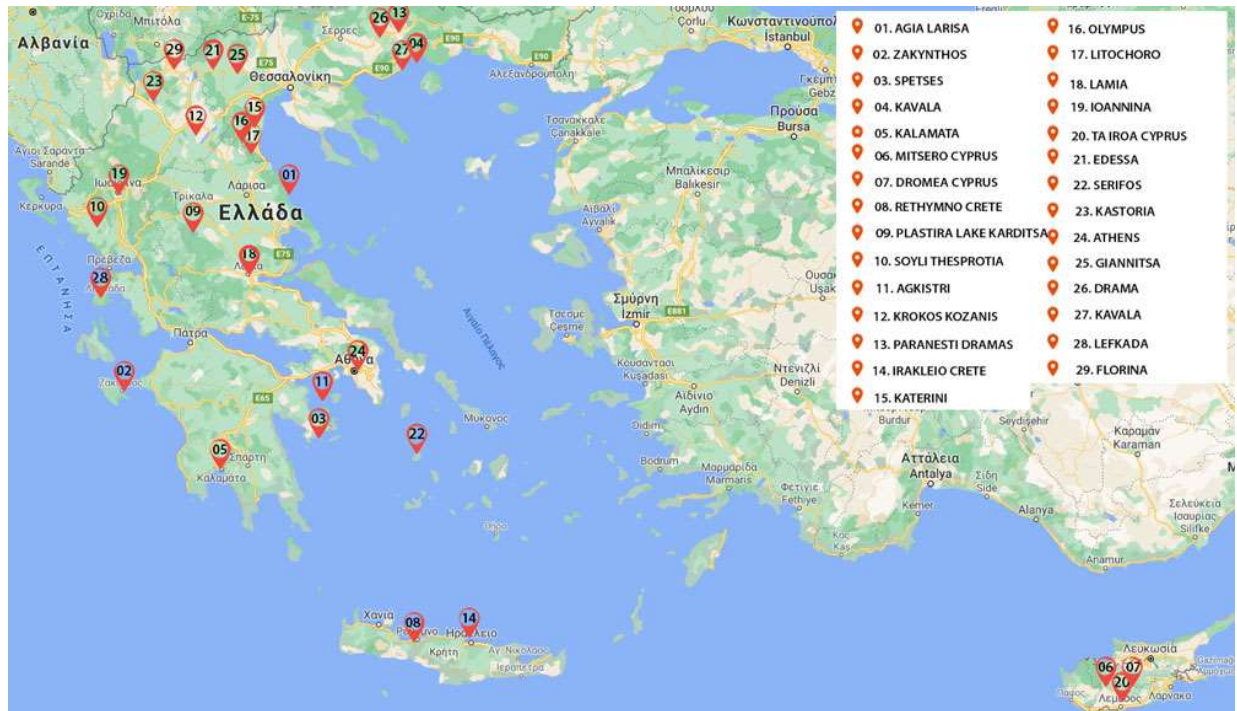
Figure 3.5:
Map of Greece and Cyprus showing the location of the 29 destinations studied
Source: Google maps and author's modification

A purposive sampling technique was chosen as the most appropriate. Based on the judgement of the researchers when it is time to select the components of the study, researchers are justified to generalize from the sample under study, through this technique (Sharma, 2017). Also, purposive sampling technique ensures the inclusion of specific kinds of cases that constitute the final sample of the research study where the different and important points of view of different kind of people are comprised (Campbell et al., 2020). The majority of the event organizers interviews live permanently in the areas under investigation. Sport events in areas like the ones that are

investigated in the current thesis are usually organized by amateurs, who, though, are "mad" for the sport with the view of promoting their local community (Fotiadis et al., 2016). The running events portfolio is depicted on Table 3.4.

Table 3.4.
Running Events Portfolio (Running Event Organizers Interviews)

A/A	Name of Event	Location	Year of Establishment	Month of conduct	Type	Online Information
1	Kissavos Marathon Race	Agia Larissa	2016	April	Mountain Race	http://www.agiarunners.gr/p/blog-page_17.html
2	Zakynthos Night Run	Zakynthos	N/A	June	Race	https://zakynthosnightrun.net/
3	Spetses Mini Marathon	Spetses	2011	October	Race	http://spetsesmarathon.com/
4	Kavala Trail Run	Kavala	2013	March	Mountain Race	http://kavalatrailrun.sxokavalas.gr/
5	Kalamata Race	Kalamata	2001	April	Race	https://sdym.gr/
6	Mitsero Mine Run	Mitsero Cyprus	2018	February	Cross Country Race	https://www.mitserorun.com/
7	Dromea Green Racing	Troodos Cyprus	N/A	December	Race	https://www.dromearacing.com/
8	Psiloritis Race	Rethymno Crete	2011	June	Race	https://www.psiloritisrace.com/
9	Plastiras Lake Trail Run	Plastira Lake Karditsa	2017	April	Race	https://plastiraslaketrailrace.gr/
10	Race of Sacrifice of Souliotes	Souli Thesprotia	2012	June	Mountain Race	http://souli-running.blogspot.com/
11	Hard Sun Trail Run	Agkistri	2020	March	Mountain Race	http://hardsunrace.gr/
12	Ioakeim Lioulias Race	Krokos Kozanis	2019	July	Race	http://www.runningnews.gr/item.php?id=40145
13	Virgin Forest Trail	Paranesti Dramas	2007	October	Mountain Race	https://www.paranestivft.gr/
14	Run Greece Irakleio	Crete	2013	April	Race	https://www.run-greece.gr/
15	Katerini Run	Katerini Pieria	2009	March	Race	www.zeusrunnersclub.gr
16	Olympus Mythical Trail	Olympus	2012	July	Mountain Race	https://www.omt100.com/
17	Olympus Marathon	Litochoro	2004	June	Race	http://www.olympus-marathon.com/
18	Lamia Night & Run	Lamia	2014	May	Race	https://lamiarunfestival.gr/
19	Ioannina Lake Run	Ioannina	2007	September	Race	https://www.ioanninalakerun.gr/
20	Race "Ta Iroa"	Agios Ioannis Cyprus	1987	August	Race	https://www.runningincyprus.com/
21	Water Night Route	Edessa	2014	October	Night Race	http://www.edessacity.gr/civilization/routes-water_night_route/index.htm
22	Serifos Sunset Race	Serifos	2015	September	Race	https://www.serifosrace.com/
23	Iron Village Trail DH Race	Kastoria	2018	July	Road Cycling	http://www.downhill.gr/
24	No Finish Line	Athens	2017	October	Charity Race	https://www.nflathens.com/
25	Giannitsa Sacrifice Race	Pella	N/A	October	Race	https://www.giannitsa.gr/marathon/?page_id=131
26	HolisteRun	Drama	2016	June	Night Race	http://www.holisterun.com/night/
27	Kavala Night City Run	Kavala	2014	September	Night Race	https://kavalanightrun.gr/
28	Green Half Marathon	Lefkada	2011	May	Race	https://greenhalfmarathon.gr/
29	Flampouro Race	Florina	2016	June	Mountain Race	https://www.advendure.com/index.php/deltia-typou/flampouro-race

3.7.3 Qualitative online interviews

The research team consisted of a total force of 10 people (seniors and this thesis writer). Taking into account the social-distancing measures, the current project was re-designed and video-calling was used as the most obvious method for data generation (Jowett, 2020). Since researchers and participants were not allowed to travel, online platforms like Google Meet and Skype were used to mitigate those challenges. Before the interviews, the researchers informed the participants via email or telephone, and an appointment setting up the date of the discussion of the process was made. In a few cases, issues arose because some respondents were not able to use the technology or had a poor WIFI, so telephone interviews were used. For online platforms interviews, there was a video contact with the participant. By this way, the interaction is facilitated and depth to the interview is brought (Greeff, 2020).

Concerning the sampling process, the main points were the following:

- Synchronous (real-time) online communication was chosen.
- Interviews were conducted one-to-one in an online chat.
- Interviews were digitally recorded to ensure accuracy (Greeff, 2020).
- Right afterwards, the researchers listened to the recorder interviews to ensure its quality and completeness (Greeff, 2020).
- Data were stored as soon as possible in order to protect them and avoid possible data loss (Greeff, 2020).
- All the respondents provided their consent before the interviews, which all were conducted in Greek.
- Most of the interviews lasted around 40 minutes, although there had been some variations in the length.

3.8 Organizers data analysis

Open coding, the first level of coding, helped the researcher determine distinct concepts and themes for categorization (Williams & Moser, 2019). The researcher had to go beyond the organizers' responses and organize concept-indicators in a systematic way

(Williams & Moser, 2019). Then, the second level of coding, that is axial coding, followed. Open coded data was reassembled and themes were further improved and aligned, resulting in categories and sub-categories (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). During this stage, the findings were compared with the literature and elements were searched in order to authenticate or reject assumptions. Through the third level of coding, the selective coding, categories were integrated in main themes. The categories and subcategories that were identified are discussed in the next section (3.8.1).

3.8.1 Results

The researcher started by evaluating all interviewees on the same level. Five main themes (tourism seasonality, road race, local professionals, synergy, sustainability) emerged from the qualitative research. The coding structure, which is the result of the present coding and of the Delphi analysis that followed, will be presented in Chapter 4.

❖ *Tourism Seasonality*

The coding process determined the initial concepts and identified 3 Open Codes. Then, the concepts were refined and categorized in one axial code, Sport Event Seasonality. Finally, the Theme Seasonality was constructed (Figure 3.6)
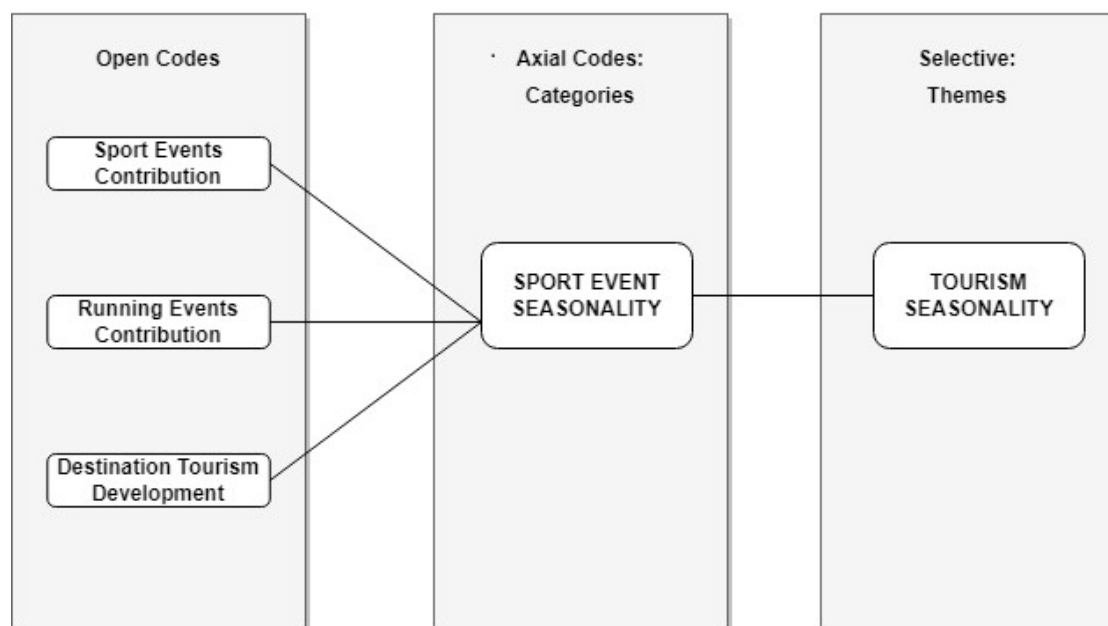
Figure 3.6
Tourism Seasonality Selective Theme Creation

Sports Events Contribution

The analysis revealed organizers' positive perceptions about the contribution of sports events to seasonality mitigation.

Sport events significantly contribute to the boost of the region. Apart from the days of the event, when the hotels are full of residents, athletes come here very often for training and some of them either stay at the hotels or set up their own tents. As long as sport event exist here, more athletes with their families will come in other seasons except for the event.
(Organizer 5)

Many athletes have the opportunity to visit our village on the days of the sport event. They see the beauties of our region and they may plan a future trip to the village. The local professionals certainly look forward to such events, when people gather and sales increase in off-season.
(Organizer 26)

Running Events Contribution

The results indicate remarkable consistencies in perceptions of organizers as regards the contribution of running events to seasonality mitigation.

I believe that the impact on tourism seasonality and on society is greater than the economic impact. Participation on our race can be done individually but most run as groups. In fact, they usually train as a team even weeks before the race, in off-season. This is how relationships develop among the individuals of a group. But relationships between residents and visitors cannot be cultivated in just one day
(Organizer 7)

The event results in a large number of visitors in the area. It is an important advertisement and every year we see even more visitors who may initially come for the race but then they come again with their families for a vacation. This has a significant impact on businesses and on their revenue. The period that the event takes place is before the beginning of the tourist season and it is a test for them to be ready in terms of staff and facilities before the intense tourist mobility
(Organizer 14)

During the days of the road race, the local professionals work as if it was August (high season)
(Organizer 18)

Destination Tourism Development

Most of the respondents are passionate about their region. They find a lot of potential to help it develop as a tourism destination, even in shoulder or low season. Since they are also themselves runners, joggers or walkers, their focus is to attract sport tourists who could venture into their local community, engage in sports and in the natural and

local cultural activities. Their experience as runners in other races could serve as a good example for their own race; they are aware of the challenges and despite them, they are trying to achieve tourism promotion for their region.

The race is held before the starting period of the tourist season, when local businesses are prepared for the new season; consequently, the race helps to increase their traffic
(Organizer 14)

Our island mainly depends on domestic tourism. We have chosen autumn in order to develop tourism in the island through the elongation of tourist season. In fact, our race attracts tourists from abroad and our aim is to attract visitors in low season
(Organizer 1)

During the weekend of the race lots of people visit our little region thanks to the event. For example, last year we had 550 participants, and in addition with their friends and family, more than 1000 visitors came here. We want to give a chance to the local area and the hotels to fill with people. When we go abroad for running, we arrive on Tuesday although the race is on Saturday; we want to organize something similar for our region.
(Organizer 29)

This date is not exactly during low but around shoulder season. Almost 500 athletes and families visit us, along with some entries from abroad, who all would not have come if it had not been for the event. Thanks to the race, the area is developed for tourism.
(Organizer 13)

Participants from Balkan countries are attracted and the accommodation is at 100% full during the days of the event
(Organizer 21)

We chose this date because it is an opportunity to elongate a bit the tourist season on the island. By this way, an alternative tourist product is developed which did not exist on the island before
(Organizer 2)

Before the event there was almost nothing in the area of the race. Only a few locals used to walk to the slightly higher places of the mountain and just some hunters or people who pastured their animals, nothing else. But then, tourism was gradually developed close to the river while some people continue to walk to the highest points of the area
(Organizer 5)

Our purpose is to connect the races with the tourism. So, we either organize the race in September or in spring, in order to attract people from different parts of Greece. Gradually, athletes from abroad start taking part. Besides, through the videos, the drone shots, the photos etc., an incredible image is provided to the general public which gets knowledge of the beauties of our area.
(Organizer 17)

We are not the destination where thousands of tourists come every year, but we have a smaller audience. Yet, the event imprints on the destination because people who come are repeat visitors. They come every year not only for the event but many of them tend to come twice or three times later in the year, with a different mood, to see the area more carefully, as they are free from the stress of participation and success in the event. That is, they will come for a regular tourist visit and they will speak about it to some friends; some of them will also decide to come. This is the other indirect benefit for this place, because the recipients of the information of the region are not only the athletes but also various others
(Organizer 8)

I remember some years ago, when we sat in our office and said that if 100 athletes
would come in our race, we would be satisfied. We do not have any benefit from
the stage of the race, we do all this just because we love our region and
we want to offer. We want to highlight the natural
beauties of the area and offer to its tourism development.
(Organizer 24)

The largest means of tourist communication for our region is our race because everything that regards
the promotion of the race is so intense that surpasses our city as a destination and highlights other
valuable things, like culture and environment. We always keep these values and we also suggest that
every weekend groups come here and run around for training
(Organizer 11)

We chose a period where the island could be used for tourist purposes but we wanted to
avoid high season. It was important for us to produce sport tourism on the island
and the organization of our race proves that some events can be done if there is the will
(Organizer 18)

We are thinking of organizing a similar event in spring because the city needs tourism.
The event will have to do with the cherry blossom season. Through the promotion of the event,
our region will also be highlighted.
(Organizer 6)

We are a small island, not particularly busy, where the high season lasts between 20 July
and end of August. So, we organize the event in order to extend the tourist season.
After the pressure of August, the locals relax and the restaurants, cafes, bars,
hotels are able to accommodate and manage the flow of tourists. The participants
are around 600 but they can reach up to 1000 visitors during the days of the event.
Some participants, who are mainly foreigners, combine sports activity with vacation and
stay some days longer. Greeks recently tend to do the same, although the majority
comes just for the days of the race
(Organizer 12)

❖ ***Road Race***

The coding process determined the next initial concepts and identified 19 Open Codes. Then, the concepts were refined and categorized in 3 Axial Codes, the Elongation, Success and Race Organizers Categories. Finally, the Road Race Theme was constructed (Figure 3.7).
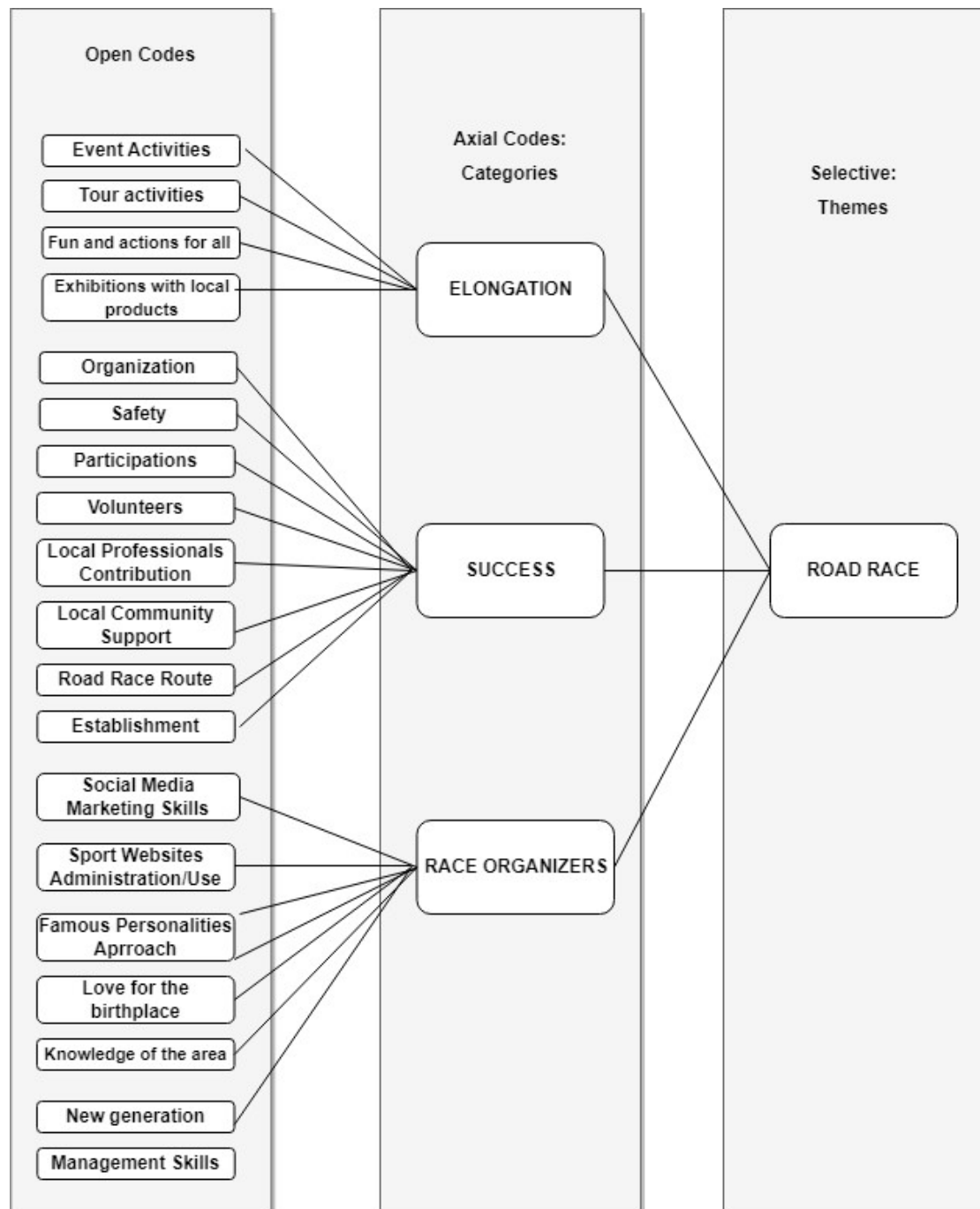
Figure 3.7
Road Race Selective Theme Creation

- **Elongation**

Event activities (music, culture, seminars)

In general, there is an agreement throughout multi-day events. The respondents seem to be in favor of an event that would last at least two-days or more. Some of them opt for sports such as another running race or for cycling and some for other kind of activities, like cultural ones.

We would like to enrich the race with other events. We are thinking of adding cycling for the next years. It will be the number one event that could really complete our race
(Organizer 10)

We have a very positive attitude to more activities, that would include the runners or the children. For example, we had cooperated with the local team in order to organize archery and with a gym where people could do yoga
(Organizer 13)

A race enriched with more events is a future goal for us. Probably we would start with a race on Friday, another event on Saturday and the final one on Sunday. So, people would come on the island on Thursday night to Friday morning and leave on Sunday night. It would develop the island, it would help the local professionals (businesses, restaurants, taxis, boats, hotels). By this way, the local community would embrace the event even more. However, the philosophy of our event is stable and has to do with mountain running. So, I would not enrich it with other events like swimming or mountain bike to avoid missing the point. On the other hand, I am thinking to add a vertical race that is basically a big uphill and you run it as fast as you can.
(Organizer 2)

We would like to include a cycling race and various other activities to attract more people and stay in the area for at least 3 days
(Organizer 19)

Athletes would stay more than 3 days, if they found something attractive here, like another race. But this is not possible for those participants who run the long race. At this moment, we are in discussions with the municipality to add a cycling event
(Organizer 5)

The day before the race we organize an event in the central hall of the city for all the athletes and the children from all over our Region who won medals or had international participations the previous year
(Organizer 17)

We are planning to add a 3km race on Saturday because we want to see local families and other people outside this weekend
(Organizer 9)

We have a total of 9 different races during the days of the event in order to achieve pan-European and worldwide level. In addition to sporting events, we provide cultural and artistic events in order to promote sports, art and culture of the region
(Organizer 23)

Along with the race, other events take place at the same time, like a gastronomic festival, some music events, painting, and pyrography. If our race could be combined with another event, powerful dynamics would be given.
(Organizer 26)

Not many people prefer to stay in our region. Maybe if there was an increase in the days that the event lasts and if more parallel activities were organized, then we could see some difference. We could add more sport activities. That is how families could also come.
(Organizer 7)

Tour activities (tours in the area, natural and historical sights etc.)

Some respondents think to promote another side of their region through, for example, guided tours in order to share a bit of their culture and their home.

We are in contact with a tourism professional in order to organize group tours and walks on natural trails. Groups can come in our region and run through the trails and through various routes, also make cultural routes even within the city. There is a lot of scope for this.
(Organizer 22)

We have already included some guided tours, like walking tourism.
We have also submitted the petition to the ministry for mapping some paths.
(Organizer 28)

We are thinking to combine the race with the archaeological museum.
(Organizer 7)

Exhibitions with local products of the region

Along with the race, some organizers are thinking of staging events and fairs in order to welcome athletes and other visitors to their region, entertain them and inform them about the local cuisine, tradition, folklore and culture.

We discuss to enrich the race with many topics. For example, some local fairs that would promote all the Greek culture, including the special diet of our region
(Organizer 28)

Apart from other sporting events, like cycling or football tournaments that we discuss to add, we already organize events with a different content like local fairs with food, traditional dances and music
(Organizer 19)

We are planning to organize a permanent fair with local dishes along with the race
(Organizer 17)

In the end of the race, we have a local fair with traditional pies and local fruit
(Organizer 24)

A conference or a fair could be organized as long as there is a timelessness and is repeated every year. The race could give the rise to all the rest activities that will give some special characteristics (like our local cuisine) to stand out
(Organizer 11)

Fun and actions for all visitors (athletes, escorts, family)

Some of them opt for activities to offer fun and entertainment to the athletes, visitors, children and guests that will attend the event. Given that many runners have families, organizers search for options that would pull all the family into a recreational running or similar activities (Nowak, & Chalimoniuk-Nowak, 2015).

In our program, we have added some extra activities as a fun option for those visitors who do not participate in the race. By this way, they have the opportunity to do something different, in the range of sports, like yoga or swimming. We also hold some food events for the visitors that do not do sports
(Organizer 1).

We always try to have new ideas that bring the vision of hope for everyone,
like music bands or air shows
(Organizer 21)

We are planning to include some children's playgrounds either with painting or with music groups.
Also, in some places, we want to add traditional dance clubs to encourage people to dance in order to make the event enjoyable for everyone
(Organizer 9)

After the race the club organizes a fiesta for all and we treat souvlaki
(Organizer 3)

- **Success**

<u>Organization</u>

Additionally, the attention is focused on the proper organization of the race including the preparation, the logistics, the sign-ups and the best sports results for the runners in order to convey that organizers have the reliability to make a successful event. Indeed, the organization of a small-scale sport event, which will include well planning, proper time execution and access, is among the factors of success (Kaplanidou et al., 2013).

A proper organization that meets the requirements of the participants is very important
(Organizer 1)

The race requires a proper organization of at least two months, which is
something that cannot be completed within a week.
(Organizer 10)

Organization is the most crucial factor. Organization is multi-level, it is not about just the athletes that come here and run in the coastal part of the city, but many other challenges need to be addressed. For example, in cooperation with people from local associations, we organize the square, we find sponsors and also help them for the contribution they provide.
(Organizer 16)

Right organization means that athletes know the schedules of the event, where they will run,
they will have their numbers, they know the routes which have been sent to them
via GPS in order to download them on their watches. Also, organization
means a feast after the race.
(Organizer 29)

Organization is basic. The athlete will choose the race based on the organization
and the support of the race, like the volunteer stations, for which our race is famous.
Besides, in difficult cases such as the bad weather or an injury, the human staff serves
the athletes and takes them safely to the center point of the event
(Organizer 5)

Everything has to be well settled and organized. Everything must be on time. You cannot program the
children's start race at 09:00 and begin at 09:30. Medical coverage is also important. Then, it is
important to "close" the city, that is no cars circulate apart from first aid ones. The organizational
part must be meticulously planned, which is our purpose although it is difficult. Therefore, especially
during the last month before the race many people deal with it, our technical advisor, the coaches, the
volunteers, they all share responsibilities. Otherwise, it would be easy to lose control.
(Organizer 17)

We want to be consistent with our announcements to people who come to take part,
which requires a very good organization. Athletes highly appreciate
the consistency with the implementation schedule
(Organizer 8)

An event well organized is a successful event. This includes accommodation and food at
affordable prices for the athlete, a sound developed sport program and proper organization
(Organizer 18)

Regardless of the event, organization and good preparation are
all you need for a successful race
(Organizer 26)

Safety

One other aspect is the importance of safety issues in providing a successful running event. Organizers analyze their thoughts about safety, explaining that in outdoor sporting events, athletes often push their bodies to their limits and proper staff must be on-site and ready to meet the needs of the athletes. Perić et al. (2018) examined active participants of 16 small-scale outdoor sport events and confirm the importance of safety for sport tourists, who tend to be more sensitive to these issues in relation to non-sport tourists. Below, the organizers give some examples of safety issues that may arise within a running event.

The success of the event will be judged by the runners but it is of paramount
important to provide a safe route.
(Organizer 22)

Safety means that the routes are well placed in order for athletes to avoid getting lost.
Also, marshals should be present in case someone hits; an action plan be provided with directions how
to save the runner and communicate with the security in case of an emergency
(Organizer 29)

The first thing I focus is the athletes' safety. That is, when the runners come, once they feel safe, they
will release themselves and will enjoy the race more. What do I mean with "safety"? I mean to have
enough rescuers, doctors, an ambulance, and have sufficiently covered all aspects of safety. It is
important for the athletes to know that they will run in the mountain and they will be safe
(Organizer 2)

Safety is the first issue, mainly along the route, in order to protect the participants.
The health coverage in our event is framed by many clubs, like the Greek Red Cross,
the race doctors and others
(Organizer 9)

The safety of athletes and the safety of volunteers are the most important for us
(Organizer 23)

Above all, there is the safety of the athlete. On the day of the race, we spread teams everywhere; the
rescue team of our region along with the raider team support us and they help us close the roads.
There are jeeps and signs everywhere so that the athletes know where to go, and also there are
refueling stations with bananas and water. All these years, we did not have the slightest accident.
We are trying to cover every need for safety, we have ruled out any kind of accident because
it is a mountain race and you can understand that an animal may come out to the athlete anytime.
Also, we have put cars, bicycles and motorbikes and pedestrians at every intersection
in order to avoid any possibility of an accident
(Organizer 24)

The most important for us is to make the event and everything goes well in terms of safety and health,
so that there is no problem and the days go by, the event ends and everything is alright
(Organizer 27)

Participations

Another success factor of a road race during low-season that emerged is the participations of the runners. Organizers want to see many participants, from Greece and abroad, who, after the race, will leave happy and satisfied.

Our motto is "participation is victory!". In fact, the success of the event all these
years is the increasing number of participants. So, our primary goal
is to attract more and more people to the island
(Organizer 1)

We believe that a successful event is an event that will attract many participants
who will come and go satisfied and happy with their experience
(Organizer 14)

Our goal is to maintain the quality of our race and increase the quantity of the participants.
For example, if we had 5.500 participants this year with the same
perfect organization, it would be an absolute success
(Organizer 17)

Attracting many athletes from abroad is the success for us
(Organizer 23)

The participations of the athletes themselves is decisive.
If they do not exist, the event will not exist either
(Organizer 7)

The participations, the people who will come, is the success for us. And of course,
to see the happiness and the satisfaction on the faces of the participants
(Organizer 15)

Volunteers

The significance of volunteering for the success of a sport event is recognized (Kaplanidou et al., 2013; Kim, 2017; Ma & Draper, 2017). Summarizing the positions of the participants in the study, they are of the opinion that without volunteers the event cannot be held; they are absolutely necessary for its smooth organization which includes not only procedural issues but also the psychology of the athletes during the race, especially for mountain races when the runner is isolated. Volunteers are usually recruited from the family or friend's environment or the local community and tend to make long-term and stable relationships with the organizers.

Our race has a total force of over 350 volunteers per year, and the local population consists the largest
part among them. We also have volunteers from many parts of the country, like Athens, Thessaloniki
and the surrounding areas. Their support is invaluable
(Organizer 1)

We definitely need volunteers and it is a big part of the success of a race. During our race,
which is a mountainous one, sometimes the runners are isolated and the presence
of a volunteer offering some water is invaluable
(Organizer 10)

To conduct a race, many volunteers are needed. If you calculate that we need
6 water stations in total for a race, over 40 volunteers from the local community are required.
(Organizer 22)

Without volunteers, an event cannot be held. We definitely want people to help us, paths
are not like the road, it is difficult to put volunteers control some remote places
(Organizer 29)

Volunteerism and especially local volunteerism are missing. Every year we need several volunteers to
complete the whole process and since we cannot find them, our friends and families help us, for
example at the secretariats, the stations and the cleaning of the route. It would help a lot if more people
would support the whole event. We need support mainly as regards the organization but it would be
crucial even for its advertising. We consider volunteerism as the most important participation,
perhaps even more important than the participation in the race
(Organizer 14)

We have many volunteers that help us to set the event up, including the maintenance of the trails
before or the issues on the day of the race, like the secretariat or presence at the crossroads
in the mountain at the time of the race. Although we have volunteers from other regions,
we prefer the locals because we want it to be a local effort
(Organizer 2)

The level of services we provide is related to the quality of the event. Talking about services, I refer to the human resources that participate in the implementation of the event, namely the volunteers. In short, volunteers are not a negligible number since they exceed the 100. Our staff must be well trained, know exactly what to do, how to treat people, which are some things that are gained from experience. Most of our volunteers have a duration working with us, they work with us every year, and it is important to have some characteristics that are appreciated by our audience
(Organizer 8)

The community of the volunteers has been built year after year; they are people who are really interested. They are also people that we find through our close friendly and family environment but also through a community that deals with mountains and are emotionally attached to it. So, we set up a relationship that we keep warm. All this thing has become a friendship and from our part we make sure that we give a small incentive to volunteers because it is mainly a moral reward and these people feel themselves as part of this family. It is very important to give the feeling that we are a family and no one should miss from these events. Emotional and mental ties have been developed and every time we organize a race we have almost the same volunteers. Many of them, the largest percentage, come from the local community, but there is a smaller part who comes from other parts of the country. There are also those who offer to participate because they are impressed by the event and through their participation they feel that they can influence and gain from the experience
(Organizer 8)

The more volunteers there are, the better a sporting event can be. The visitors are happy to see the locals being part of a race which they embrace
(Organizer 12)

In recent years, we have also rewarded groups of volunteers. Their participation is crucial for the event and we do not take it for granted
(Organizer 7)

You need persons, you need volunteers, all the rest can be effectuated
(Organizer 3)

Local Professionals Contribution

According to some interviewees, contribution in terms of financial support or other kind of sponsorships, is a factor of success. For small events, even small sponsorships can leave their footprint in the community (Eddy & Cork, 2019).

Local sponsorships are drivers for success because the costs we have to cover every year are really large
(Organizer 9).

We cooperate with several local professionals in terms of sponsorships and other equipment. For example, they supply us with bicycles for those who need them, with sports equipment, etc.
(Organizer 1)

The financial support is a key issue and will help us for the next events
(Organizer 27)

For an event like this, the resources and the sponsorships are important
(Organizer 25)

Financial and other kind of aid from the part of the local businesses
is an important element for success.
(Organizer 3)

Local Community Support

Several researchers have recognized the importance of the active support of the local population in the success and the sustainability of tourism (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). In the present study, the organizers strongly ask for the involvement and investment of the local community, both inhabitants and authorities, as a key element for the success of the event. Local support may be demonstrated by financial support, interest and help in the project, reduction of bureaucracy, understanding and cooperation, volunteering, assistance and other event-related activities. For example, there is a group of organizers who express dissatisfaction about the lack of support and its consequences.

We need a significant number of locals who will be involved and willing to help us. In terms
of natural environment, I do not think we are lagging behind other destinations. But, indeed,
what we need is even greater support. We are just a small club and we cannot implement
all these ideas that we have without local support
(Organizer 9)

We need support from the locals. We are trying hard to convince them to help us. There is so much
bureaucracy and recently, there have been so many budget cuts from the part of the municipality, that
we feel that we are some poor relatives that they want to avoid.
(Organizer 10)

Our local community should support us more, including the competent bodies,
the hotels and of course the residents
(Organizer 29)

It is important to have support from the local community, the local bodies and the municipality. The
more collective the effort is, the more attractive the event is.
(Organizer 13)

Apart from the help of 1-2 hotels and some friends who are local professionals and provided us with
some financial support, we had no other support and the municipality also did not help us
(Organizer 2)

The organizers must be supported by locals, all the bodies,
the sponsors and the community
(Organizer 20)

We definitely want support, especially from the municipality. Also, our fellow citizens should be calmer
during the days of the event. They must understand that there will be more noise in our city for a while.
In a few words, we need support and understanding from the locals
(Organizer 27)

*Organizing an event of this size incurs many responsibilities. The absolute support and
cooperation of a large number of individuals and groups is needed; the municipality,
the local volunteers and the professionals*
(Organizer 7)

*Local support, especially from the municipality and the Region, is needed.
Without them, the event is not possible.*
(Organizer 3)

There are many who support us in theory, but in practice we would like to have more results
(Organizer 21)

There is also another group of organizers who enjoy local support and recite the results,
the feelings and the outcomes.

*Local support is priceless. There is hospitality and respect from the locals.
There are moments when old women offer water and pies to the athletes, and this is very touching*
(Organizer 28)

*Our race has become famous because it is organized for so many years with a very good support from
the municipality, the professionals, the volunteers and the locals, which is something well appreciated
from the runners, given the increasing trend in the participations.*
(Organizer 5)

*Without local support we cannot achieve the quality and the perfection we target. We contribute with
our know-how, our materials and our people but we cannot rely only on our forces. Without the
support of the local authorities, which give us the city, the railings, the services and help with the
registrations etc., nothing would have been possible for us. The truth is that if the society does not
embrace an event, its success will be more difficult. We are pleased to say that our society has truly
loved it, and we call it now not our event, but of everyone, because all locals participate!*
(Organizer 17)

*Even in the first year of the race, many locals came just because nothing similar had ever
happened in our region. The most important is that then the locals embraced the event
and along with the 60-70 volunteers, they all tried hard for this success*
(Organizer 24)

*The race is not ours, it is the city's race; without the involvement of the community it would be a race
like those that anyone could do. It is not a matter of resources, but a matter of people. The secret
is not the money; it is the local support through the help of people, volunteers and all participants.
Moreover, every local professional is well informed about the race in order to
communicate to the visitors all the details about the race and the city.
They are positive to the event because they know that they will also benefit.*
(Organizer 11)

*Whichever local support is important. Whatever the local community has to offer you is needed, even if
it has to do with their tolerance and confidence. For example, many locals use their motorcycles on the
island, a fact that may create security problems on the day of the event. So, even their support has to do
with not entering the route with their motorbike or car, is still a connection and a participation*
(Organizer 12)

*Local authorities are already involved and their support is necessary. Also, we
have the consent of the local people because without their support, a road race
cannot be organized*
(Organizer 25)

Road Race Route

Some interviewees appreciate the natural heritage of their region and have proudly designed a route that the athletes will enjoy. Besides promoting the area, the route of the race is an attracting pole for the athletes.

Runners want to enjoy a good and beautiful route in order to have
a good time, positive energy and fun.
(Organizer 22)

The route of the race contributes a lot to the promotion of our area. It starts from the local springs,
then it passes next to the big springs, and for some kilometers it is just next to the river. Then, it
continues to our historical paths and ends to the historical wells. So, the participant has the
opportunity to run through several points and have an amazing experience
(Organizer 14)

Race truck is the most basic. The organizers must respond to the choice made by each runner
to travel to come and run to your place. The athletes of mountain races choose the route
based on its beauty and its difficulty, because there are routes that have many large
altitudes, and few other routes are milder
(Organizer 5)

Our race is held in one of the most beautiful routes in Greece
and we invite people to run there
(Organizer 11)

A factor that could add to the success of the event is the route. We could include routes next to our
river but there is some water pollution in it. Although it is considered one of the best navigable rivers
in Greece, unfortunately it is polluted. Through the inclusion of sport routes, its protection could be
strengthened and at the same time nature could be observed
(Organizer 7)

Establishment

Another key that arose out of the analysis of the collected data relates to the establishment of the race in the consciousnesses of the participants which enables athletes to coordinate their choices effectively. Thus, participants are engaged in a commitment process for the race and make their trusting choices accordingly. The perceived image of the marathon seems to be a factor to revisit a destination (Wicker et al., 2012).

The establishment of a race and the fact that participants state that will come again are
both important for its success as participants will transfer their experience to others
(Organizer 14)

It is important for a race to become established and get a good reputation.
Athletes choose it depending on the date, the distance, the type of the field, the organizers, their
satisfaction. That means that throughout the year every road race has been fixed and new matches
are added every year, some of which are very close to dates with some others
(Organizer 5)

The event has been well established and serves a specific purpose. Also, the fact that an event open to
everyone is organized every year in our island, an event where tourists that still remain in the island
can participate, probably extends the tourist season a bit. Year per year, the event becomes more
recognizable from the surrounding areas and it may be an incentive for visitors to come
(Organizer 9)

The quality of an event increases its degree of reliability and establishes the race in the
consciousnesses of the participants. When you organize a non-credible event, which does not leave a
good impression to those who take part, it is sure that they will not return again. It is easy to lose the
audience because audience is easily lost in non-established events and then it is difficult to gain it back
(Organizer 8)

Our event has gained a worldwide fame and it is the reason why the tourist season starts in the best
way in our region as hundreds of Greeks and foreigners visit our place. It has been established
worldwide at a date which is known to thousands of athletes who participated. The event has been a
well-established event which includes a wide range of other races and according to the information we
gain from local professionals, the 3-day event is the most profitable time of the year
(Organizer 23)

In the beginning, we had problems, things were different but as soon as the race was established, the
obstacles have been overcome because it is an event that locals wait for
(Organizer 20)

The aim is to keep in the minds of the participants that the first day of the month, we have something to
do. That is, we want to establish something stable.
(Organizer 15)

- **Race Organizers**

Social Media Marketing Skills

In reference with the promotion of the event, social media is considered by the organizers as a powerful way to stay connected with the athletes. However, most respondents are limited to Facebook while others outsource the digital work to professionals. The contribution of social media to the sustainable tourism recovery after COVID-19 pandemic (Hysa et al., 2022) and to the marketing of sport events has been discussed in literature (Harb, 2019); yet, most studies examine social networks in relation to major sporting events.

I believe that the new technologies, such as social media, applications, websites etc.
make a significant contribution to the promotion of the race
(Organizer 9).

150

We are totally in line with the new technologies. Our Instagram account has 43.000 followers
and I can say that the publicity and the reputation of the event highly depend on the
social media influence. We pay great attention to the promotion through social media;
we regularly update our posts to keep in touch with our followers
(Organizer 1)

Social media is important but we only have a Facebook page. But we work a lot, and we are so tired.
All the race needs effort and we do not have time to check other possibilities.
(Organizer 10)

We are constantly trying to improve social media tools because they are very helpful;
however, we are not so good at it because we only have a Facebook page
(Organizer 16)

Social media are our big and measurable weapons
(Organizer 21)

The contribution of social media was important because we advertised the event and made it known to
the public. On our Facebook page, people sent their reviews which were very positive
(Organizer 19)

People who have undertaken the social media promotion of the event are
experienced journalists. Since we started incorporating social media tools, we
have experienced a significant increase in the participations
(Organizer 9)

We maintain a Facebook page where we upload all the events that we organize, and our followers
know our race. They call us even from Athens and from running sites to ask us about the race
(Organizer 24)

It is impossible to hold an event without social media. The more you use them, the more successful the
event is. However, everything incurs a cost because we are forced to pay a lot for advertising purposes
let alone the fact that there are too many social media, which are not necessary. So, we try to keep a
balance in order to have the best result based on our budget
(Organizer 20)

We have made our own team for the promotion of the race, which consists of 12-13 people. They are
all very good professionals. As regards social media, they are specialized, as regards photography, we
cooperate with two agencies. Little by little we are trying to do more and better because the
communication is for us the number one. A successful race that is not advertised through
social media and other means, will be forgotten!
(Organizer 11)

We only use Facebook and we make some targeted promotions for the time being. But the more
these technologies develop, the more the organization of the race will be improved
(Organizer 26)

Communication through social media is required and necessary.
We have people who work to support this part
(Organizer 12)

Social media is the main way through which we advertise the event.
However, we also rely on traditional methods, such as the word of mouth
(Organizer 25)

Sport Websites Administration/Use

Generally, the interviewees maintain a website where they promote their race but they also address to well-known websites which present everything that happens in Greece and the world regarding running, training, runners' clubs, race calendar etc.

Although our city is a very tourist area, through our website we manage to successfully promote both the event and our region
(Organizer 21)

We maintain a website where we try to integrate as much information as necessary. But we do not make any other efforts because it is clearly an event in nature and does not concern technology
(Organizer 8)

We are constantly trying to improve the experience of the participant, for example, we pay attention to the website, we try to improve the registration process and all the part until the athlete comes to the island
(Organizer 12)

We are registered in large official websites in Greece that advertise the races, whether they have to do with mountain running or other type of running. All those who are involved in running, visit these sites to be informed
(Organizer 24)

Promotion in concerned websites is something that all organizations make
(Organizer 3)

Famous Personalities approach

Analysis revealed another issue which is the participation of famous personalities in the race. Organizers believe that it would be interesting for the athletes and visitors to see celebrities in action or just being there.

Most athletes come here to run and leave, they do not have escorts. But surely, if it had been for a famous person, an artist or a group that would present something, this would be positive
(Organizer 5)

If we hosted some great and well-known athletes during the event, then we could attract more people
(Organizer 7)

Some organizers already do so by bringing together celebrities and other people in order to attract the attention.

Very well-known athletes have come to our race, such as the first winner of Thessaloniki Marathon or another one professional athlete who has the national record.
(Organizer 24)

Celebrities help us, especially if they are originated in our region
(Organizer 11)

Love for the birthplace

A shared love and pride for the place they organize the race emerged; these feelings are related to the uniqueness of every region and the interviewees' willingness to contribute to the highlighting of the area as a tourist destination.

I firmly believe that the event can contribute to the tourist development of the city. We love this city from the bottom of our hearts, and from our side, we want to contribute as much as we can. We started the event because we love nature. We want to see people go to the forest. After its fire almost 35 years ago, we decided to create a race for the people to visit the forest and also, to create a protection against arsonists. We believe that the more people are in the mountain, the harder it is for someone to damage the forest.
(Organizer 10)

Sport tourism is an uncharted territory for our island. There are some points in the mountain, like small villages, where the locals used to hide from Germans during the war. So, for sure the runners will get excited and they may pick up some friends and visit the island again. I think that definitely the event offers to the tourism in the island
(Organizer 2)

We want to make people run, walk and see their city without cars. If the route becomes much more beautiful, its success will increase. An example, is the tree planting that took place along the central road. One of our purposes is to make our event be the cause for improvement of the route, the road, the environment and the city. That is to plant trees and to clean the area and the squares
(Organizer 17)

We want the event to surpass Greek borders and athletes come from all over the world, given the reputation of our region. This is a peculiarity that we have here in Greece as we organize a sporting event on a place that it is essentially a global symbol and recognizable all over the world
(Organizer 8)

Knowledge of the area

As runners who have experienced different weather conditions, steep climbs or unyielding terrain, organizers deem the knowledge of the region and paths as important for the avoidance of accidents and for the athletes to have the opportunity to enjoy the local beauties.

The organizers must have knowledge about the subject. It is different to organize an event as a businessman than as a runner, who runs on the paths and knows what he/she will face.
(Organizer 29)

Our area is one of natural beauty and several historical sites. The paths of the race are specially selected points for the participant to see our local beauties.
(Organizer 14)

There are beautiful routes for mountain running in our mountain village and we have especially chosen the routes because they are literally in nature; they are on rural community roads where there is no danger. We do not have any paths that could cause any risk of accident.
(Organizer 24)

<u>New generation</u>

In reference to the inspiration of the youth, they display considerable alignment perhaps because many of them are runners and want to inspire the power of sports to the youngsters. Respondents pride themselves on offering unique experiences to the young generation through the race and they love hearing the great feedback that the race has on the participants.

We organize this athletic event, in the light of entertaining our children
and to take messages to them beyond sport
(Organizer 9)

Through our club, we have invested a lot for the new generation. We have renovated two schools and we have invested in climbing for the children. At the moment, many children come here to climb and this is a profit not for our club, but for all the city
(Organizer 10)

Given that there are not sport facilities or sport activities on the island, the event will contribute to the young children. If they see so many people running and get in the mood of exercising, they may start engage in sports in some way
(Organizer 2)

We want to spread the message to the new generation that whatever happens in our life, it is still beautiful and we should enjoy it. For example, in the past we gave a special award to an athlete who runs with an artificial limb. Through volunteering, sports, running we want to spread the benefits of sports and to make people forget for a while the pressure of everyday life. As an organizing committee, we want to disseminate the feeling of the organization of a race and the experiences that young people gain after it. Its organization incurs a lot of difficulties but when everything comes to an end, you enjoy the result that all these athletes and visitors had been attracted by your race. And the greatest satisfaction is when you see young children who laugh and play around;
it is then, when all your fatigue is paid back with satisfaction.
(Organizer 24)

Through their experiential participation, either as spectators, or as volunteers, or runners, young people come up with the values of sports and sustainable environment.
(Organizer 11)

A sport activity of this type usually tries to create an incentive, especially to parents, to turn their children to sport because there is no corresponding culture from the school and children are not educated to swim, run or do sports
(Organizer 12)

I have been President of the Parents' Association and a Member for many years. I see children taking part in the race either as participants or as volunteers, and they rejoice. Every year more and more. It is an event they are waiting for!
(Organizer 7)

<u>Management skills</u>

The results also highlight the respondents' opinion that management is key to running a race because unforeseen challenges may occur. Specialized skills like organization, communication, networking, problem-solving, multi-tasking and flexibility are some traits of running event managers in order to make their race run successfully. Effective event management is related to successful small-scale sport events (Kaplanidou et al., 2013).

It is difficult to coordinate a race that requires an organization of three months before,
for at least 3-4 hours per day. You have to manage and coordinate a lot of people, to
tell them what to do, where to be etc. And also, to be able to find the financial
and material support that is necessary
(Organizer 24)

Even from the first organization, if the race is not well coordinated, then there is no chance
that people will come next year. As organizers, we do a lot of work and in case someone
forgets a detail, the event will not be successful
(Organizer 20)

Organizing an event is managing people. It is as if the athletes were customers. Sport
events should be driven by executives with quality, knowledge and experience in order to
offer the corresponding services to customers – participants
(Organizer 12)

It is important that the people involved are characters who understand what a running
event is and have the management skills and the willingness to contribute to the
organization of a good race
(Organizer 25)

❖ ***Local Professionals***

The coding process determined the next initial concepts and identified 3 Open Codes. Then, the concepts were refined and categorized in 1 Axial Codes, the Local Professionals (LP) Promotive Elements. Finally, the Local Professionals Theme was constructed (Figure 3.8).
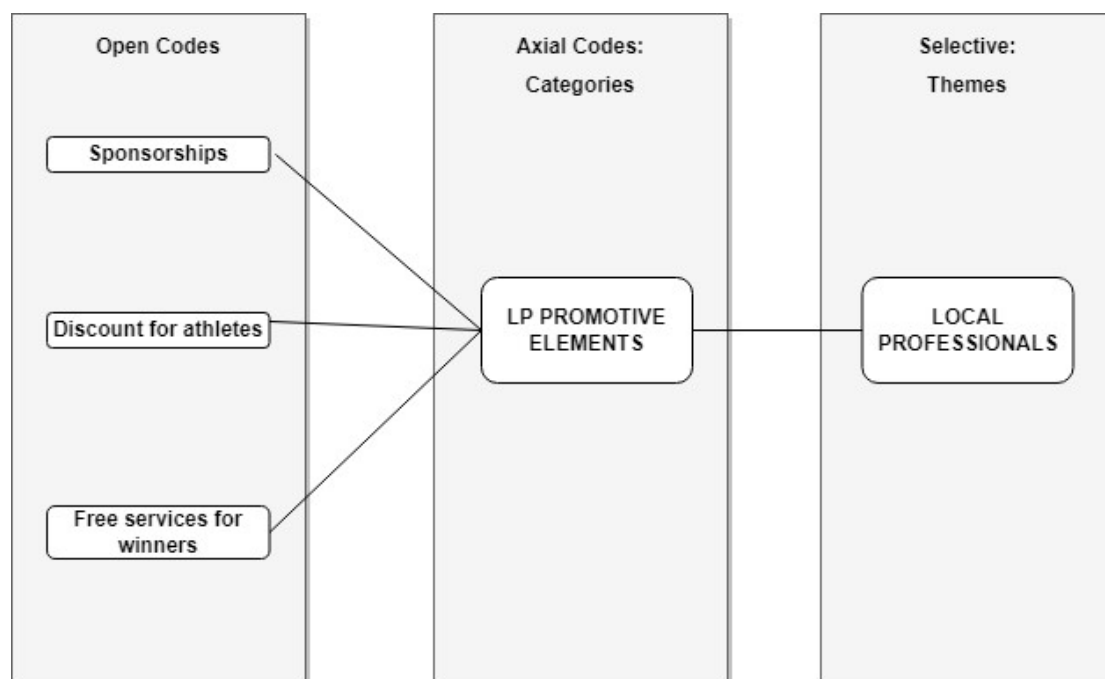
Figure 3.8
Local Professionals Selective Theme Creation

Sponsorships

Event organizers emphasize that the contributions of local professionals in terms of financial or in-kind support exert a significant influence on both the organization and the community. For in-kind sponsorship especially, the sponsors contribute value to the race by making good impression to the athletes and visitors who have the opportunity to experience the local hospitality, taste local food etc.

Sponsorships are important but it is not very easy because local professionals have faced so many difficulties recently. The main issue is the mentality and the culture. Locals do not embrace the event. This year we decided to change the start and finish point because they were indifferent. So, we chose another village where people are more willing to support us.
(Organizer 10)

Some Missions outside our prefecture are coming in recent years. For them, we have ensured some baskets which include local products, like wine, oil, figs, in the form of sponsorship. We try to be as rewarding as possible for all the people that come and honor us with their presence
(Organizer 16)

The local professionals' assistance is of great value.
They provide us with accommodation, services, materials
and they promote our race via their website
(Organizer 28)

Most of the materials (water, juices) that we provide to the athletes come from our sponsors.
We want to have mainly local products
(Organizer 13)

It is mainly the restaurants that highly benefit from the event because the largest part of the residents
sits and has lunch after the race. Sometimes, restaurant managers are willing to set up free buffets
outside their restaurants so that guests try when they pass.
(Organizer 9)

We collaborate with one restaurant which hosts us and makes a massive meal for the athletes
and the organization. Of course, we pay the meal but at a lower price.
This is the only thing we do as regards sponsorships
(Organizer 8)

Many stores help us. They provide us with some products. For example, a bakery gives us 500-600
energy bars for the athlete's bag. The pharmacy gives us the ampoules. Another store provides us
with juices. So, the registration bag contains water, juice, cereal bar,
magnesium ampoule and all these are sponsorships from the stores of our city.
(Organizer 24)

There is a warm interest for this kind of events from the part of local professionals who
sponsor these events by offering materials, such as water, treats, savory or sweets.
(Organizer 26)

Local professionals on an island are usually people engaged in tourism, so they have hotels,
rooms to let, cafes, bars, restaurants, shops and the like. So, the vast majority of them
benefit from the presence of the athletes and sponsor the event someway. Some of them act as
small or large sponsors depending on their financial dynamics.
(Organizer 12)

We have very positive impressions from the local professionals; they accept to help us although we do
not even ask it! Some of them belong to the sports trade sector, others deal with local products.
Everyone offers whatever they want. For example, some of them draw 2 balls, another one serves free
pizza for the participants, or water or coffee.
(Organizer 15)

The pandemic will leave its imprint since now there are around 1.000 running races and 600-700 are
good. I believe that half of them will not be organized again and, anyway, the sponsors have decided
not to support everyone. They have been wiser and they seem to avoid to be identified with races that
are not very good. I think that a new era begins as regards this part of the races
(Organizer 11)

Discounts for athletes

The interviews highlighted importance of providing discounts for athletes as an ancillary intervention from the part of the local professionals that could contribute indirectly to the success of the race. They suggest that this strategy could be used and appreciated by most athletes. For example, hotels could offer discounted prices for athletes and their families during the days of the race, restaurants could make special offers for their meals and rest stores provide discounts tailored to the individual needs and preferences of the athletes.

This event is based on the support of the local community. There is a part of local professionals who constantly support us, but if they could provide specific discounts for the athletes, this would be an extra incentive for them to come.
(Organizer 9).

Some hotel owners do not show interest in providing some discount to the athletes. They are acting like speculators while they should behave more collectively. Besides, if it had not been for the event, their hotels would be empty this period
(Organizer 29)

We are in touch with accommodation professionals in order to provide the athletes with more affordable prices during the event.
(Organizer 14)

Local professionals make various discounts. For example, ferry companies make discounts on travel tickets and some stores have a discount list during the days of the race
(Organizer 17)

I consider the involvement of local professionals as of paramount importance. Hoteliers, restaurants and others contribute indirectly. What they can do is to offer qualitative services, possibly make some discounts to the participants of the race, in order to upgrade the level of the event and of the region in general. Going somewhere and participating in a sporting event without being able to find a nice hotel, restaurant and the like is an issue for the organizer of the event, who have their hands tied
(Organizer 8)

There is a significant support from professionals, mainly from restaurants for the needs of our guests and our elite athletes. However, compared to the impact of the event on the local economy, their benefits and support are rather limited
(Organizer 23)

Some professionals provide us with sponsorships, but some hotel owners cut their prices for the runners during the days of the event and this is also very helpful for us. I consider it as an important contribution and collaboration.
(Organizer 2)

We try to please everyone that comes here, through for example some discounts, like 50% discount in the museums or other discounts with almost 120 companies in our city. This is something that we agreed with the local professionals five years ago.
(Organizer 11)

The 90% of the local professionals provide some discounts for the athletes
(Organizer 18)

You cannot organize a sporting event without involving the locals. They may be few and they may not participate in the sense of running, but they take part in other ways. Either by making special offers in the hostels, the restaurants and the shops for the athletes or by hosting the visitors providing voluntary services for them. All these activities are very interesting because they maximize the footprint that the athletes take with them after departing; the runners will remember that they had a nice time not only because they ran well but also thanks to the hospitable people.
(Organizer 12)

Through their participation, the athletes support the local hotels, restaurants and cafes. But also, the local professionals themselves make special offers and discounts both for the athletes and for the volunteers
(Organizer 25)

Local professionals are not particularly warmhearted towards the event. Although they like it when they see clients in their businesses, they do not support the race. They do not even make some offers for the days of the event. For instance, some restaurants could make a special discount for the athletes,

which is something that is done in other regions, but they do not collaborate well with us. In fact,
during the days of the race, they all have their standard expensive rates
(Organizer 3)

Free services for winners

Some organizers believe that free gifts or services for the winners can positively work for the attraction of the athletes to the race. Attractive marathon packages could be offered to runners in order to convince them to return (Hallmann & Wicker, 2012).

If the local professionals welcome the athletes enthusiastically, for example with
providing some free services for the winners, the athletes will return it to them in future
(Organizer 2)

There is a positive response from the hotel owners, which is gradually increasing. The hoteliers give a
gift to the first winner, which is 5-6 days overnight stay at a 4-star or 5-star hotel
(Organizer 17)

The joy of the athlete who finishes is great and it is even more moving when they are rewarded with a
gift. Apart from commemorative medals, some sponsors provide free products for the winners
(Organizer 23)

Local professionals could provide a small gift to winners or
even through a draw to everyone who ran
(Organizer 20)

We offer a cash prize for the winners, although it is not my philosophy
(Organizer 11)

Through a cash prize so that actually the expenses of the event and some vacation for 2-3 days
for free, an athlete would probably attracted to come.
(Organizer 27)

❖ ***Synergy***

The coding process determined the next initial concepts and identified 5 Open Codes. Then, the concepts were refined and categorized in 1 Axial Code, the Running Event Synergies. Finally, the Synergy Theme was constructed (Figure 3.9).
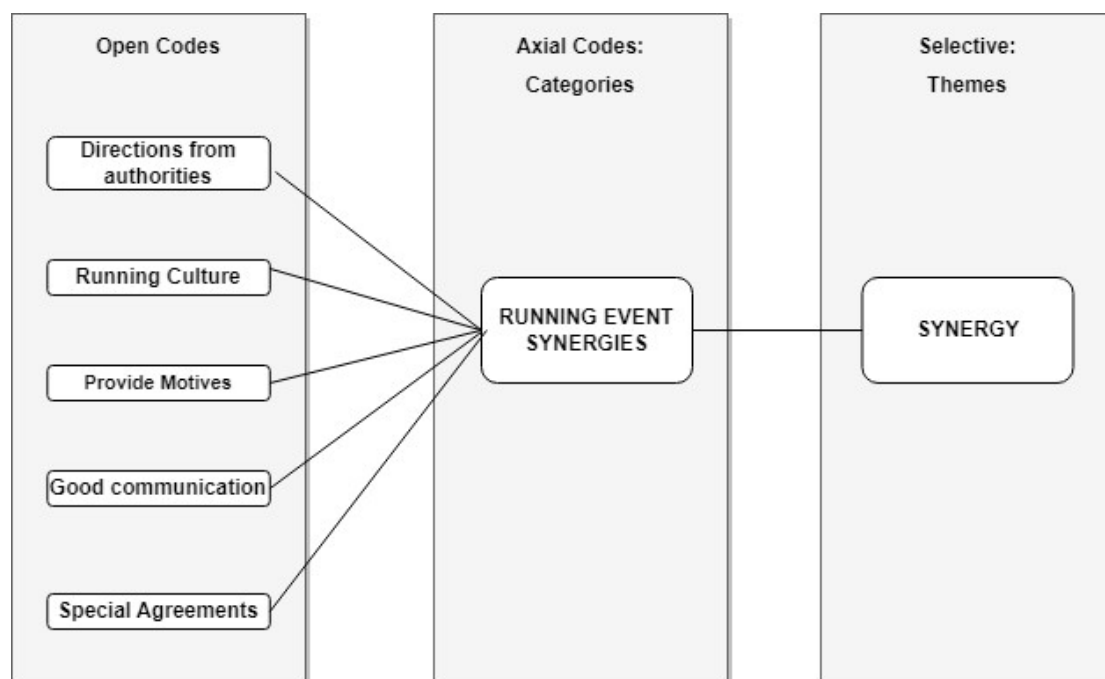
Figure 3.9
Synergy Selective Theme Creation

Directions from authorities

The organizers' perception that local authorities are the catalysts for local sustainable development, including the environmental and cultural dimensions is another aspect relating to the authorities. Thus, interviewees ask for transparency, co-responsibility for the community activities and commitment from the part of the authorities to ensure that knowledge and learning will be spread and disseminated to enhance the event and hence to improve local communities' quality of life.

Our area is so beautiful, it combines mountain and sea and what do we do for this? We are just waiting for everything to come and happen without intervening. We have to get out of this perception, success does not come without work. Effort and program are needed; we have to set a perspective of 2-3 years. This is the most difficult issue that concerns the locals. We do things rather offhand and we fail to highlight the beautiful aspects of our city.
(Organizer 10)

There are tourist services in the surrounding areas but our region needs more development. The authorities should provide us with some guidelines because the event benefits us all.
(Organizer 22)

Local authorities know the local community and their culture; we would like them to guide us
(Organizer 28)

Nature in our area is unique but there are still few opportunities for visitors to make several activities here. Long-term planning and guidance from the municipality in cooperation with the people who deal with plants, who know flora and fauna, could probably reshape some paths and

satisfy the runners who are those that perceive changes more clearly. We do not have special problems but there is room for improvement in terms of services. Specialized seminars could be organized for those groups who deal with runners, cyclists, walkers etc.
(Organizer 5)

We make a real contract with the authorities because we want everything to be legitimate. We ask for transparency and apart from the money we get from the municipality, we take directions how to continue. We have official papers and appropriate taxation because we have the desire to organize an event but we want to ensure the process through the municipality
(Organizer 20)

We need directions from the municipality, which does not pay particular attention to us. To elongate the event, we should make a deal with the hotels and to arrange accommodation, food and transport but the authorities do not have the mindset to respond
(Organizer 3)

Our role is to organize a sport event, not to enrich it with recreational activities. Our program is already very busy as it includes the athletes' reception and information before the race, which lasts at least 30 hours and requires a lot of voluntary effort. Additional activities would require additional resources, effort, human resources, time and possibly money which we do not have; thus, we need help from the authorities
(Organizer 8)

It would be nice to enrich the event with more activities, as long as someone else takes over because we want to organize the running. But for any extra activities, we would gladly welcome anybody who could come and accompany us
(Organizer 15)

Running Culture

The comments also revealed that the sense of running is hardly met among the local stakeholders. As the organizers are runners themselves, they feel that the passion shared among runners for the sport does not exist in the locals, which results in a disadvantage for the event and the local community.

With some locals, we cooperate only at the level of sponsorship. We wish we had seen some intentions from them but unfortunately there are not. For example, a large hotel at our city, which is one of the best here, could advertise our race to its customers. We tried to approach the hotel owners but in vain, they do not show any interest, so we just cannot communicate with them.
(Organizer 10)

Locals are not in the level to help the region, most of them do not have running awareness. They should start thinking in the long run, because this event can grow into something very important internationally.
(Organizer 29)

It is positive for us that many participants from the area that are either runners or just walkers treat the event as if it was a part of them, and even if they do not contribute to its organization, they advertise the event and the benefits of running
(Organizer 14)

There is tourism but not running awareness. Locals are accustomed to tourism like beach, drink, coffee, food. They have never been involved in such alternative tourism sports and they have no idea. But this event, may become a motivation for them, to deal with this part more, for example to

cooperate with some clubs and arrange various hikes in the mountain.
(Organizer 2)

The constant wish of the organizing committee is to work with international organizations,
associated with mountain running and the concept of running, in order to improve the level
of the organization and at the same time have an impact on the local economy
(Organizer 23)

We want the people to enjoy the race. We want them to get off the couch and start running.
There are no other races in our prefecture so we are far behind in relation to others as
regards an official strong runner's association club. Although we are a little behind
in this part, efforts are made in the last 4-5 years and we are constantly improving
(Organizer 24)

Sports activities that started almost 10 years ago in various areas, either in the mainland or in
island Greece, tend to change the situation of tourism seasonality a bit. However, there were
difficulties in the beginning given that there was not a running culture. In general, there is not
a sports culture in Greece nor professional staff to be able to support all this effort. So, there
was a disadvantage which gradually turned into an advantage, and suddenly in one decade,
there are running races in every village, island or mountain, regardless of the infrastructure.
This was the situation until February 2020, because after the pandemic everything will change.
(Organizer 12)

There is a rejection mentality from the part of the locals which makes the organization
processes harder. They do not seem to understand that we make something important which
is for the benefit of the community. It is a mountain race, we are responsible for the
process. Most locals do not even know the mountain.
(Organizer 3)

In addition to the benefits of exercise, we try to show that running is a joy, it is health and
wellness. Of course, we promote our city all over Greece but the most important is to
challenge our fellow citizens in the sector of sports
(Organizer 16)

Provide Motives

In many cases, athletes and visitors are motivated to return to the race by receiving special gifts and medals, draws and relevant incentives, which are the result of cooperation and contribution of all the stakeholders involved.

Here, we altogether (the municipality, the regional administration and the hotel
chamber of the Region) collaborate in order to establish reasons for the visitors to
come for the race. For this particular day, we make offers for the athletes, and discounts
even at 40-50%. We want them to come with friends and family without worrying
about returning the same day. For example, a double room that costs 70-80€
in May, for the weekend of the race its price will be at 35-40€. Our aim is to attract
people from the nearing prefectures, and if they decide to stay here, they
will also spend money on other activities.
(Organizer 16)

The certain amount that the runner pays, is given back in terms of items. Our medals
have some value, we provide the athletes with a few meals, we also give a
welcome bag which includes various local products
(Organizer 2)

We want to offer a product of high quality; the music, the medals, the gifts,
the numbers of the athletes and even the kiosks that offer the delicacies
(foods and drinks), all of them for free, are of high standard.
(Organizer 29)

Some athletes come from very far and we should motivate them because our place is rather isolated.
A motive could be to find a way to facilitate those who come from islands, like Crete or Rhodes,
or other remote areas such as the Peloponnese. As regards abroad, we could cover the
expenses of those athletes who come here to run
(Organizer 5)

We give some special gifts to every athlete. For example, the prizes and the medals are
specially designed since they are wooden because we organize a mountain running race.
We wanted these items to be made of natural wood, which we cut and then we reshape it
in order to make the medal have our logo. Also, every year we make special awards.
We give a special award to the most populous club that brought the most athletes and honored
us with their presence. Then, we have a special award to the oldest athlete, either man or
woman because our motto is that "running has no age"
(Organizer 24)

We are thinking of drawing a trip in our region. That is, the next day after the race, the winners
could tour the beauties of our region through a local tourist office. Although this is cost for
us, if we had a financial support, then this stimulus would bring people to our region
(Organizer 20)

Our running race is the biggest sporting event we currently have on the island. The running movement
has greatly developed in recent years; more and more running events are organized in Greece and
everywhere in the world. If we enrich it with 1-2 more things, it may become a strong asset for the
local tourism development. We are already at a good level of organization as we have electronic
timing, we distribute commemorative medals to all participants and upload photos on our website,
characteristics that make the event attractive both to locals and to tourists
(Organizer 9)

Good communication among them

Good communication among the stakeholders of the race is considered as an essential tool in delivering a successful event. On the other hand, in the context of poor communication, some respondents explain that their intentions are not understood and the message of the event is not delivered effectively with a worse impact on the local society.

The event is implemented with the help of the local community and the municipality. I must admit that
we have a very good communication with the locals and they welcome the race every year with great
pleasure. Also, the cooperation with the municipality is perfect and their contribution is crucial.
(Organizer 1)

The event was initially organized by the municipality and other clubs supported it.
There is a good communication and support from the police, the Region, the municipality,
the Red Cross and so many others.
(Organizer 4)

The organizing committee along with the locals should communicate well and
dedicate several hours for this difficult project
(Organizer 24)

We have a good communication with some hotels, which are close to the place of the
race. Respectively, with restaurants and cafes. And we contribute to the good communication
between participants and local businesses
(Organizer 25)

Municipality can do a lot with respect to the event, but it is crucial that they believe to our efforts.
The communication with them is not very good. They do not behave us properly and we have lots of
complaints. I have been in our club for years and this issue is longitudinal; they express mistrust and
they think that we want their money. We cannot prove our efforts, we are volunteers, we do not ask for
rewards, but just for the good future of our club. All these efforts have an impact on our local society
and especially, on the new generations. Financial aid is crucial but municipality can also contribute in
a different way. For example, they can provide us with secretariat support, or offer a place for the
athletes to change, or maybe clean the surrounding area of the start and the finish line.
(Organizer 10)

We are afraid of involving anyone else, we do not want it, we prefer the event be purely
ours. When others are involved, the communication is not good
and we want to rely on our own thinking and philosophy
(Organizer 15)

Special agreements

Organizers often make special agreements with the community stakeholders relating to
discounts, special offers and other facilitations.

We cooperate with the professionals of maritime taxis since we live on an island where
the sea transport is essential and the good cooperation is necessary
(Organizer 1).

We have some friends from the capital city with whom we have made some special
agreements as regards the food. They give us some portions of food but we have to bring them
here and it is a long distance. We would like to have a similar cooperation with the local
enterprises but we are volunteers, and it is not easy for us to find them.
(Organizer 29)

We are in communication with the professionals of alternative activities like rafting, horseback riding
in order to create an attractive package for the runners and their families, to enjoy the event more
(Organizer 14)

We are in contact with the city gyms to contribute together to the promotion of the
race and other events of our city
(Organizer 21)

There are many athletes who want to run and come to our region one day before the race.
So, we have made a special agreement with some hotels for those participants who come one day
before the race and they have a 20-30% discount. This is something that gives a bonus to our region
because tourists can stay and purchase, eat, walk and spend money
(Organizer 24)

We have a special agreement with some restaurant entrepreneurs that the amount for the special
choice of some dishes, is intended to support young people who have diabetes.
(Organizer 11)

❖ *Sustainability*

The coding process determined the next initial concepts and identified 6 Open Codes. Then, the concepts were refined and categorized in 1 Axial Codes, Sustainability Category. Finally, the Sustainability Theme was constructed (Figure 3.10). The part of the interviews relating to the sustainability is in line with those of previous studies suggesting the sustainable impact of small-scale sport events.
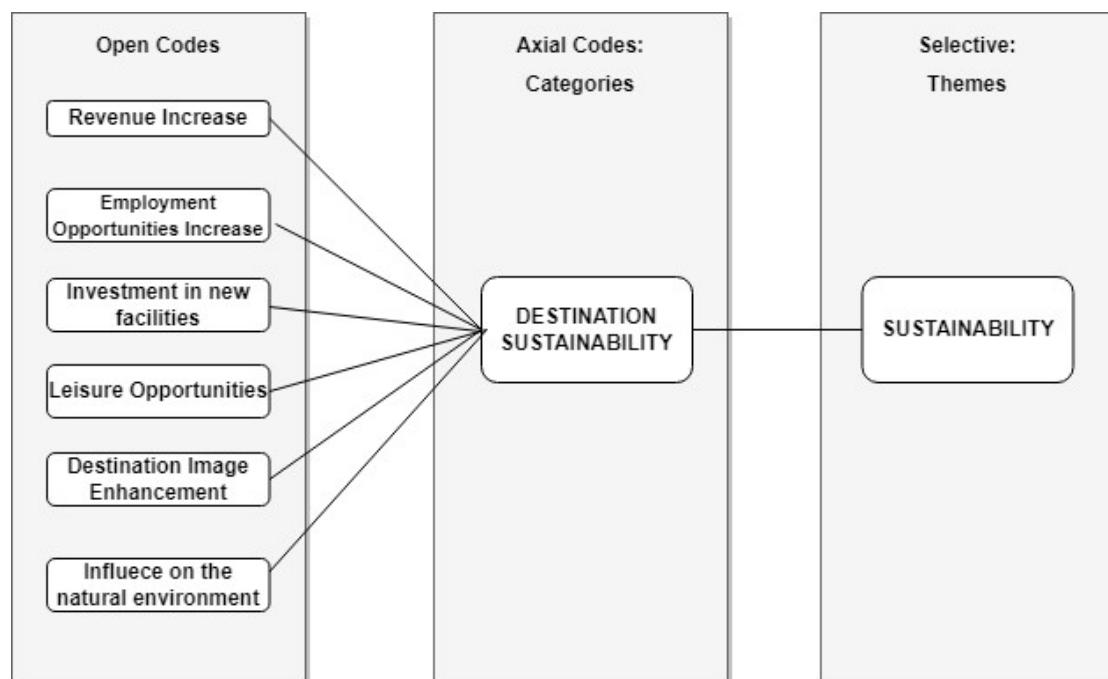
Figure 3.10
Sustainability Selective Theme Creation

The positive economic effect of running events is recognized and emphasized. Along with the literature, the organizers confirm the employment, income and investment increases (Walo et al., 1996). They agree that during the event money is spent on food services, accommodation and shopping activities (Gibson et al., 2003; Pereira et al., 2015) and confirm that all the event participants, both athletes and visitors, make their contributions to the local community (Gibson et al., 2012).

> *If there is for example a 2-day sport event, there will be a great financial benefit for the area.*
> *Lots of visitors will come to the island, like parents with their children and athletes, or*
> *even spectators who will just want to watch the event. For sure, they will either drink a coffee*

or go to the restaurants, as soon as the event is over.
(Organizer 9).

Certainly, our race is a kind of "injection" for the local economy. The increased tourist presence contributes to the extension of the tourist season and has a positive impact in the income of the locals, strengthening their finances for the rest of the year. The race affects financially the island to a great extent as it is organized during an off-season weekend when entrepreneurs do not expect to work as they are already closed. Therefore, it is an extra and very important income for them in order to have a positive economic closure for the winter. In addition, jobs are created or existing employment contracts are extended with extra workforce in order to provide better services to visitors who come to the island
(Organizer 1).

The race positively affects our city. A large number of people come, they eat, they drink, they go from one place to another, they probably stay one night, and this means that 1.000, 2.000 or 5.000€ come in the city. The more events, the better for us.
(Organizer 10)

The economic impact is important. People from 38 different countries visit us and they stay more days after the event ends.
(Organizer 28)

The economic effect is only positive for the local businesses. They open at least three weeks earlier than the date they had planned in order to serve the athletes and their escorts. Automatically, the tourism season starts earlier because they will not close again. And if the weather is fine, there are visitors during the weekends
(Organizer 2)

During the days of the event, many professionals hire extra staff to meet their needs. In recent years, local professionals and local community has invested in new facilities because of this fact
(Organizer 23)

We should bear in mind that the financial footprint of the event is received by the local economy. Because, as you understand, and this happens for every event, not only ours, during most events it is the local community that enjoys its financial benefits. There is very little income from sports activity for the organizers
(Organizer 12)

The organizers seem almost unanimous in the belief that their running event creates an important social value for the local community. Their opinions are in line with the existing academic small-scale event literature that refer to enrichment of social lives (Chalip, 2006), tighter social networks (Taks et al., 2015), growth in community spirit, cooperation and cost-free services of the volunteers (Walo et al.,1996) and motivations for locals to be more active in sport (Ramchandani et al., 2015).

The society definitely comes closer thanks to the event because everyone works and collaborates, I dare to say, voluntarily, in order to get the best possible result and a strong image of our island to the public
(Organizer 1).

The first year we conducted a race, 2-3 people decided to start running.
Sometimes, imitating is a good phenomenon. Everyone that gradually
acquires a running consciousness is a gain for the society
(Organizer 22)

Since local community is involved, volunteers along with ladies and old women prepare local
delicacies. Thus, there are working together, and are active citizens of our society.
Something new for them happens in our region which makes them happy
(Organizer 29)

Sports help people in general. Through the race, the relationships are strengthened
(Organizer 13)

The race activated the locals who showed their interest and took part. So, we achieved our first goal
which was to involve all the locals and to attract people from other regions
(Organizer 19)

Almost all the residents of all ages help or support the athletes or just applaud them.
The race is their top event throughout the year. Some people have started running thanks to the event.
In this remote but so beautiful region something unique is implemented.
And in this sense, given that all residents and local society supports the race, social cohesion,
cooperation and communication among locals are achieved
(Organizer 5)

The event has a positive effect on the social sector and in fact it is one of our goals. It goes without
saying that an event like this, in combination with the anniversary that our city celebrates, makes
people go out and socialize with locals or visitors
(Organizer 9)

In our small communities, events like our race are celebrations. Lots of people gather
the village and a very pleasant and festive atmosphere is created.
The whole village meets in the square where the starting and the finishing points
will take place, they watch the awards and all the local community participates.
(Organizer 26)

The race is organized off-season so the locals have the opportunity and time to get close to
people who are very much into sports. The local athletes can run or swim with someone
for whom they read on sites or magazines or watch on TV
(Organizer 12)

The event brings together people who have different cultures. People from other cities and countries
gather, social contacts are increased and locals learn how to offer
(Organizer 25)

There is an agreement in the extant literature regarding the environmental sustainability of small-scale events. Emphasis is given on the environmental protection and the ecological footprint that sporting events entail (Tsekouropoulos et al., 2022). Accordingly, the organizers seem to understand the importance of protecting the ecosystem and tend to make responsible decisions that will reduce the impact of their event on the environment. For example, they use environmentally friendly materials and they try to spread the message of a responsible interaction with the nature.

Although there is a mass influx of people in our island on the day of the event, nevertheless, there is not a particular problem of traffic congestion. In the athletes' bag that we offer, we include some leaflets as regards the sustainable environmental behavior of the participants during the event, in order to avoid possible vandalism or other environmental issues
(Organizer 9).

As an organization, and in cooperation with the sponsors we use environmentally friendly materials in order to enhance the environmental awareness of the participants
(Organizer 1).

Vandalism is not a rule but sometimes it happens. Also, a few participants may just throw away some garbage.
(Organizer 10)

In general, we are sensitized and we try to be impeccable as regards, the cleanliness of the city after the race, of course with the help of the municipality
(Organizer 16)

Runners are also environmentalists. We point out that they should keep the area clean, and, so, after the race the environment is cleaner than before.
(Organizer 22)

There are people who act like brooms behind the runners and pick up every rubbish that is thrown away. Of course, we emphasize that it is forbidden to throw garbage in any place, especially in the forest. But there are always some who will throw something, like water bottles. There are people in a perimeter of 15-20 meters that collect every single garbage. We are very strict in this issue, and we always point up that if someone grows garbage in the route, they will be excluded from the race and will not be able to participate again
(Organizer 29)

There had been some traffic problems and congestion because street vendors come near the roadside to sell their merchandise. For this reason, we had problems at the start of the race but they were solved by changing the starting point of the event
(Organizer 14)

We have taken care of the environmental issue. We have cleaned the paths and have shaped the dirt roads in a way that the route is not vandalized. We have deliberately started the route from a village which is one kilometer before entering the mountain and until the athletes enter, they are spread; so, they will run behind each other and will step on the same spot in order to avoid the vandalization of a new mountain path. They just step on the same path which has existed so many years. But of course, it is an issue which calls for special attention, we are careful with the signaling, we do not cut trees, we do not nail sign on trees and we do not use spray paints
(Organizer 2)

There are no environmental problems. At the end of the race there is a service which cleans the whole space, and the environment remains as it was before. Sometimes, it is even better because the area is cleaned and some improvements are made on the road. There is always a motivation to do something better
(Organizer 17)

Athletes are people who have a special sensitivity for the environment. This kind of events does not burden the environment with noise and garbage, so they are not an environmental burden; on the contrary, thanks to the events, the paths are maintained every year and then a beautiful well-worked network of trails remains that can be used by hikers or just ordinary tourists
(Organizer 8)

One hundred meters after the stations, there are big garbage bags and we always request that no garbage is thrown in other places. Besides, all the organization committee along with the volunteers collect any garbage that is thrown away or put it in the recycling. We constantly make announcements

about the garbage and the athletes seem to respect the environment. Besides, the natural beauty is unbelievable and they do not feel to throw away plastic bottles at all
(Organizer 24)

Local authorities are in contact with the police and the roads are temporarily closed. The traffic is channeled through some other ways and in this way, the safety of the event, the participants and the spectators are ensured. Also, there is a staff that follows the athletes and cleans the areas from plastic bottles or anything else that may be thrown
(Organizer 26)

I think that sports contribute to environmental awareness. The athletes try to keep the space clean. Not only our event, but sports in general help us to become better. We always try to create an event that will not incur any problems to the environment
(Organizer 15)

The race contributes to tourism development because athletes get to know about the mountain and tend to return. Sometimes, they come for training. We have introduced a new pave and thanks to some funds from the municipality, the path has been signaled by the Region. All the year round you can visit it!
(Organizer 3)

3.9 Third Step - Delphi technique to achieve event expert opinion

As regards the processing of the results, the next step was to be able to reach a group consensus. In this respect, a Delphi survey appeared suitable for identifying and analyzing potential factors of small-scale running events for expanding the tourist season. Delphi term stems from an ancient Greek myth, according to which this method was used to predict the future (Clayton, 1997).

Turoff (1970:149) summarizes the research objectives that make the use of Delphi necessary:

- *to determine or develop a range of possible alternatives*
- *to explore or expose underlying assumptions or information leading to different judgements*
- *to seek out information which may generate a consensus of judgement on the part of the respondent group*
- *to correlate informed judgements on a topic spanning a wide range of disciplines*
- *to educate the respondent group as to the diverse and interrelated aspects of the topic*

Through this "group facilitation technique", a series of structured questionnaires (rounds) is completed by a number of anonymous experts with the view to obtaining consensus on their opinions (Hasson et al., 2000). These "experts" have the knowledge and experience to take part in the procedure (Clayton, 1997). It is a process that includes several stages until consensus is obtained; interviews may be used as the first step to collect qualitative data (Hasson et al., 2000).

For the current thesis, the issue was to discover how the panel of road race experts interpreted the feedback they received after the interviewing. The respondents of this step were indeed expected to be experts in the field of sport tourism, with different backgrounds in order to let the researcher accumulate broad knowledge on seasonality and sport event issues.

In this phase, memoranda in order to examine the content validity of the conceptual entities were created. They included 3 sheets of evaluation rounds. Their subject was the content validation support of the factors of the organizational process of the races; the factors under consideration, may contribute to the extension of the tourism season, in the context of sustainable sport event tourism. Seven running event experts took part in this phase. The memorandum pattern is presented in Annex 3; based on it and on the results of the primary data, the model variables and the relationships among them were created.

Conclusion

In the current chapter, the findings from the interviewing of local professionals and running event organizers have been presented and thoroughly analyzed. Five main themes (seasonality, road race, local professionals, synergy, sustainability) emerged from the qualitative research. The key factors that have arisen will be used to design and implement the empirical research. Delphi method was applied in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. In the next chapter, the basic conclusion from all the preliminary data gathering along with the formulation of the theoretical framework and basic hypotheses will be presented.

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PROBLEM DEFINITION, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND GENERATION OF HYPOTHESES

In the current chapter, the findings of the systematic literature review and the interviewing are utilized in order to delimit the research problem.

The proposed theoretical model is the result of the systematic integration of published research and literature related to tourism seasonality, sustainability and small-scale running events. In the previous literature review, the main concept of seasonality was extensively presented and theoretically founded. Also, the concepts of sustainability and of small-scale events in light of seasonality were commented on. Primary data (local professionals and organizers interviewing) on these concepts was collected and analyzed.

In this chapter, the foundations for the research framework are laid through: a) the presentation of the basic conclusions that have emerged from the literature review and the interviewing b) the drawing of key research gaps c) the formulation of the basic research hypothesis and sub-hypotheses d) the identification of the dependent and independent variables that will be used in the statistical part of the thesis.

Figure 4.1:
The research process and the step that Chapter 4 corresponds to
Source: Adapted from Sekaran & Bougie (2016)
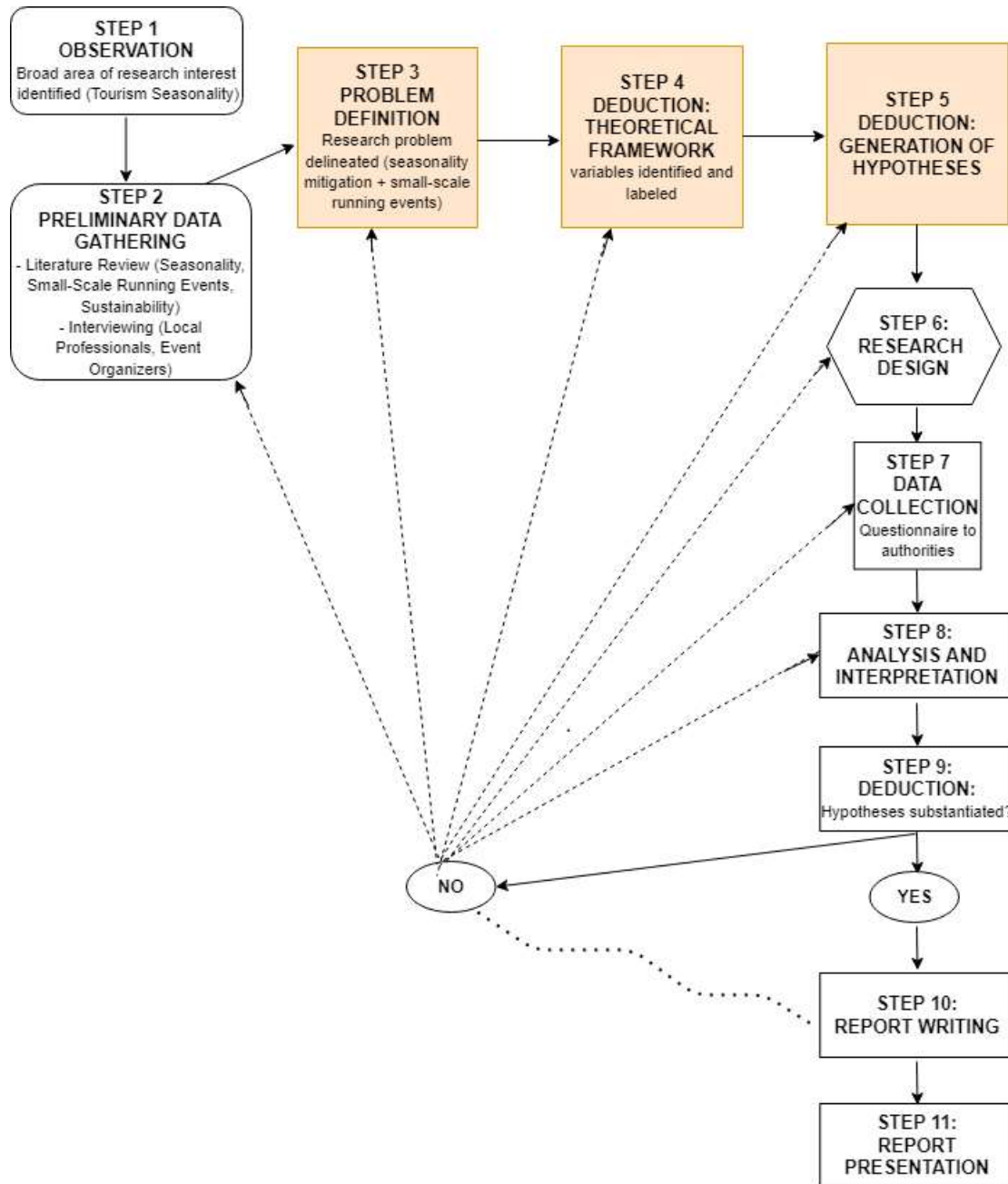
4. Conceptual Development of the Proposed Theoretical Model

In order to be able to create a solid theoretical framework, the problem should be firstly identified after a thorough literature review and an exploratory research; then the variables that give rise to the problem should be clearly defined (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

4.1 Key Findings of Preliminary Data Gathering
(Literature Review and Interviewing)

Through the previous literature review and interviewing process, the main concepts of the study, that is those of seasonality, sustainability and small-scale running events as well as their combination were extensively presented and commented. Through the presentation of these concepts, the formulation of the following (important for the delimitation of the research framework) points becomes possible and documented:

1. Tourism seasonality is an issue of great importance in academic literature given that it is a phenomenon that affects the majority of tourism destinations. Its main causes are the variations in weather conditions (natural), the public or industrial holidays (institutional) and other (like sporting).

2. Tourism seasonality is usually recognized as a problem or difficulty which may generate negative economic and socio-cultural impacts during the non-peak season and negative environmental consequences during the peak season.

3. Literature has mainly revolved around the demand side of seasonality at the expense of supply one. The geographical distribution of seasonality tourism research is concentrated in Europe. The role of tourism in the Greek national and economic development is central; yet, the phenomenon of seasonality has been slightly approached.

4. The relevant studies concerning seasonality tourism over the years, starting from 1974 until 2020, that exist in the international literature have been grouped and sorted by category (Table 2.1).

5. Although seasonality will never be eliminated, there are some initiatives that could be undertaken in order to extend the season. The systematic literature review revealed some policy strategies including development of events, off-season promotions, market diversification and other product diversification. Yet, a research gap on the area of empirical evaluation of the proposed strategies was identified. Moreover, although events are a common strategy to mitigate seasonality, in-depth and longitudinal research is needed to investigate their characteristics.

6. Events are widely recognized as a strategic tool to combat seasonality. Events are divided in several categories; special events are one of them and are divided in minor, festival and major ones. Literature has mainly focused on major events at the expense of smaller ones, despite the latter's recognized central role in the viability of host communities. Besides, most events globally are local and small and involve tourism development potential. Small-scale special events, like sporting ones, can expand the tourism season for the host communities and many authorities have applied a small-scale sport tourism event development as a diversification strategy against global pressures.

7. The ensuring of sustainable development has been a concern both for academics and the authorities. Small-scale events can generate a sustainable impact with favorable outcomes for the host community, related with positive economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts, and thus, they can be a viable form of sustainable tourism development.

8. Sport events may ensure some tourism benefits for the host region; apart from their contribution to tourism seasonality mitigation, they may be part of a diversification strategy benefiting the local community, develop its brand awareness and affect positively the local economy and the life of the residents.

9. There is not enough research on the type of local sport event that would benefit the host community. On the other hand, running-related activities have largely increased during the last decade and may be considered as an important instrument for the sustainable development of local communities.

10. A review on literature suggests that most of the research has concentrated on runners' behaviors or characteristics and to date there are no studies centered to the relation of running events organization and seasonality mitigation.

11. There is no theoretical framework-model, documented through empirical research, that specifically focuses on the identification of factors that influence seasonality mitigation and expansion of the tourist season through the organization of small-scale running events. Therefore, the introduction and the empirical documentation of such a model becomes necessary while, at the same time, it may help tourism stakeholders to use these factors in order to organize a running event with greater success, achieving more substantial results.

12. Stakeholder collaboration is crucial to sustainable tourism planning and has been extensively recognized as an important factor of the success of a tourism destination. As regards event tourism development, cooperative strategies seem to yield good results but it is needed to adopt a coordinated and holistic approach during the host of an event where stakeholders should act collaboratively.

13. Starting from local stakeholders, there is a noticeable absence of scholarly findings regarding small-scale running events and their perceptions on seasonality mitigation despite the fact that the success of tourism is built around the support of the local community.

14. The current thesis applies a qualitative research methodology in order to explore and to evaluate local professionals' opinions regarding a running event and its sustainability, to examine their willingness to support it and assess the event's effectiveness on seasonality mitigation. Seven destinations, which present high tourism seasonality while low season sport events are organized in months with low tourist traffic, were chosen. The inductive analysis strategy for the 155 respondents confirmed some harmonious perceptions among the participants as regards the negative consequences of seasonality on their region and their businesses. Local professionals almost unanimously suggest the organization of more events, of all kinds, in order to boost the destination in periods of low season.

15. Literature recognizes the need for engaging multiple stakeholders in the event planning process. Given the gap in the field of the running races, the organizers' perceptions are explored with respect to seasonality mitigation, sustainability and small-scale event organization.

16. A qualitative research methodology, through the application of semi-structured interviews to 29 small-scale running event organizers, was used.

17. The findings were compared with the literature and the local stakeholders' data gathering. Five main themes (seasonality, road race, local stakeholders, synergy, sustainability) emerged from the qualitative research.
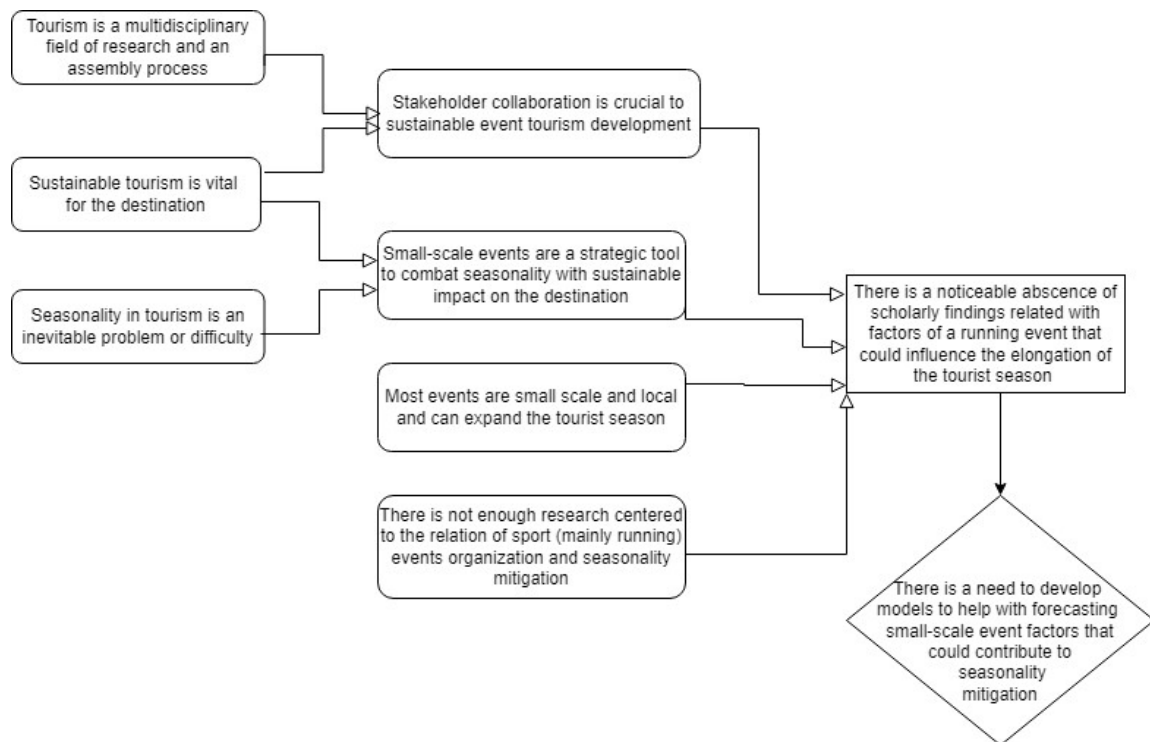
Figure 4.2
**The evolution of the need to develop models to help with forecasting small-scale running event
factors that could contribute to seasonality mitigation.**

Through the aforementioned, we come to the logical assumption of if **there may
be a number of factors in sport (running) events that could contribute to the
extension of the tourist season, leaving a sustainable imprint on the destination.**
The model of the current thesis comes to serve this direction.

The synthesis and the interaction of these factors is given in the following Figure (4.3):
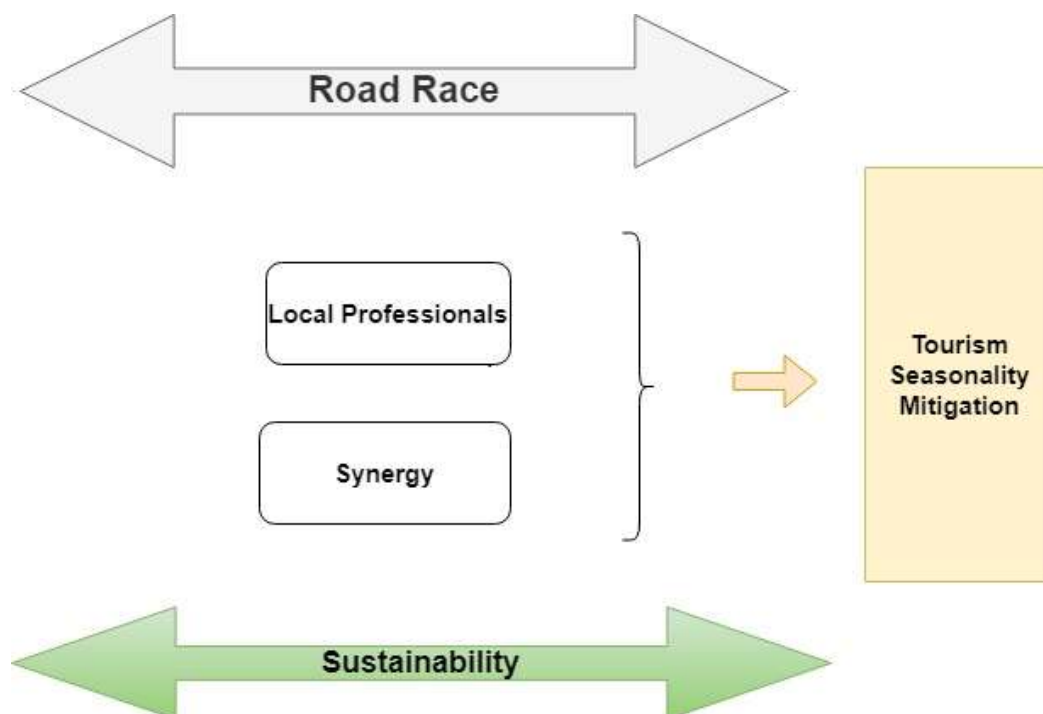
Figure 4.3
Proposed Theoretical Framework

In Figure 4.3, the extended network of a small-scale running event organized in low season is depicted based on the results of the preliminary data analysis. The factors of the proposed model are incorporated. Tourism seasonality is the main issue that has to be addressed and the small-scale running event (road race) is applied as a strategy to mitigate seasonality. Local professionals are involved in the decision-making process; event organizers as a factor of the road race and authorities as a factor of synergy are also involved.

Considering the involvement of the previous stakeholders in the event process, synergy issues arise. The result is some potential proposals that could work for the organization of a small-scale running event as a tool to extend the tourist season, achieving a sustainable development for the destination. The next step is to support and substantiate the model through the empirical research.

4.2 The variables of the quantitative model

In order for the proposed model to become operational, it is necessary to define measurable variables dependent on the factors that compose it. The variables are defined in relation to the documentation of the role of every factor in the proposed model. The documentation arises from the preliminary data gathering (literature review and interviewing). The synthesis of the factors into a single model was made by the researcher. The bibliographic references or/and the references of the qualitative research are given to all the variables in order to confirm and strengthen their role as factors. But in addition, their relationship will be tested through the empirical confirmation.

Table 4.1.
The structure of the relationships of the variables of the proposed model

Z LATENT VARIABLES	REFERENCE	Y CONSTRUCTS	REFERENCE	X OBSERVED VARIABLES	REFERENCE
Z1 TOURISM SEASONALITY	PRR(I); PRR(LP)	**Y1 SPORT EVENT SEASONALITY**	PRR(I); PRR(LP)	**Sport Events Contribution X1 (SR1)**	Baum & Hagen, 1999; Cannas, 2012; Connell et al., 2015
				Running Races Contribution X2 (SR2)	PRR(I); PRR(LP)
				Destination Tourist Development X3 (SR3)	PRR(I); PRR(LP)

Z LATENT VARIABLES	REFERENCE	Y CONSTRUCTS	REFERENCE	X OBSERVED VARIABLES	REFERENCE
	PRR(I); PRR(LP)	**Y2 ELONGATION**	PRR(I); PRR(LP)	**Event Activities (music, culture, seminars) X4 (ELO1)**	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Connell et al., 2015; Nowak & Chalimoniuk-Nowak, 2015
				Tour activities (tours in the area, natural and historical sights etc) X5 (ELO2)	PRR(I); Connell et al., (2015)
				Fun and actions for all visitors (athletes, escorts, family) X6 (ELO3)	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Connell et al., 2015; Nowak & Chalimoniuk-Nowak, 2015
				Exhibitions with local products of the region X7 (ELO4)	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Nowak & Chalimoniuk-Nowak, 2015
Z2 ROAD RACE	PRR(I); PRR(LP)		PRR	**Organization X8 (SUC1)**	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Kaplanidou et al., 2013

	Y3 SUCCESS		**Safety X9 (SUC2)**	PRR(I); Perić et al., 2018
			Participations X10 (SUC3)	PRR(I)
			Volunteers X11 (SUC4)	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Kaplanidou et al., 2013; Kim, 2017; Ma & Draper, 2017
			Local Professionals Contribution X12 (SUC5)	PRR(I); Eddy & Cork, 2019
			Local community support X13 (SUC6)	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Butler, 2001; Connell et al., 2015; Figini & Vici, 2012; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011
			Road Race Route X14 (SUC7)	PRR(I); PRR(LP)
			Establishment X15 (SUC8)	PRR(I); Wicker et al., 2012
PRR(I); PRR(LP)	**Y5 RACE ORGANIZERS**	PRR	**Social Media Marketing Skills X16 (ORG1)**	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Becker et al. (2009); Harb et al., (2019)
			Sport websites administration/use X17 (ORG2)	PRR(I); PRR(LP)
			Famous personalities approach X18 (ORG3)	PRR(I)
			Love for the birthplace X19 (ORG4)	PRR(I); PRR(LP)
			Knowledge of the area X20 (ORG5)	PRR(I)
			New generation X21 (ORG6)	PRR(I); PRR(LP)
			Management skills X22 (ORG7)	PRR(I); Kaplanidou et al., 2013

Z LATENT VARIABLES	**REFERENCE**	**Y CONSTRUCTS**	**REFERENCE**	**X OBSERVED VARIABLES**	**REFERENCE**
Z3 LOCAL PROFESSIONALS	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Andriotis, 2000; Bazzanella et al, 2019; Fredline, 2005; Misener & Mason, 2006; Reid, 2011	**Y6 LOCAL PROFESSIONAS PROMOTIVE ELEMENTS**	PRR	**Sponsorships X23 (LOCPRO1)**	PRR(I); PRR(LP)
				Discounts for athletes X24 (LOCPRO2)	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Connell et al., (2015)
				Free services for winners X25 (LOCPRO3)	PRR(I), Hallmann & Wicker, 2012

Z LATENT VARIABLES	**REFERENCE**	**Y CONSTRUCTS**	**REFERENCE**	**X OBSERVED VARIABLES**	**REFERENCE**
Z4 SYNERGY	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Mackellar, 2015; Misener & Mason, 2006; Papanikos, 2015; Reid, 2011; Wäsche et al., 2013	**Y7 RUNNING EVENT SYNERGIES**	PRR	**Directions from authorities X26 (SYN1)**	PRR(I); PRR(LP)
				Running culture X27 (SYN2)	PRR(I); PRR(LP)
				Provide motives X28 (SYN3)	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Connell et al., (2015)
				Good communication among them X29 (SYN4)	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Butler, 2001; Mackellar, 2015; Perić et al. (2016)
				Special Agreements X30 (SYN5)	PRR(I); PRR(LP); Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2010

Z LATENT VARIABLES	REFERENCE	Y CONSTRUCTS	REFERENCE	X OBSERVED VARIABLES	REFERENCE
Z5 SUSTAINABILITY	PRR(I); PRR(LP)	Y8 DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY	PRR	Income Increase X31 (SUST1)	Gibson et al., 2012; Priporas et al., 2018
				Employment Opportunities Increase X32 (SUST2)	Daniels & Norman, 2003
				Investment in new facilities X33 (SUST3)	PRR(I); PRR(LP)
				Leisure Opportunities X34 (SUST4)	Olberding & Olberding, 2014
				Destination Image Enhancement X35 (SUST5)	Fotiadis et al., 2016b; Priporas et al., 2018; Vassiliadis & Fotiadis, 2020
				Positive influence on the natural environment X36 (SUST6)	Fredline, 2005; Sáez-Fernández et al., 2020

4.3 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

The theoretical framework is the basis of the hypotheses that will be formulated, according to Sekaran & Bougie (2016). After the identification of the important variables and the establishment of the relationships among them, the hypotheses development is operated (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

As a result of the main purpose of the current thesis, the basic research hypothesis emerges; its validity will be evaluated after the description of the statistical methodology and the commenting on the results of the empirical research. Since its main purpose is to identify the small-scale running event key factors that could extend the tourist season, the main research hypothesis adopted in the context of the current analysis and which must be tested is the following:

<u>Basic Research Hypothesis (BRH):</u>

There is a number of factors related to sport (running) events that could contribute to the extension of the tourist season, leaving a sustainable imprint on the destination.

The BRH contains:

a) The factors of the sustainability and the road race, which are determined through the development of a network of dependent and independent variables, and:

b) And the rest model as the central variable of the empirical research

In view of the above and taking into account the data in Table 4.1, there are 8 factors (constructs), which are the Yv, to be measured through the variables Xv. Zv factors are also dependent variables, which depend on Yv factors. The key factors that emerged from the preliminary data gathering (literature review and interviewing) (Xv) are 36 and will initially be the independent variables of the model. The main dependent variable is the proposed theoretical framework, which is also a latent variable and depends on Zv variables.

In the next chapters, the final different hypotheses (23 sub-hypotheses) hidden in points a) and b), which were set up to evaluate the relationship of predictors on the outcome, will be presented.

Conclusion

In the current chapter the key findings of the preliminary data gathering were presented and the basic research hypothesis along with the components of the theoretical framework were suggested. Their measurement will be specified in the next chapter, where the empirical research methodology is described in detail. The hypothesized relationships will also be specified and examined.

References of the 4ᵗʰ chapter

Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research methods for business: A skill building approach*. John Wiley & Sons.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND
DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

In the current chapter, the researcher describes how the research instrument was designed and distributed. Specifically, the research questions and hypotheses that had been formulated in the previous chapters, served as the starting point for the development of the coding scheme. Then, the collection of quantitative data as final part of the research methodology process for this thesis was selected and a questionnaire was created, based on the three basic principles that Sekaran and Bougie (2016) suggest for the questionnaire design. Some pilot studies were undertaken to check the reactions of the participants. The final questionnaire was developed and distributed to the local authorities.

Figure 5.1:
The research process and the step that Chapter 5 corresponds to
Source: Adapted from Sekaran & Bougie (2016)
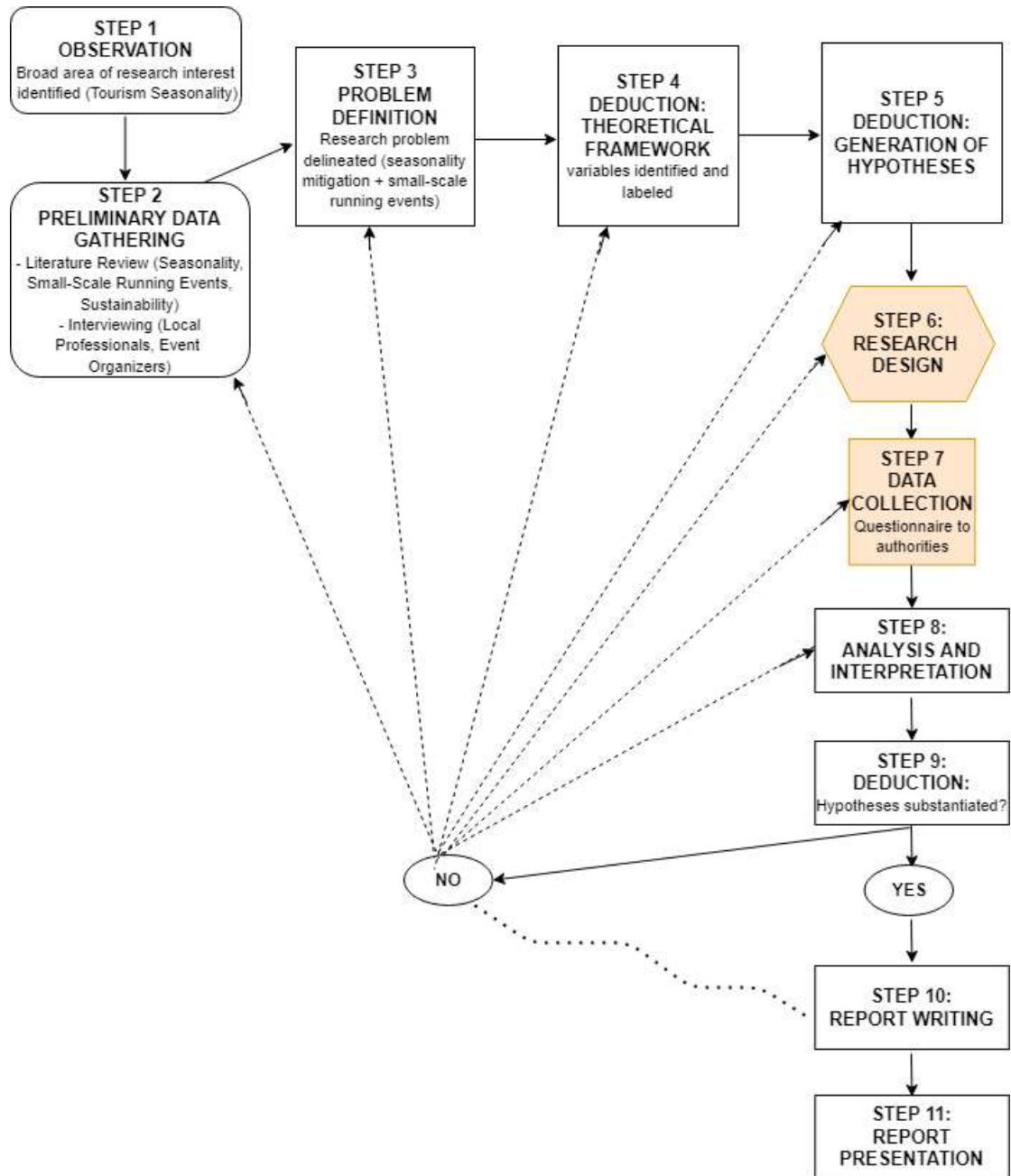
5. RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 Research Instrument Selection

As it was mentioned in the literature review of the current thesis, the majority of studies that refer to seasonality tourism are based on quantitative approaches. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), interviewing, observing people, and administering questionnaires are three important data collection methods. Among them, questionnaires are widely used in survey research to measure the variables of interest (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

For the purpose of this thesis, a structured questionnaire was chosen; a given approach allows the strict a priori definition of both the questions that will be included and the range of the replies (Churchill, 1997).

For the questionnaire design, the basic principles that Sekaran and Bougie (2016) propose were employed; these principles are presented in Figure 5.2. They focus on three areas: a) principles of wording b) principles of measurement c) general "getup" and are analytically described in the next section:
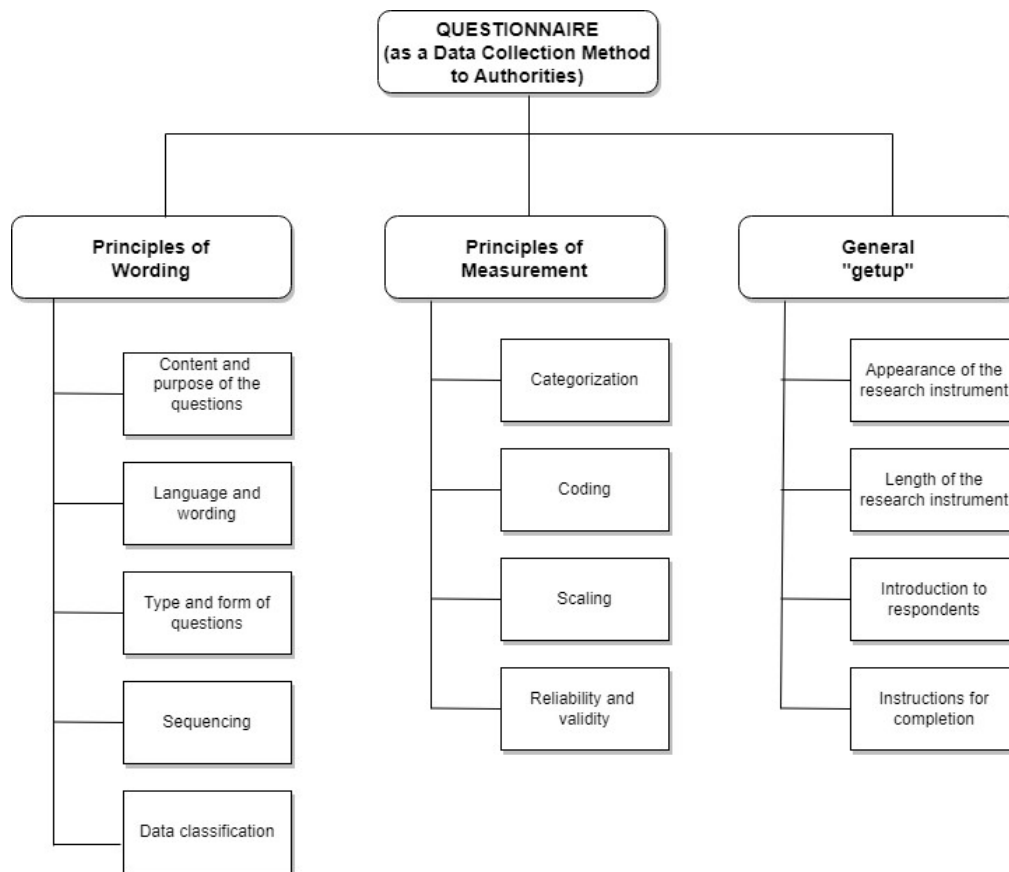
Figure 5.2:
Basic Principles of Questionnaire Design
Source: Adapted from Sekaran & Bougie (2016)

5.1.1   Principles of Wording

The aim of this research is the collection of the Greek municipalities' tourism executives' views with respect to the factors of the seasonal performance of sport tourism events. For this reason, ***the purpose and the content*** of the questions were to highlight those views in relation to the role of the variables – factors in the issue of the expansion of the tourism season through the organization of small-scale running events. Indicatively, for the variables Xv, the respondents were asked to answer questions such as:

> "*We would like to know how these factors would contribute to the success of a road race during a period of low tourist demand.*"

> [Type of question used for case Z2]

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As regards the ***language and wording*** of the questionnaire, the researcher tried to use simple and understandable words, in order to render the concepts, and avoid problems during the completion of the questionnaire (Taylor-Powell & Marshall, 1998). Moreover, it was taken into account that since the questionnaire would be addressed to senior tourism executives, the latter would have an adequate level of education and training in order to be able to comprehend the questions.

The ***type*** of the questions used was almost exclusively closed questions, where the respondents would choose the answer among a set of alternatives. The only exceptions were the questions concerning the data of the respondents, such as their region, their role and the descriptions of their tasks along with the information for the road race.

Regarding their ***form,*** both positively and negatively worded questions were included in order to avoid a potential tendency of the respondents to fill in the research instrument mechanically.

The ***sequencing*** of the questions was such as to facilitate the respondents although the majority of the answers were of the same degree of difficulty. Therefore, there was no reason to escalate the degree of the difficulty of the answers.

Finally, with respect to the ***classification data***, which is known as personal or demographic questions, only the geographic region of the road event was used as an optional choice. In case a respondent would like to receive the results of the survey, there was the optional choice of sending an email to the researcher.

5.1.2   *Principles of Measurement*

Another important issue that has to do with the research process is the measurement of variables, which is not always easy; some of them that have to do with feelings and perceptions are more nebulous because of their abstract nature (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). According to Malhotra (2010), to measure means to assign numbers or others symbols to characteristics of objects, following specified rules. One technique to measure variables is to observe their characteristics in order to reduce their abstract

concepts and render them measurable; this procedure is called operationalization (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Through the use of numbers, we will be able to conduct statistical analysis and better communicate the results; we measure characteristics like perceptions and preferences and not the consumers themselves (Malhotra, 2010).

One preliminary step after obtaining the data and before data analysis is to **categorize** (organize, arrange and classify unit codes) and then **code** and edit it (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In the Road Races Questionnaire, we have 36 items measuring issues related to seasonality, road race, local professionals, synergy, sustainability and 3 demographic variables along with open-ended non-obligatory questions.

The coding presentation of the current thesis is applied through the use of a Codebook where the general information of all the variables is described so that a general picture of the research can be easily got (Codebook – Annex 6). Specifically, in the Codebook the following information is indicatively presented:

- variable name
- position
- label
- measurement level
- role
- column with
- alignment

Another concept that concerns the process of measuring variables is *scaling*; scaling includes a continuous sequence upon which measured things are situated (Malhotra, 2010). The selection of the measurement scale is a particularly important decision given that based on it, the data analysis method will be chosen for the next steps of the research process.

In a very old article, Stevens (1946) distinguishes measurement scales into four categories:

a) Nominal Scales

They are used το measure variables the values of which represent different categories without any physical arrangement, such as the variables occupation and gender (Stevens, 1946). Since the researchers employs them to group subjects into certain categories (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), their numbers are used to identify and classify objects and serve as labels for classes or categories (Malhotra, 2010).

b) Ordinal Scales

They provide more information than the nominal scales (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Their values represent a hierarchical list in the coding, through the operation of rank-coding (Stevens, 1946). Their numbers indicate the relative extent of the characteristic of an object and an ordinal scale indicates relevant position (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). For example, opinions, preferences and perceptions are measured in marketing research through the use of ordinal scales (Malhotra, 2010).

c) Interval Scales

With interval scales, the difference between objects can be compared and both the zero point and the units of measurement are arbitrary (Malhotra, 2010). They represent equal differences between any two values in the characteristics that are measured (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

d) Ratio Scales

According to Stevens (1946), ratio scales are the most frequently used measurement scales in physics. The zero point is fixed here and the ratios of scale values can be computed (Malhotra, 2010). Typical examples include height, age and in marketing we meet sales, costs and number of customers (Malhotra, 2010).

In the current thesis, in order to classify the perceptions of the respondents, Likert scales were employed. Likert scales which "*use the five anchors of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Disagree nor Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree*" (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:393), are usually treated as interval scales (although they are formally ordinal

ones); in this way, researchers are able to apply advanced statistical techniques, to test hypotheses and to get feedback on the importance of the difference of the variables under investigation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The degree of construction refers to the degree of standardization that the researcher adopts during the design and the completion of the questionnaire (Churchill, 1997). The nature of the variables of the current thesis as well as the type of the desired quantitative analysis necessitated the construction of a questionnaire with a high degree of structure, which presupposes the existence of mainly multiple-choice questions. The latter allow a wider range of answers than dichotomous questions (Churchill, 1997).

Following the basic principles of the operational definition of the variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), the next steps were taken in the current thesis:

- **Step 1. Defining the construct that the researcher wants to measure.** Through the literature review that was developed in the previous chapters and the interviews on local stakeholders and running events organizers, the proposed model, which was presented in Chapter 4, was developed. This model includes the five factors of the seasonal performance of a running small-scale event (seasonality, road race, local professionals, synergy, sustainability) for which the study aimed to investigate their role in relation to the model.

- **Step 2. Determination of the instrument that will measure the concept.** The selection of the questions was made in order to check the basic research hypothesis based on the concepts of this study. The Table 4.1 in Chapter 4 presents the structure of the relationships between the variables and the factors of the model. Through this structure the reason of measuring of the concepts is revealed. Specifically, the variables Y_v (which are the constructs and have to be considered in the context of the five factors Z_v) will be measured through the thirty-six variables X_v and more precisely of the average of the X_v that every variable Y_v includes. The variables Z_v are latent variables.

- **Step 3. Determining the response format, for example a rating scale.** The main response formats used were for the Xv space scale type variables, and more specifically unbalanced itemized rating scales; that is, a five-point scale was employed ranging from 1=the corresponding factor has no influence and 5=the corresponding factors highly influences the model, according to the perceptions of the authorities (Table 5.1). A corresponding scale was suggested by Ko (2005) in a research that aimed to develop a procedure to assess tourism sustainability. Ko (2005: 439) explains that "*perception study has been widely employed in examining tourism impacts and the quality of services or products in marketing*". Also, a "6=I do not know" option was employed in order to avoid false neutral evaluations (Shoemaker et al., 2002).

Table 5.1
Unbalanced Itemized Rating Scale

1	2	3	4	5	6
I strongly disagree	I slightly disagree	Neutral	I slightly agree	I strongly agree	I do not know

- **Step 4. Assess the reliability of the measurement scale (Table 5.2)**. Regarding the *reliability* analysis (it concerns the case of the variables Yv which come of the average of the variables Xv they include) it should be noted that in the current thesis the Cronbach's Alpha (α) was used, which is a statistic for investigating the internal consistency of a questionnaire (Cronbach, 1951). Cronbach's Alpha is the most frequently applied test for consistency among the questionnaire elements and tends to be applied in preliminary analyses (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992). More specifically, for each group of variables Xv that compound a factor Yv, the α coefficient was calculated in order to determine whether the chosen measurement scale is acceptable and the calculation of the corresponding factor is permissible. According to Churchill (1979), this coefficient should be the first measure to check the quality of the instrument. A value of Cronbach's Alpha lower than 0,600 indicates that the measurement scale cannot be structured and its calculation is not permissible, whereas a value of Cronbach's Alpha between 0,600 and 0,800 indicates that the measurement

scale can be improved but it is permissible and can be used (Janssens et al., 2008). The closer to 1 the coefficient is, the higher the internal consistency of the scale elements is, while items which present correlations near zero should not be included (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). It should be noted that when an exploratory research is conducted, coefficients greater than 0,60 can be accepted (Robinson et al., 1991).

Table 5.2
Cronbach's Alpha values

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of observed variables
Tourism Seasonality (A)	0,927	3
Road Race (B)	0,937	19
Local Professionals (C)	0,768	3
Synergy (D)	0,755	5
Sustainability (E)	0,804	6

- **Step 5. Assess the validity of the measurement scale.** *Validity*, which explains if the questionnaire measures the right concepts (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), is mainly expressed through 'criterion validity', 'face validity', 'content validity' and 'construct validity' (Taherdoost, 2016). In order to test the content and face validity, Sekaran & Bougie (2016) refer to a panel of experts who can verify the content of the questionnaire. For the current thesis, the supervisor along with the other two members of the committee, who belong to the same field of research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), thoroughly checked the research instrument for its feasibility, readability, consistency and clarity of language, based on the indications of Taherdoost (2016). Through these contacts, useful corrections and comments occurred, which were then incorporated in the questionnaire. In view of the aforementioned, the research instrument was designed and a detailed description of the questions follows:

The first three questions of the Questionnaire are descriptive and constitute the first section of the questionnaire, aiming at summarizing the details (region and duties) of the respondent.

Section A.

Section A includes issues related to tourism seasonality and sport events of the examined region. The researcher wanted to know the respondents' views on tourist seasonality on their region and on the possibility of extending the tourist season through the organization of road races. The respondent was able to choose the answer from the menu through the left click of their mousse.

Section B.

Section B was the introduction to the measurement of the variables of the research model. More specifically, this question B was intended to measure the views of the respondents in relation to factor $Z2$ – Road Race and the individual factors that constitute it, according to the model. The wording of the question B2 (which was associated with factors related to extension of a road race to days) was the following: "*We would like to know how these factors would affect your case so that the organization of a road race in your region would last more days during a period of low tourist demand*". The question was followed by a list of variables from $X4$ to $X7$. The unbalanced itemized rating scale was next to each sentence that concerns these variables, according to the template of Table 4.1. Through the left click of the mousse, the respondent had to choose among the five alternative answers in line with their opinion and experience on the specific topics.

The wording of the question B3 (which was associated with factors related to the success of a road race organization) was the following: "*We would like to know how these factors would contribute to the success of a road race during a period of low tourist demand*". The question was followed by a list of variables from $X8$ to $X15$.

The wording of the question B4 (which was associated with factors related to the characteristics of the organizers of sport road events) was the following: "*We would like to know how these characteristics of the organizers affect the organization of a road race during a period of low tourist demand*". The question was followed by a list of variables from $X16$ to $X22$.

Section C.

Proceeding below, section C intended to measure the views of the respondents in relation to local professionals. The wording of the question C5 (which was associated with factors related to the local professionals with respect to the road race) was the following: "_We would like to know how the following promotive elements that local businesses would provide affect the organization of a road race during a period of low tourist demand_". The question was followed by a list of variables from X23 to X25.

Section D.

Next section D included issues related to synergy among the stakeholders. The wording of the question D6 (which was associated with factors related to the synergies of the region stakeholders) was the following: "_We would like to know how these characteristics that are related to the synergies among the local stakeholders affect the organization of a road race during a period of low tourist demand_". The question was followed by a list of variables from X26 to X30.

Section E.

The final section E concerns sustainability issues and the perceptions of the respondents of the impact of road races (organized in low-season) on the sustainability of their region. The wording of the question E7 (which was associated with factors related to their perceptions on the economic, social and environmental sustainability) was the following: "_We would like to know how road races affect the region in an economic, social and environmental level during a period of low tourist demand_". The question was followed by a list of variables from X31 to X36.

As a final step, and after filling in the optional fields of the questionnaire, the respondent could submit the questionnaire and complete the process. A thank you message for the time devoted and the valuable contribution to the research appeared in the end.

5.1.3   General "Getup"

The ***appearance*** of the questionnaire is as important as the wording and the measurement. It was tried to create an attractive questionnaire which would include a proper introduction and instructions so as to make it easier for the respondent to reply.

To achieve the best possible appearance of the questionnaire, the following actions were performed:

- The questions were organized in sections and alignment. Instructions on how to complete the items were provided in each section so as to help the respondents avoid difficulties.

- The logo of the Department of Business Administration of the University of Macedonia was used in order to enhance the trust of the respondents to the study and its researchers.

- The background of the screen contained soft colors so that it would be visually relaxing for the respondent during their answering.

The researcher tried to keep the ***length*** short and include the absolutely necessary questions so as to make it easy and simple to complete. In total, it contains 7 questions, which contain 36 sub-questions (one for each factor X). The total time required did not exceed the fifteen minutes.

An ***introduction*** that disclosed the identity of the researcher and the purpose of the survey was included. It was tried to motivate the respondents to feel comfortable and devote their time to answer the questionnaire effortlessly.

Finally, as concerns the ***instructions for completion***, there was a general reference in the introduction of the research. At a specific level, there were individual instructions in each question to make completely clear what the respondent had to do, in order to receive a complete reply.

5.2 Survey Errors and Reduction Techniques

In general, in sampling literature, the following four sources of error have been identified: coverage error, sampling error, non-response error and measurement error (Schwarz et al. 1999).

The *coverage error* occurs when there is inconsistency between the target population and the frame population, the *sampling error* refers to the fact that the survey is limited to only a few and not to the entire population, the *non-response error* occurs when some respondents that had been included in the sample do not respond and the *measurement error* occurs when there is a difference between the measured and the true value (Groves, 2004; Groves & Lyberg, 2010).

To address the aforesaid potential errors, the following actions were taken:

o   Sampling + coverage

The sampling and coverage errors were addressed through the methodological steps that will be presented in the next section (Data Collection – Sampling Design Section)

o   Measurement

The measurement error was minimized through the methodological steps of the measurement of the variables. Besides, the piloting process also contributed to the minimization of the measurement error.

o   The non-response errors. Montez (2003) asserts that the reasons that lead to non-response may be divided into five categories:

- Simply refusing to participate in the research

- Insufficient time to participate in the research

- Change in the professional status of the respondent (therefore, the subject of the research is inappropriate for their participation)

- Lack of desire to respond to researches from specific organizations and responding positively to those of other organizations or associations

- Belief that the research is poorly designed or does not effectively address the issue

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The process of sending a questionnaire to a group of recipients, motivating it to complete it honestly and returning it back to the sender may be characterized as a special case of "Social Exchange", (Dillman, 2011). According to Blau (1964), Social Exchange Theory suggests that the actions of individuals are motivated by the expected returns of these actions, which are not economical; the exchange is based on social and material resources. A widely accepted form of encouraging and motivating people to participate in a survey is to provide incentives (Gritz; 2004). Dillman (2011) suggests the following actions in order to increase the response rate: a) to establish trust between the sender and the respondent, b) to increase the reward of the respondent and c) to reduce social costs. The next Table 5.3 presents by axis the script of the actions that Dillman (2011) suggests and the way they were addressed in the context of this research.

Table 5.3
Techniques to improve the response rate.
Note. Adjusted by Dillman (2011)

Suggested Actions	Current Thesis
A. Establish trust between the sender and the respondent	
Provide token of appreciation in advance	• Thanking in the email and in the "Purpose of research" field
Sponsorship by legitimate authority	• Message sent from an email address of University of Macedonia (sgarane@uom.edu.gr) • Reference to the email message and the questionnaire that the research concerns a thesis, elaborated in the Business Administration department of University of Macedonia • The logo of the University appeared in the questionnaire
Make the task appear important	• Reference to the fact that the participation is essential for the success of the study
Invoke other exchange relationships	• Reference to the fact that the participation can be an opportunity for the authority to have a holistic view of the practices it follows on seasonality mitigation through small-scale events
B. Increase the reward of the respondent	
Show positive regard	• Arguments concerned with the importance of the survey both in the

	email and in the "Purpose of research" field • Personal greetings by the responsible researcher
Say thank you	• In advance thanking in the email • Thanking in the "Purpose of research" field • Thanking in the end, in the "Submission" field
Ask for advice	• A field for optional comments was created
Support group value	• Reference to the fact that the questionnaire is addressed to a senior executive of development and supervision of sport tourism activities
Give tangible rewards	• Promise to send the results of the survey after providing the personal contact details in the questionnaire, in the "Submission" field
Make the questionnaire interesting	• Emphasis was placed on the structure and the appearance of the questionnaire • The questions were structured in a way that would ease the reply
Give social validation	*Not concerned with the current thesis*
Communicate scarcity of response opportunities	*Not concerned with the current thesis*
C. Reduce social costs	
Avoid subordinating language	• Adoption of careful wording both in the email and in the questionnaire
Avoid embarrassment	• Emphasis on the fact that this research aims to record the respondents' personal point of view on the issues mentioned and is anonymous and confidential
Avoid inconvenience	• Creation of optional fields (personal details and comments)
Make questionnaire short and easy	• Creation of a questionnaire of 7 main themes and sub-questions • Reference to its estimated completion time in the "Purpose of research" field
Minimize requests to obtain personal information	• Reference to the confidentiality of the research and its data • Limitation of personal information requested to the minimum and information of optional submission of this information
Emphasize similarity to other requests	*Not concerned with the current thesis*

5.3 Piloting and Finalizing the Questionnaire

The step before the finalization of the questionnaire was the performance of a pre-audit process (pilot testing) in order to determine its effectiveness and to minimize (or eliminate) potential errors (Dillman, 2011). In tourism research, several types of questionnaire surveys are used, such as household, telephone or mail surveys, within which self-reply questionnaires (that is questionnaires where the respondent reads and completes the questions themselves) are a dominant data collection instrument (Veal, 2017). However, during the completion of a self-reply questionnaire, seldom does the respondent have the opportunity to ask for clarification or get some help while answering the questions, therefore the pilot study is of great significance (Orams & Page, 2000).

Having the results of the literature review along with the results of the elicitation study, the initial questionnaire was formulated, through Google Forms, the survey administration application that is included in the Google Drive office. Nowadays, the web-based survey instruments are applied in almost all the research fields (Zhang, 2000), and Google Forms is one of the many online survey tools available with many features, including its free use, unlimited surveys, unlimited respondents, automatically collected data, logo and images addition (Vasantha & Harinarayana, 2016). According to Malhotra (2010), the participants' characteristics in the pre-test phase should match the characteristics of the final sample of the survey. For this reason, the sample of the pre-testing was selected to consist of four tourism executives, with whom there was the relevant contact and then they accepted to participate in the pretest of the questionnaire. All of them are occupied as administrative executives in Greek municipalities; two of them are also marathon runners and the other two are tourism executives in the municipality. The purpose of the pilot was to examine and evaluate the measuring instrument before the main survey to the Greek municipalities. In addition, the data that would be collected during the pilot testing were expected to provide quantitative information on the validity and reliability of the scales used (Groves et al., 2011). The pilot questionnaire was written in Greek. Some very few comments arose which were taken into account and corrections were made where necessary.

After the pilot testing completion, the final questionnaire was prepared (Annex 4 and Annex 5) and the link of the survey was the following:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1pomEjikUwkr8v6wiHlMlND-fJ7vRa1P-ffpC6A8uzXA/edit

5.4 Data Collection

For the sampling process the major steps that Sekaran & Bougie (2016) suggest, were followed (Figure 5.3):
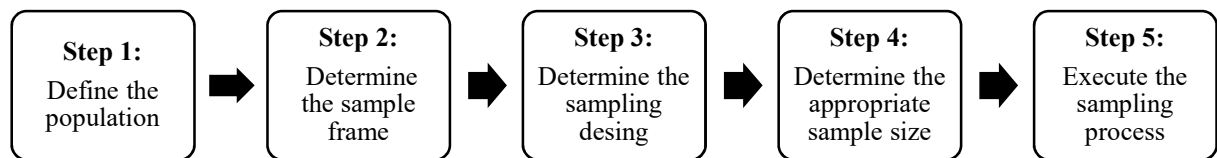
Figure 5.3
Sampling Process
Source: Adapted from Sekaran & Bougie (2016)

- Step 1: Population Definition

The planning process for the sampling begins with the definition of the population under study. Elements, geographical boundaries or time may define the target population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In the current thesis, the target population was defined based on the following criteria:

A. Sampling Unit: Responsible of development and supervision of tourist sport activities in their region
B. Country of Origin: Greece
C. Government Body: Municipalities (Local Authorities)

- Step 2: Sample Frame Determination

In order to determine the population of the municipalities, the database that is available on the official webpage of the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (https://kedke.gr/) was used. In the page "Local Authorities", there was the list of all the Greek municipalities, both in Greek and English language, along with more information (region, prefecture, municipality, mayor name, telephone, email and website address) (Figure 5.4). The research revealed that there are 332 municipalities. The collection of all the email addresses was the electronic database of this thesis for sending invitations to participate in the completion of the survey questionnaire.

Figure 5.4
The website of the central union of Greek municipalities
Source: https://kede.gr/en/, Visit 15.12.2020

- Step 3: Sampling Design Determination

For the current thesis, no sampling design determination issue was raised given that the designed questionnaire was addressed to the entire population that was defined based on the criteria of the 1st step.

- Step 4: Appropriate Sample Size Determination

For the current thesis, no sampling design determination issue was raised given that the designed questionnaire was addressed to the entire population that was defined based on the criteria of the 1st step.

- Step 5: Sampling Process Execution

Based on the available data received from kede.gr, it was decided to contact all the 332 municipalities in order to select responses. Starting from January until November 2021, emails were sent to the municipalities, asking for their contribution to the research (Annex 6). Telephone calls and new mailings (reminders) were planned in order to receive as many responses as possible. Also, the researcher visited Philoxenia 2021, the International Tourism Exhibition, so as to meet some executives and be able to collect more responses (Annex 7).

Conclusion

In the current chapter, the basic research instrument (questionnaire) was set as the method of collecting data for this thesis. The (road races and extension of the tourist season) questionnaire design principles were designed and discussed, including the wording, the measurement and the general "get-up", in order to minimize bias in research. Based on the five main themes that emerged from the qualitative research, thirty-six questions were prepared for the authorities. The pilot study and elements of data collection were presented. In the next chapter, the data analysis method will be chosen and the appropriate statistical technique that will be selected to test the hypotheses will be described.

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ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In the current analysis and interpretation chapter, the modeling of the conceptual structures is carried out using data which was collected by the Municipalities of Greece (authorities) during 2021. The validity of the hypotheses is examined through the widely accepted PLS-SEM analysis, as suggested by recent studies. The model verification follows two levels of analysis. First, the validity and the reliability of the proposed measurement model is assessed. Next, the structural model ascertains the significance of the hypothesized relationships.

Figure 6.1:
The research process and the step that Chapter 6 corresponds to
Source: Adapted from Sekaran & Bougie (2016)
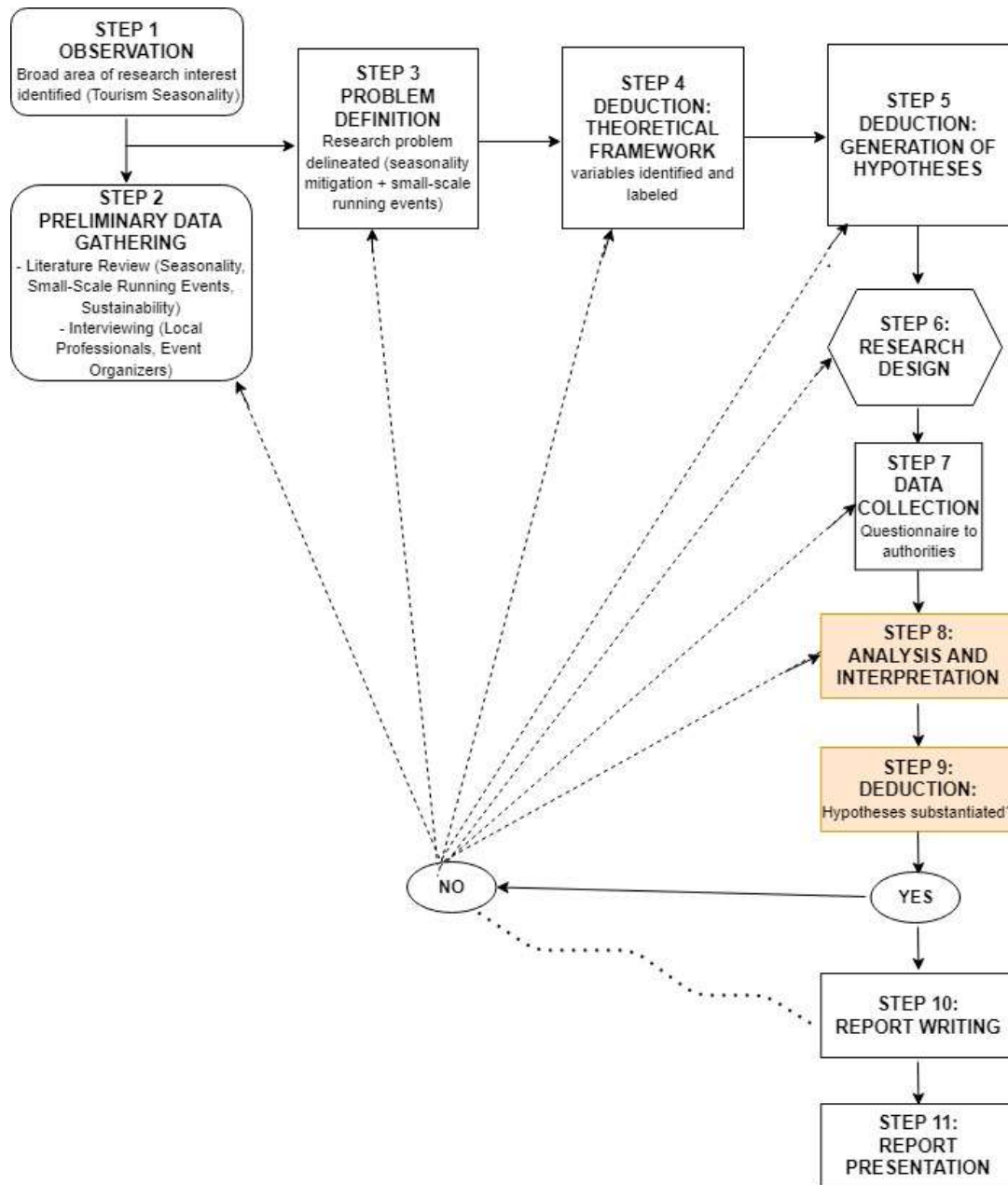
6. PLS – SEM as a Research Method

The purpose of this thesis was to test the proposed exploratory conceptual model which suggests that the extension of the tourist season depends on a number of factors related to sport (running) events in connection with their footprint on the sustainability of the destination. For this purpose, the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling, PLS-SEM, was considered as an appropriate method for several reasons.

Firstly, in a structural equation model, PLS-SEM is applied as an alternative approach to the widely applied Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM), in situations when theory has not been widely developed and the main target is to predict and explain the constructs (Hair et al., 2021, Wong, 2013). Indeed, PLS-SEM can be used as an attractive methodological alternative when the objective is the exploration and theory building rather than confirmation (Hair et al., 2021). In the current thesis, the theoretical framework was tested from a prediction perspective for which PLS-SEM is the most suitable method (Hair et al., 2019).

Besides, PLS-SEM is a method that depends on the creation of models; in this kind of models, causal relationships through links among variables are indicated (Kock, 2015). For complicated models, like the current, where many constructs, indicators and relationships occur, PLS-SEM method is preferred (Hair et al., 2019). It is effective with small sample sizes and complex models, achieves high levels of statistical power and has been widely applied in research, including tourism research (Hair et al., 2021; Wong, 2013). In this thesis, the relationship between tourism seasonality and the rest factors related to the running events is examined.

Also, PLS-SEM works well for both reflective and composite measurement (Henseler, 2017), whereas CB-SEM allows only formative measurement (Hair et al., 2021).

Considering the characteristics of the current theoretical model along with the advantages of PLS-SEM method, the latter was selected as the most appropriate method for this thesis.

But it was not until the last two decades when PLS-SEM got the attention of the academic community thanks to the development of PLS software (Wong, 2019).

SmartPLS has facilitated the use of PLS-SEM and has been gradually included in several research areas (De Souzabido & Da Silva, 2019). It is a free software for the research community and the researcher can easily have access to knowledge exchange among users (Wong, 2013). Thus, in this thesis, SmartPLS Statistical Software was used to analyze the variables of the running events and the rest variables as influencers of tourism seasonality.

6.2 Hypotheses Formulation

Based on the proposed theoretical framework that was presented in the previous chapters (Figure 4.3 and again here as Figure 6.2), the different hypotheses which were set up to evaluate the relationship of predictors on the outcome, are the following:
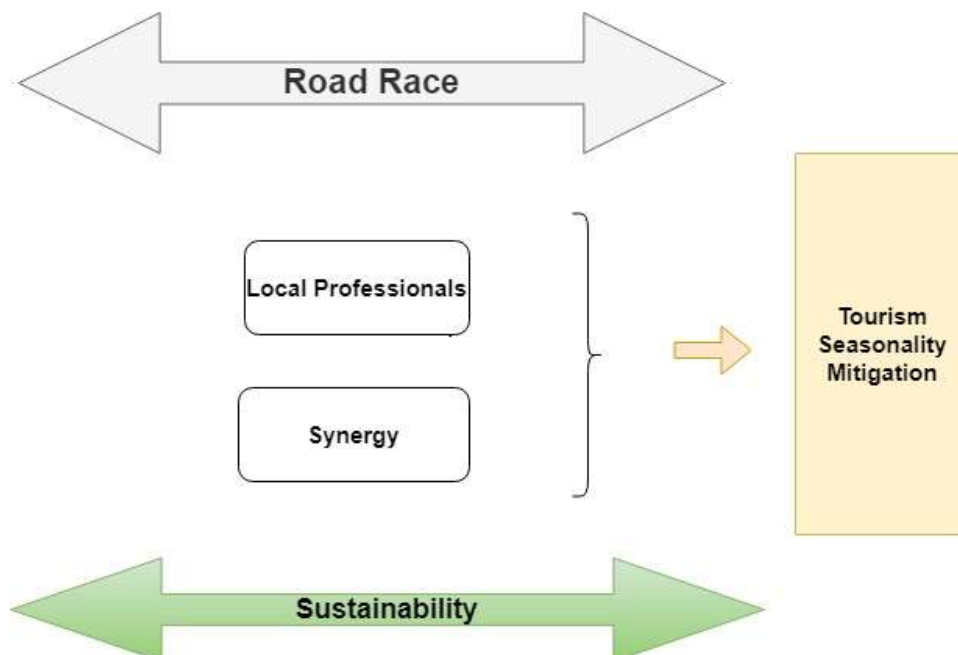
Figure 6.2
Proposed Theoretical Framework

H1. There is a significant positive effect of Local Professionals (LocalPro) on Road Race in Low Season Period

H2. There is a significant positive effect of LocalPro on Synergy in Low Season Period

H3. There is a significant positive effect of Road Race on Sustainability in Low Season Period

H4. There is a significant positive effect of Road Race on Tourism Seasonality

H5. There is a significant positive effect of Sustainability on Tourism Seasonality

H6. There is a significant positive effect of Synergy on Road Race in Low Season Period

H7. There is a significant positive effect of Synergy on Sustainability in Low Season Period

H8. There is a significant positive effect of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality

H9. Road Race positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Sustainability in Low Season Period

H10. Synergy, Road Race and Sustainability positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality

H11. Synergy and Road Race positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality

H12. Sustainability positively Mediates the Relationship between Road Race and Tourism Seasonality

H13. Synergy positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Road Race in Low Season Period

H14. Synergy positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Sustainability in Low Season Period

H15. Sustainability positively Mediates the Relationship between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality

H16. Synergy positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality

H17. Road Race positively Mediates the Relationship between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality

H18. Road Race and Sustainability positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality

H19. Road Race positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality

H20. Synergy and Sustainability positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality

H21. Synergy and Road Race positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Sustainability in Low Season Period

H22. Road Race positively Mediates the Relationship between Synergy and Sustainability in Low Season Period

H23. Road Race and Sustainability positively Mediate the Relationship between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality

6.3 Sample Size

The purpose of the study is twofold: to identify to what extent factors related to sport running events (input road race, local professionals, synergy, sustainability) influence the extension of the tourist season (output seasonality) and to identify if there are determinant relationships between the categories.

A PLS model is examined in two stages: firstly, the reliability and validity of the measurement model is assessed and then the structural model is assessed (Wasko & Faraj, 2005).

The current model was refined using structural equation modelling (with SmartPLS 3 Software) and was tested empirically, analyzing a sample of local authorities from the 332 municipalities. The researcher received 80 completed questionnaires that were included in the analysis. The rate of response was 24,01% (80/332). For the commonly used level of statistical power of 80%, the minimum sample size requirements to detect minimum R^2 values of 0.25 in the structural model for significant levels of 1% and the maximum number of arrows (8) pointing at a construct were 73 responses. The latter is based on the sample size recommendation in PL-SEM for a Statistical Power of 80% by Hair et al. (2021).

6.4 Seasonality Mitigation Model

Corroborating the theoretical suggestions of the qualitative research, this thesis proposes a model for seasonality mitigation that analyses how road race related factors (input) influence tourism seasonality (output) as well as the interconnections among various categories of other related factors, as shown in Figures 6.3 and 6.4. From the

total of 36 items initially included for the 8 constructs (as presented in Table 4.1), based on PLS reiterations, 28 were kept in the final model as being reflective for the seasonality mitigation constructs.
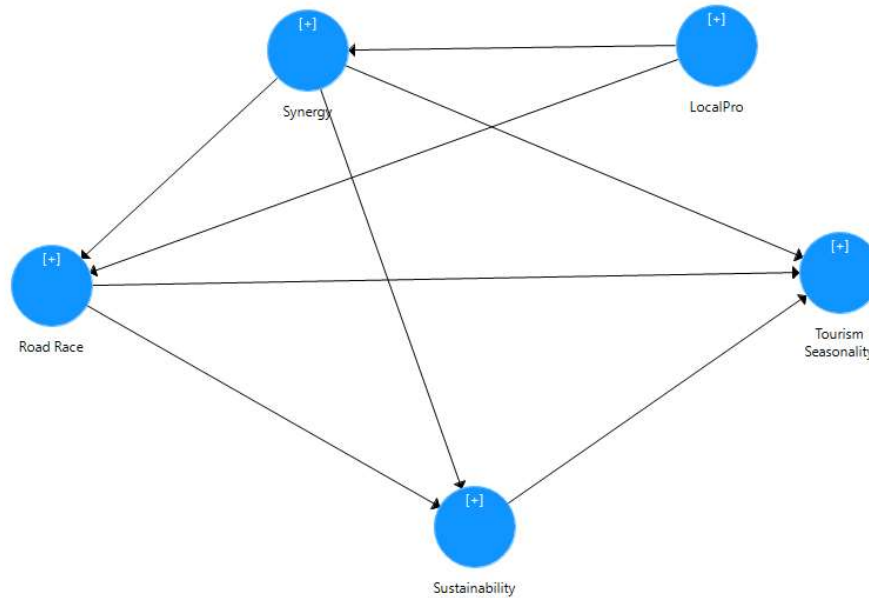
Figure 6.3
Seasonality Mitigation Conceptual Model
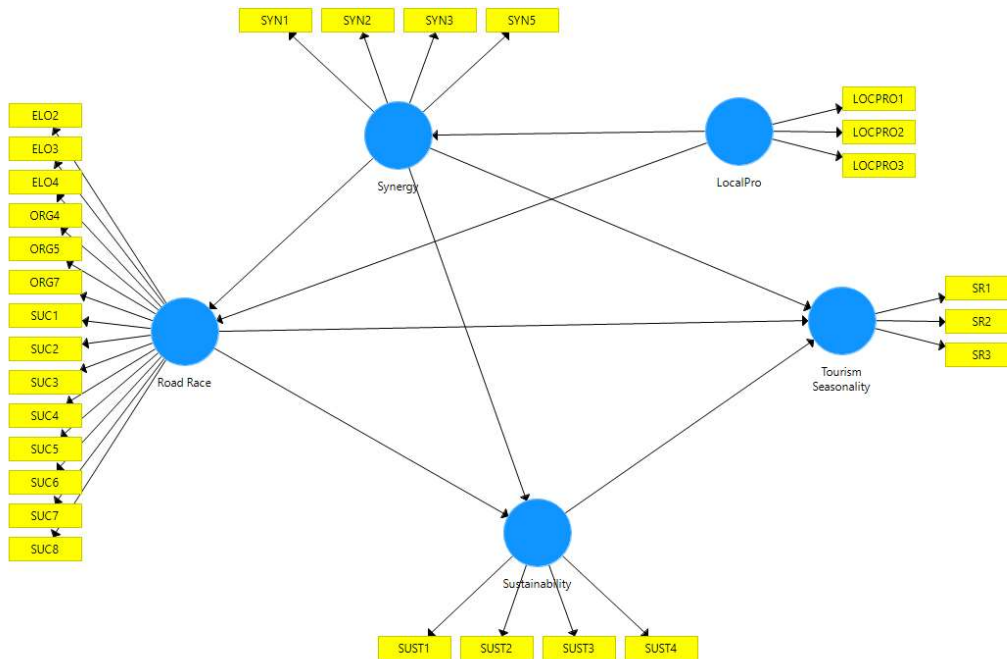
Figure 6.4
Seasonality Mitigation Model with variables

6.5 Data Analysis and Results

6.5.1 Measurement Model

The measurement model involves the measurement, the reliability and the validity of the indicators. As a start, after double-clicking the import button, the Seasonality Full Data was uploaded as a CSV file. Smart-PLS identified Semicolon option as the proper Delimiter for the data.

As mentioned before, the initial model included 36 items and 8 constructs, each formed from a number of items. The acceptable condition for factor loadings of 0.50 was taken as a reference and was included in the analysis (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Şengel et al., 2022). Seasonality Mitigation Measurement Model is presented in Figure 6.5.
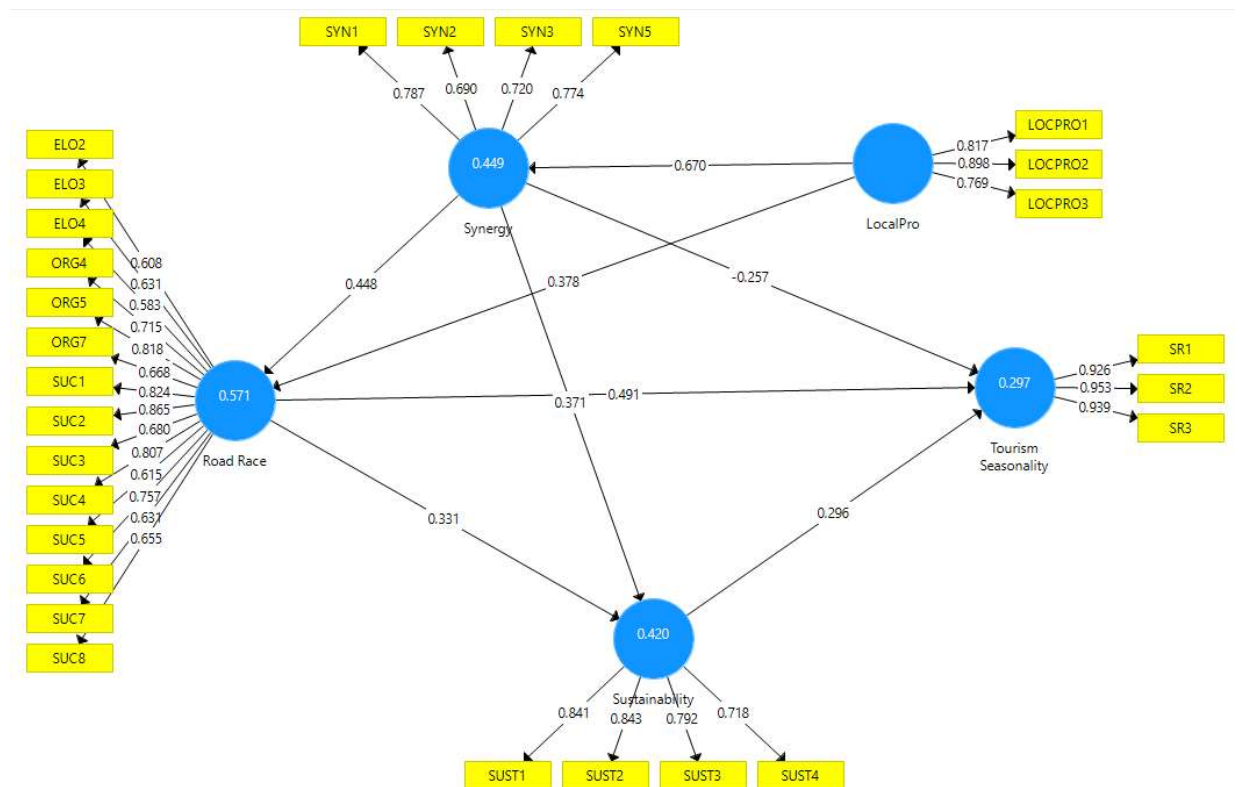
Figure 6.5
Seasonality Mitigation Measurement Model

- *Confirmatory Tetrad Analysis*

Before starting the evaluation of PLS-SEM results, the measurement model examination as reflective or formative is necessary. Although it is an issue largely discussed, it is not fully resolved (Hair et al., 2021), especially in marketing where theoretical frameworks have not been established (Wong, 2019). Gudergan et al. (2008) suggest the confirmatory tetrad analysis for PLS-SEM (CTA-PLS) which is a bootstrapping procedure to test empirically and assess the measurement model. For the current thesis, Confirmatory Tetrad Analysis was applied through SmartPLS. The only limitation was that (CTA-PLS) could only check latent variables that included at least 4 indicators (Wong, 2019); therefore, the variables Running Race, Synergy and Sustainability were included whereas Local Professionals and Seasonality were omitted from the testing. Based on Wong' s (2019) guidelines for CI, the measurement model was determined as reflective. For variables of 3 indicators or fewer, when CTA-PLS cannot be applied, it is suggested that researcher makes the decision but usually, when indicators seem well together, it is a *reflective* model (Wong, 2019).

The figures below (6.6 –6.8) depict the CI low adj. and CI Up adj. for the variables under examination; since zero (0) lies between the CI low adj. and CI Up adj., the model is reflective.

Road Race

Road Race	Original Sampl...	Sample Mean (...	Standard Devia...	T Statistics (|O/...	P Values	Bias	CI Low	CI Up	Alpha adj.	z(1-alpha)	CI Low adj.	CI Up adj.
1: ELO2,ELO3,ELO4,ORG4	-0.036	-0.035	0.047	0.768	0.443	0.001	-0.130	0.056	0.001	3.435	-0.200	0.125
2: ELO2,ELO3,ORG4,ELO4	0.003	0.003	0.012	0.279	0.781	-0.000	-0.021	0.028	0.001	3.435	-0.039	0.046
4: ELO2,ELO3,ELO4,ORG5	-0.003	-0.004	0.033	0.084	0.933	-0.001	-0.067	0.064	0.001	3.435	-0.116	0.113
6: ELO2,ELO4,ORG5,ELO3	0.016	0.017	0.032	0.511	0.609	0.000	-0.047	0.079	0.001	3.435	-0.094	0.127
7: ELO2,ELO3,ELO4,ORG7	-0.043	-0.043	0.044	0.992	0.322	0.000	-0.130	0.042	0.001	3.435	-0.194	0.107
10: ELO2,ELO3,ELO4,SUC1	-0.012	-0.012	0.031	0.384	0.701	-0.000	-0.073	0.049	0.001	3.435	-0.118	0.095
13: ELO2,ELO3,ELO4,SUC2	-0.030	-0.028	0.040	0.751	0.453	0.002	-0.110	0.047	0.001	3.435	-0.169	0.106
17: ELO2,ELO3,SUC3,ELO4	0.003	0.003	0.013	0.232	0.817	0.000	-0.022	0.028	0.001	3.435	-0.041	0.046
20: ELO2,ELO3,SUC4,ELO4	0.007	0.007	0.015	0.468	0.640	-0.000	-0.023	0.038	0.001	3.435	-0.045	0.060
24: ELO2,ELO4,SUC5,ELO3	0.006	0.005	0.034	0.168	0.866	-0.000	-0.061	0.074	0.001	3.435	-0.112	0.124
27: ELO2,ELO4,SUC6,ELO3	0.035	0.035	0.046	0.751	0.453	-0.000	-0.056	0.125	0.001	3.435	-0.124	0.193
31: ELO2,ELO3,ELO4,SUC8	-0.090	-0.090	0.072	1.246	0.213	0.000	-0.233	0.052	0.001	3.435	-0.339	0.158
42: ELO2,ORG4,SUC1,ELO3	-0.012	-0.011	0.016	0.768	0.443	0.001	-0.044	0.017	0.001	3.435	-0.067	0.040
52: ELO2,ELO3,ORG4,SUC5	0.027	0.026	0.032	0.840	0.401	-0.001	-0.035	0.092	0.001	3.435	-0.083	0.140
56: ELO2,ELO3,SUC6,ORG4	0.035	0.032	0.036	0.978	0.329	-0.003	-0.032	0.109	0.001	3.435	-0.085	0.161

Road Race

Matrix   Copy to Clipboard: [Excel Format] [R Format]

Road Race	Original Sampl...	Sample Mean (...	Standard Devia...	T Statistics (|O/...	P Values	Bias	CI Low	CI Up	Alpha adj.	z(1-alpha)	CI Low adj.	CI Up adj.
58: ELO2,ELO3,ORG4,SUC7	0.026	0.024	0.032	0.817	0.414	-0.001	-0.035	0.089	0.001	3.435	-0.081	0.136
59: ELO2,ELO3,SUC7,ORG4	0.037	0.034	0.034	1.061	0.289	-0.003	-0.029	0.107	0.001	3.435	-0.079	0.157
62: ELO2,ELO3,SUC8,ORG4	0.051	0.048	0.046	1.112	0.267	-0.003	-0.036	0.144	0.001	3.435	-0.104	0.211
66: ELO2,ORG5,ORG7,ELO3	0.008	0.007	0.014	0.557	0.578	-0.000	-0.019	0.034	0.001	3.435	-0.039	0.054
78: ELO2,ORG5,SUC4,ELO3	-0.002	-0.002	0.010	0.176	0.860	-0.001	-0.021	0.019	0.001	3.435	-0.036	0.033
92: ELO2,ELO3,SUC1,ORG7	0.015	0.013	0.023	0.663	0.508	-0.002	-0.028	0.063	0.001	3.435	-0.062	0.097
98: ELO2,ELO3,SUC3,ORG7	0.005	0.004	0.024	0.218	0.827	-0.001	-0.041	0.053	0.001	3.435	-0.076	0.088
100: ELO2,ELO3,ORG7,SU...	0.039	0.036	0.031	1.248	0.213	-0.003	-0.019	0.102	0.001	3.435	-0.065	0.148
104: ELO2,ELO3,SUC5,OR...	0.005	0.004	0.025	0.217	0.828	-0.002	-0.041	0.055	0.001	3.435	-0.077	0.091
114: ELO2,ORG7,SUC8,EL...	0.021	0.020	0.025	0.851	0.395	-0.001	-0.027	0.072	0.001	3.435	-0.064	0.109
121: ELO2,ELO3,SUC1,SUC4	0.023	0.021	0.021	1.086	0.278	-0.002	-0.017	0.065	0.001	3.435	-0.048	0.096
134: ELO2,ELO3,SUC8,SUC1	0.046	0.042	0.040	1.128	0.260	-0.003	-0.031	0.129	0.001	3.435	-0.090	0.188
144: ELO2,SUC2,SUC5,ELO3	-0.015	-0.014	0.015	0.990	0.322	0.001	-0.046	0.014	0.001	3.435	-0.068	0.036
146: ELO2,ELO3,SUC6,SUC2	0.013	0.012	0.020	0.668	0.505	-0.001	-0.025	0.053	0.001	3.435	-0.054	0.082
161: ELO2,ELO3,SUC6,SUC3	0.019	0.017	0.029	0.673	0.502	-0.002	-0.035	0.078	0.001	3.435	-0.077	0.120

Road Race

Matrix   Copy to Clipboard: [Excel Format] [R Format]

Road Race	Original Sampl...	Sample Mean (...	Standard Devia...	T Statistics (|O/...	P Values	Bias	CI Low	CI Up	Alpha adj.	z(1-alpha)	CI Low adj.	CI Up adj.
163: ELO2,ELO3,SUC3,SUC7	0.055	0.051	0.046	1.212	0.226	-0.004	-0.030	0.149	0.001	3.435	-0.097	0.215
166: ELO2,ELO3,SUC3,SUC8	0.015	0.014	0.033	0.465	0.642	-0.001	-0.048	0.081	0.001	3.435	-0.096	0.129
176: ELO2,ELO3,SUC7,SUC4	0.029	0.027	0.030	0.981	0.327	-0.002	-0.027	0.091	0.001	3.435	-0.071	0.135
179: ELO2,ELO3,SUC8,SUC4	0.039	0.036	0.034	1.125	0.261	-0.003	-0.026	0.110	0.001	3.435	-0.076	0.160
181: ELO2,ELO3,SUC5,SUC6	0.060	0.056	0.058	1.036	0.301	-0.004	-0.049	0.177	0.001	3.435	-0.134	0.261
194: ELO2,ELO3,SUC8,SUC6	0.047	0.044	0.039	1.208	0.227	-0.003	-0.027	0.126	0.001	3.435	-0.084	0.183
245: ELO2,ELO4,SUC5,OR...	0.025	0.026	0.034	0.739	0.460	0.000	-0.043	0.093	0.001	3.435	-0.093	0.143
249: ELO2,ORG5,SUC6,EL...	-0.003	-0.002	0.007	0.372	0.710	0.001	-0.017	0.011	0.001	3.435	-0.028	0.022
278: ELO2,ELO4,SUC8,OR...	0.074	0.071	0.059	1.264	0.207	-0.003	-0.038	0.193	0.001	3.435	-0.125	0.280
284: ELO2,ELO4,SUC3,SUC1	0.051	0.049	0.044	1.154	0.249	-0.003	-0.033	0.141	0.001	3.435	-0.099	0.206
291: ELO2,SUC1,SUC5,ELO4	-0.003	-0.002	0.008	0.330	0.741	0.000	-0.018	0.012	0.001	3.435	-0.029	0.024
301: ELO2,SUC4,SUC2,SUC3	0.057	0.055	0.053	1.072	0.284	-0.003	-0.045	0.164	0.001	3.435	-0.123	0.242
307: ELO2,ELO4,SUC2,SUC5	0.036	0.034	0.044	0.813	0.416	-0.002	-0.049	0.124	0.001	3.435	-0.113	0.189
330: ELO2,SUC3,SUC7,ELO4	0.005	0.005	0.007	0.662	0.508	-0.000	-0.009	0.020	0.001	3.435	-0.020	0.030
337: ELO2,ELO4,SUC4,SUC6	0.095	0.092	0.067	1.425	0.155	-0.003	-0.033	0.229	0.001	3.435	-0.131	0.326

Road Race

Matrix   Copy to Clipboard: [Excel Format] [R Format]

Road Race	Original Sampl...	Sample Mean (...	Standard Devia...	T Statistics (|O/...	P Values	Bias	CI Low	CI Up	Alpha adj.	z(1-alpha)	CI Low adj.	CI Up adj.
365: ELO2,ORG4,ORG7,ORG5	-0.011	-0.011	0.012	0.994	0.321	0.001	-0.035	0.011	0.001	3.435	-0.052	0.028
391: ELO2,ORG4,ORG7,SUC1	-0.010	-0.010	0.011	0.910	0.363	0.000	-0.031	0.011	0.001	3.435	-0.047	0.027
424: ELO2,ORG4,SUC1,SUC5	-0.012	-0.011	0.016	0.731	0.465	0.001	-0.043	0.019	0.001	3.435	-0.066	0.042
452: ELO2,ORG4,SUC8,SUC2	-0.004	-0.003	0.011	0.328	0.743	0.000	-0.026	0.018	0.001	3.435	-0.043	0.035
457: ELO2,ORG4,SUC3,SUC5	0.004	0.003	0.020	0.217	0.828	-0.001	-0.034	0.045	0.001	3.435	-0.064	0.075
467: ELO2,ORG4,SUC3,SUC3	-0.004	-0.004	0.014	0.243	0.808	-0.000	-0.032	0.025	0.001	3.435	-0.053	0.046
537: ELO2,SUC1,SUC6,ORG5	0.006	0.006	0.012	0.461	0.645	0.000	-0.018	0.030	0.001	3.435	-0.036	0.048
544: ELO2,ORG5,SUC2,SUC3	-0.012	-0.011	0.016	0.745	0.457	0.001	-0.043	0.018	0.001	3.435	-0.066	0.041
547: ELO2,ORG5,SUC2,SUC4	-0.002	-0.002	0.012	0.174	0.862	-0.000	-0.025	0.021	0.001	3.435	-0.043	0.039
551: ELO2,ORG5,SUC5,SUC2	-0.006	-0.006	0.009	0.672	0.502	0.000	-0.025	0.012	0.001	3.435	-0.038	0.025
553: ELO2,ORG5,SUC2,SUC6	-0.013	-0.012	0.017	0.775	0.439	0.001	-0.046	0.019	0.001	3.435	-0.071	0.044
557: ELO2,ORG5,SUC7,SUC2	0.015	0.014	0.014	1.119	0.264	-0.001	-0.010	0.043	0.001	3.435	-0.030	0.063
600: ELO2,SUC6,SUC7,ORG5	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.994	0.320	-0.001	-0.015	0.049	0.001	3.435	-0.039	0.073
644: ELO2,ORG7,SUC8,SUC2	0.008	0.008	0.012	0.680	0.497	-0.000	-0.015	0.032	0.001	3.435	-0.033	0.050
678: ELO2,SUC5,SUC7,ORG7	0.020	0.020	0.016	1.242	0.215	-0.001	-0.011	0.054	0.001	3.435	-0.035	0.078

Road Race

Matrix   Copy to Clipboard: [Excel Format] [R Format]

Road Race	Original Sampl...	Sample Mean (...	Standard Devia...	T Statistics (|O/...	P Values	Bias	CI Low	CI Up	Alpha adj.	z(1-alpha)	CI Low adj.	CI Up adj.
715: ELO2,SUC1,SUC3,SUC6	0.004	0.004	0.014	0.283	0.777	-0.000	-0.023	0.032	0.001	3.435	-0.043	0.052
755: ELO2,SUC2,SUC4,SUC3	-0.002	-0.002	0.010	0.173	0.863	-0.000	-0.022	0.018	0.001	3.435	-0.037	0.033
766: ELO2,SUC2,SUC3,SUC8	0.019	0.018	0.025	0.740	0.460	-0.001	-0.030	0.069	0.001	3.435	-0.067	0.106
800: ELO2,SUC3,SUC5,SUC4	-0.009	-0.008	0.016	0.569	0.569	0.001	-0.042	0.022	0.001	3.435	-0.066	0.046
848: ELO2,SUC5,SUC7,SUC6	0.010	0.010	0.023	0.444	0.657	-0.000	-0.034	0.055	0.001	3.435	-0.068	0.088
1021: ELO3,ELO4,SUC7,SUC8	0.025	0.024	0.030	0.839	0.402	-0.001	-0.033	0.086	0.001	3.435	-0.078	0.131
1361: ELO3,SUC1,SUC6,SUC2	-0.009	-0.009	0.013	0.697	0.486	0.001	-0.037	0.016	0.001	3.435	-0.057	0.036
1377: ELO3,SUC3,SUC6,SUC1	0.004	0.004	0.017	0.240	0.811	-0.000	-0.029	0.038	0.001	3.435	-0.055	0.063
1378: ELO3,SUC1,SUC3,SUC7	0.013	0.012	0.021	0.613	0.540	-0.001	-0.028	0.056	0.001	3.435	-0.060	0.088
1464: ELO3,SUC4,SUC6,SUC3	-0.006	-0.006	0.018	0.347	0.729	0.000	-0.041	0.029	0.001	3.435	-0.067	0.055
1478: ELO3,SUC3,SUC8,SUC5	-0.044	-0.043	0.039	1.130	0.259	0.002	-0.123	0.031	0.001	3.435	-0.181	0.089
1656: ELO4,ORG7,SUC1,ORG5	-0.006	-0.006	0.008	0.802	0.423	-0.000	-0.021	0.009	0.001	3.435	-0.032	0.020
1819: ELO4,ORG7,SUC4,SUC6	-0.034	-0.032	0.027	1.288	0.198	0.002	-0.088	0.016	0.001	3.435	-0.127	0.055
1969: ELO4,SUC3,SUC5,SUC7	-0.037	-0.035	0.039	0.970	0.333	0.002	-0.115	0.036	0.001	3.435	-0.172	0.093
2077: ORG4,ORG5,SUC3,SUC4	-0.006	-0.006	0.015	0.391	0.696	-0.001	-0.035	0.024	0.001	3.435	-0.058	0.047

Road Race

Road Race	Original Sampl...	Sample Mean (...	Standard Devia...	T Statistics (|O/...	P Values	Bias	CI Low	CI Up	Alpha adj.	z(1-alpha)	CI Low adj.	CI Up adj.
800: ELO2,SUC3,SUC5,SUC4	-0.009	-0.008	0.016	0.569	0.569	0.001	-0.042	0.022	0.001	3.435	-0.066	0.046
848: ELO2,SUC5,SUC7,SUC6	0.010	0.010	0.023	0.444	0.657	-0.000	-0.034	0.055	0.001	3.435	-0.068	0.088
1021: ELO3,ELO4,SUC7,SUC8	0.025	0.024	0.030	0.839	0.402	-0.001	-0.033	0.086	0.001	3.435	-0.078	0.131
1361: ELO3,SUC1,SUC6,SUC2	-0.009	-0.009	0.013	0.697	0.486	0.001	-0.037	0.016	0.001	3.435	-0.057	0.036
1377: ELO3,SUC3,SUC6,SUC1	0.004	0.004	0.017	0.240	0.811	-0.000	-0.029	0.038	0.001	3.435	-0.055	0.063
1378: ELO3,SUC1,SUC3,SUC7	0.013	0.012	0.021	0.613	0.540	-0.001	-0.028	0.056	0.001	3.435	-0.060	0.088
1464: ELO3,SUC4,SUC6,SUC3	-0.006	-0.006	0.018	0.347	0.729	0.000	-0.041	0.029	0.001	3.435	-0.067	0.055
1478: ELO3,SUC3,SUC8,SUC5	-0.044	-0.043	0.039	1.130	0.259	0.002	-0.123	0.031	0.001	3.435	-0.181	0.089
1656: ELO4,ORG7,SUC1,ORG5	-0.006	-0.006	0.008	0.802	0.423	-0.000	-0.021	0.009	0.001	3.435	-0.032	0.020
1819: ELO4,ORG7,SUC4,SUC6	-0.034	-0.032	0.027	1.288	0.198	0.002	-0.088	0.016	0.001	3.435	-0.127	0.055
1969: ELO4,SUC3,SUC5,SUC7	-0.037	-0.035	0.039	0.970	0.333	0.002	-0.115	0.036	0.001	3.435	-0.172	0.093
2077: ORG4,ORG5,SUC3,SUC4	-0.006	-0.006	0.015	0.391	0.696	-0.001	-0.035	0.024	0.001	3.435	-0.058	0.047
2153: ORG4,ORG7,SUC6,SUC2	-0.002	-0.002	0.008	0.227	0.821	0.000	-0.017	0.013	0.001	3.435	-0.029	0.025
2353: ORG4,SUC4,SUC6,SUC7	0.011	0.011	0.018	0.611	0.542	-0.000	-0.024	0.047	0.001	3.435	-0.051	0.074
2562: ORG5,SUC6,SUC8,SUC2	0.007	0.006	0.012	0.549	0.583	-0.001	-0.017	0.032	0.001	3.435	-0.035	0.050

Figure 6.6
Road Race CTA-PLS results

Synergy

Synergy	Original Sampl...	Sample Mean (...	Standard Devia...	T Statistics (|O/...	P Values	Bias	CI Low	CI Up	Alpha adj.	z(1-alpha)	CI Low adj.	CI Up adj.
1: SYN1,SYN2,S...	0.018	0.018	0.023	0.812	0.417	-0.000	-0.026	0.063	0.025	2.248	-0.032	0.070
2: SYN1,SYN2,S...	-0.136	-0.128	0.085	1.599	0.110	0.008	-0.311	0.023	0.025	2.248	-0.335	0.047

Figure 6.7
Synergy CTA-PLS results

Sustainability

Sustainability	Original Sampl...	Sample Mean (...	Standard Devia...	T Statistics (|O/...	P Values	Bias	CI Low	CI Up	Alpha adj.	z(1-alpha)	CI Low adj.	CI Up adj.
1: SUST1,SUST2...	0.054	0.051	0.053	1.023	0.307	-0.004	-0.046	0.162	0.025	2.248	-0.062	0.177
2: SUST1,SUST2...	-0.055	-0.056	0.080	0.691	0.490	-0.001	-0.212	0.103	0.025	2.248	-0.234	0.125

Figure 6.8
Sustainability CTA-PLS results

- *Reliability and Validity*

The reliability of the variables of the measurement model was estimated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) and the findings are presented in Figure 6.9. All the CRs and the Cronbach's Alpha values are higher than the recommended value of 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951).

Construct Reliability and Validity

Matrix	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
	Cronbach's Al...	rho_A	Composite Rel...	Average Varian...
LocalPro	0.771	0.775	0.868	0.688
Running Race	0.922	0.929	0.933	0.504
Seasonality	0.935	0.972	0.958	0.883
Sustainability	0.812	0.817	0.876	0.640
Synergy	0.732	0.739	0.832	0.553

Figure 6.9
Measurement Model Reliability and Validity

As concerns the convergent validity, outer loadings of the indicators along with the average variance extracted (AVE) are considered (Hair et al., 2021). Although in many cases, an indicator's outer loading should be above 0.708, indicators should not always be eliminated automatically; when they are between 0.40 and 0.70 they should be retained on the basis that their removal affects content validity (Hair et al., 2021). In the current thesis, the threshold of 0.50 was applied for outer loadings. The average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated for every construct, ensuring AVEs higher than the acceptable 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981); in particular, the values are between 0.504 and 0.883, proving that the model has convergent validity.

As soon as the Convergent Validity is established, the next step is the establishment of Discriminant Validity, which was assessed by Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Figure 6.10). Figure 6.10 shows that the square root of AVE for the construct is greater than the inter-construct correlation.

Discriminant Validity

Fornell-Larcker Criterion	Cross Loadings	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)
	LocalPro	Road Race	Sustainability	Synergy	Tourism Seaso...
LocalPro	0.829				
Road Race	0.678	0.710			
Sustainability	0.569	0.591	0.800		
Synergy	0.670	0.702	0.603	0.744	
Tourism Seaso...	0.280	0.485	0.431	0.265	0.940

Figure 6.10
Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Discriminant validity was also assessed through cross-loadings. Figure 6.11 shows that all factor loadings are greater than their cross loadings, which is another sign of discriminant validity.

Discriminant Validity

	LocalPro	Road Race	Sustainability	Synergy	Tourism Seaso...
ELO2	0.303	0.608	0.374	0.426	0.312
ELO3	0.296	0.631	0.473	0.418	0.456
ELO4	0.406	0.583	0.383	0.418	0.415
LOCPRO1	0.817	0.671	0.473	0.494	0.347
LOCPRO2	0.898	0.570	0.522	0.572	0.288
LOCPRO3	0.769	0.434	0.417	0.607	0.043
ORG4	0.445	0.715	0.453	0.492	0.398
ORG5	0.732	0.818	0.537	0.559	0.367
ORG7	0.391	0.668	0.374	0.477	0.342
SR1	0.144	0.338	0.310	0.150	0.926
SR2	0.272	0.437	0.451	0.254	0.953
SR3	0.332	0.549	0.425	0.309	0.939

Discriminant Validity

	LocalPro	Road Race	Sustainability	Synergy	Tourism Seaso...
SUC1	0.487	0.824	0.468	0.587	0.433
SUC2	0.462	0.865	0.490	0.608	0.486
SUC3	0.468	0.680	0.328	0.455	0.169
SUC4	0.528	0.807	0.404	0.579	0.316
SUC5	0.507	0.615	0.281	0.420	0.164
SUC6	0.618	0.757	0.433	0.494	0.360
SUC7	0.560	0.631	0.372	0.513	0.201
SUC8	0.442	0.655	0.441	0.469	0.339
SUST1	0.438	0.547	0.841	0.493	0.382
SUST2	0.438	0.436	0.843	0.556	0.332
SUST3	0.458	0.359	0.792	0.455	0.273
SUST4	0.489	0.525	0.718	0.420	0.377
SYN1	0.534	0.634	0.505	0.787	0.300
SYN2	0.539	0.433	0.473	0.690	0.202
SYN3	0.404	0.458	0.418	0.720	0.094
SYN5	0.501	0.539	0.388	0.774	0.162

Figure 6.11
Cross-loadings

Finally, discriminant validity was tested using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations and discriminant validity issues appear when HTMT values are high (Henseler et al., 2015). The results are reported in Figure 6.12, where values are below the threshold of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2015).

Discriminant Validity

	LocalPro	Road Race	Sustainability	Synergy	Tourism Seaso...
LocalPro					
Road Race	0.794				
Sustainability	0.720	0.673			
Synergy	0.890	0.844	0.776		
Tourism Seaso...	0.328	0.503	0.478	0.293	

Figure 6.12
Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio

Based on all the aforementioned, we conclude that discriminant validity is established.

- *Collinearity Test*

The full collinearity test showed that all VIFs are lower than 3.3 (Figure 6.13), so, as recommended by Kock (2015), we conclude that this model has no common method biased issues.

Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

	LocalPro	Road Race	Sustainability	Synergy	Tourism Seaso...
LocalPro		1.814		1.000	
Road Race			1.969		2.158
Sustainability					1.723
Synergy		1.814	1.969		2.206
Tourism Seaso...					

Figure 6.13
Full collinearity test

6.5.2 Structural Model

Structural model analysis includes the coefficient determination (R^2), the path coefficients, the predictive relevance Q^2 and the direct and indirect effects (mediating effects).

The goodness of a model is determined by the strength of each structural path (Gallardo-Vázquez & Sánchez-Hernández, 2014). The value of R^2 should be equal to or greater than 0.10 in order for the variance explained to be deemed adequate (Falk & Miller, 1992). As it is presented in Figure 6.14, all R^2 values remain between 0.297 and 0.571, so the model has a predictive capability in varying degrees.

R Square

Matrix	R Square	R Square Adjusted
	R Square	R Square Adjus...
Road Race	0.571	0.560
Sustainability	0.420	0.405
Synergy	0.449	0.442
Tourism Seaso...	0.297	0.269

Figure 6.14
R square values

As regards Q^2, which is used to assess the predictive relevance of endogenous constructs with a reflective measurement model (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012), the predictive relevance of the endogenous constructs is established in our model since all values are above zero. Figure 6.15 shows the results of the Blindfolding procedure in Smart_PLS for the values of Q^2; it can be observed that there is significance in the prediction of the constructs because a positive Q^2 value is obtained.

Construct Crossvalidated Redundancy

	SSO	SSE	Q² (=1-SSE/SSO)
LocalPro	240.000	240.000	
Road Race	1120.000	964.273	0.139
Sustainability	320.000	238.066	0.256
Synergy	320.000	257.516	0.195
Tourism Seaso...	240.000	185.770	0.226

Tabs: Total | Case1 | Case2 | Case3 | Case4 | Case5

Figure 6.15
Q square values

Finally, the model fit was assessed using standardized root mean square residual value (SRMR). The value of 0.095 was below the recommended threshold 0.10, which is the accepted value for statistical program (Şengel et al., 2022).

6.5.3 Results of basis hypothesis testing

Then the basic hypotheses were tested to ascertain the significance of the relationships. Path coefficient (Direct Effect) refers to the effect of Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable in the presence of Mediating Variable in the Model. Figure 6.16 presents the results of hypothesis testing using 5000 bootstrap re-samples (significant at $*p < 0.05$ level, significant at $**p < 0.01$ level, $t > 1.96$).
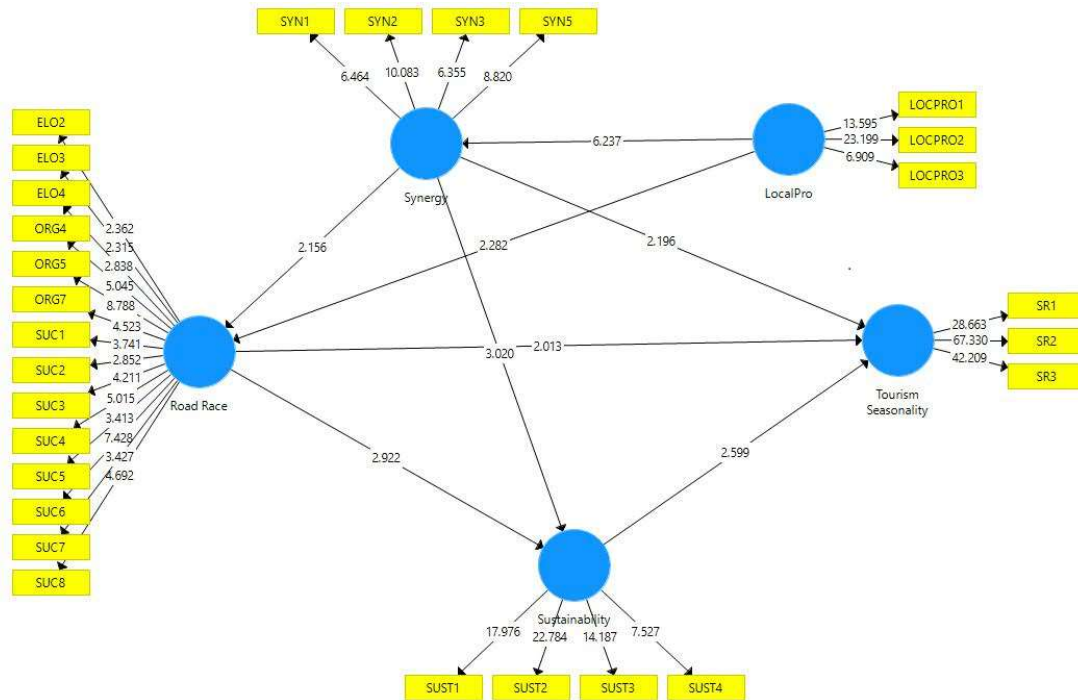
Figure 6.16
Seasonality Mitigation Structural Model

All the eight hypotheses, where direct effects were tested (Figure 6.17), were supported:

- **H1 evaluates whether LocalPro has a significant positive impact on Road Race**. The results revealed that LocalPro has a significant positive impact on Road Race (O=0.373, t=2.284, p<0.05). Hence, **H1 was supported**.

- **H2 evaluates whether LocalPro has a significant positive impact on Synergy.** The results revealed that LocalPro has a significant positive impact on Synergy (O=0.670, t=6.296, p<0.01). Hence, **H2 was supported**.

- **H3 evaluates whether Road Race has a significant positive impact on Sustainability**. The results revealed that Road Race has a significant positive impact on Sustainability (O=0.335, t=2.986, p<0.05). Hence, **H3 was supported**.

- **H4 evaluates whether Road Race has a significant positive impact on Tourism Seasonality**. The results revealed that Road Race has a significant positive impact on Tourism Seasonality (O=0.496, t=2.028, p<0.05). Hence, **H4 was supported.**

- **H5 evaluates whether Sustainability has a significant positive impact on Tourism Seasonality**. The results revealed that Sustainability has a significant positive impact on Tourism Seasonality (O=0.292, t=2.508, p<0.05). **Hence, H5 was supported.**

- **H6 evaluates whether Synergy has a significant positive impact on Road Race**. The results revealed that Synergy has a significant positive impact on Road Race (O=0.452, t=2.204, p<0.05). Hence, **H6 was supported**.

- **H7 evaluates whether Synergy has a significant positive impact on Sustainability**. The results revealed that Synergy has a significant positive impact on Sustainability (O=0.368, t=3.077, p<0.05). Hence, **H7 was supported**.

- **H8 evaluates whether Synergy has a significant positive impact on Tourism Seasonality**. The results revealed that Synergy has a significant positive impact on Tourism Seasonality (O=-0.261, t=2.322, p<0.05). Hence, **H8 was supported**.

Path Coefficients

Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values	Confidence Intervals	Confidence Intervals Bias Corrected	Samples		Copy to Clipboard:
	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
LocalPro -> Road Race	0.373	0.424	0.163	2.284	0.023
LocalPro -> Synergy	0.670	0.666	0.106	6.296	0.000
Road Race -> Sustainability	0.335	0.349	0.112	2.986	0.003
Road Race -> Tourism Seasonality_	0.496	0.439	0.244	2.028	0.043
Sustainability -> Tourism Seasonality_	0.292	0.309	0.116	2.508	0.012
Synergy -> Road Race	0.452	0.386	0.205	2.204	0.028
Synergy -> Sustainability	0.368	0.371	0.120	3.077	0.002
Synergy -> Tourism Seasonality_	-0.261	-0.260	0.112	2.322	0.021

*Significant at *p < 0.05 level, Significant at **p < 0.01 level, t > 1.96*

Figure 6.17
Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

6.5.4 Mediation Analysis

"*Mediation is one way that a researcher can explain the process or mechanism by which one variable affects another*" (MacKinnon et al., 2007:594); so, a mediation analysis was performed to understand what the mediating effects of the current model are. When testing for mediation, total effect, direct effect and indirect effect are examined.

Total Effect refers to the effect of Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable without the presence of Mediating Variable. Indirect Effect refers to the effect of Independent variable on dependent variable through the mediator variable.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Road Race on the linkage between LocalPro and Sustainability (H9). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of LocalPro on Sustainability was significant (β=0.473, t=5.279, p=0.0). With the inclusion of the mediating variable (Road Race), the impact of LocalPro on Sustainability became insignificant (β=0.210, p=0.190). The indirect effect of LocalPro on Sustainability through Road Race was found insignificant (β=0.125, t=1.800, p=0.072). This shows that there is no mediation between the relationship of LocalPro and Sustainability.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Synergy, Road Race and Sustainability on the linkage between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality (H10). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality was insignificant (0.298, t=1.759, p=0.079). With the inclusion of the mediating variables (Synergy, Road Race and Sustainability), the impact of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality remained insignificant (β=-0.101, p=0.434). The indirect effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality through Synergy, Road Race and Sustainability was found insignificant (β=0.030, t=1.220, p=0.223). This shows that there is no mediation between the relationship of LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Synergy and Road Race on the linkage between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality

(H11). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality was insignificant (β=0.298, t=1.759, p=0.079). With the inclusion of the mediating variables (Synergy and Road Race), the impact of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality remained insignificant (β=-0.101, p=0.434). The indirect effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality through Synergy and Road Race was found insignificant (β=0.150, t=1.239, p=0.216). This shows that there is no mediation between the relationship of LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Sustainability on the linkage between Road Race and Tourism Seasonality (H12). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of Road Race on Tourism Seasonality was significant (β=0.593, t=2.419, p=0.016). With the inclusion of the mediating variable (Sustainability), the impact of Road Race on Tourism Seasonality became insignificant (β=0.496, p=0.043). The indirect effect of Road Race on Tourism Seasonality through Sustainability was found insignificant (β=0.098, t=1.801, p=0.072). This shows that there is no mediation between the relationship of Road Race and Tourism Seasonality.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Synergy on the linkage between LocalPro and Road Race (H13). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of LocalPro on Road Race was significant (β=0.675, t=8.345, p=0.000). With the inclusion of the mediating variable (Synergy), the impact of LocalPro on Road Race became insignificant (β=0.373, p=0.023). The indirect effect of LocalPro on Road Race through Synergy was found insignificant (β=0.303, t=1.864, p=0.063). This shows that there is a direct, non-mediating effect between the relationship of LocalPro and Road Race.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Synergy on the linkage between LocalPro and Sustainability (H14). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of LocalPro on Sustainability was significant

(β=0.473, t=5.279, p=0.000). With the inclusion of the mediating variable (Synergy), the impact of LocalPro on Sustainability remained significant (β=0.210, p=0.190). The indirect effect of Local Pro on Sustainability through Synergy was found significant (β=0.247, t=2.604, p=0.009). This shows that Synergy partially mediates the relationship between LocalPro and Sustainability.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Sustainability on the linkage between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality (H15). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality was insignificant (β=0.115, t=0.654, p=0.513). With the inclusion of the mediating variable (Sustainability), the impact of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality became significant (β=-0,261, p=0.021). The indirect effect of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality through Sustainability was found significant (β=0.108, t=1.994, p=0.047). This shows that the relationship between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality is fully mediated by Sustainability.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Synergy on the linkage between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality (H16). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality was insignificant (β=0.298, t=1.759, p=0.079). With the inclusion of the mediating variable (Synergy), the impact of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality remained insignificant (β=-0,101, p=0.434). The indirect effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality through Synergy was found significant (β=-0.175, t=1.983, p=0.048). This shows that the relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality is fully mediated by Synergy.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Road Race on the linkage between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality (H17). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality was insignificant (β=0.115, t=0.654, p=0.513). With the inclusion of the mediating variable (Road Race), the impact of Synergy on Tourism

Seasonality remained insignificant (β=-0,261, p=0.021). The indirect effect of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality through Road Race was found insignificant (β=0.224, t=1.446, p=0.149). This shows that there is no mediation between the relationship of Synergy and Tourism Seasonality.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Road Race and Sustainability on the linkage between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality (H18). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality was insignificant (β=0.298, t=1.759, p=0.079). With the inclusion of the mediating variables (Road Race and Sustainability), the impact of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality remained insignificant (β=-0,101, p=0.434). The indirect effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality through Road Race and Sustainability was found insignificant (β=0.036, t=1.219, p=0.223). This shows that there is no mediation between the relationship of LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Road Race on the linkage between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality (H19). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality was insignificant (β=0.298, t=1.759, p=0.079). With the inclusion of the mediating variable (Road Race), the impact of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality remained insignificant (β=-0,101, p=0.434). The indirect effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality through Road Race was found insignificant (β=0.185, t=1.871, p=0.062). This shows that there is no mediation between the relationship of LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Synergy and Sustainability on the linkage between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality (H20). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality was insignificant (β=0.298, t=1.759, p=0.079). With the inclusion of the mediating variables (Synergy and Sustainability), the impact of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality remained insignificant (β=-0,101, p=0.434). The indirect effect of LocalPro on Tourism Seasonality through

Synergy and Sustainability was found significant (β=0.072, t=1.977, p=0.049). This shows that the relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality is fully mediated by Synergy and Sustainability.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Synergy and Road Race on the linkage between LocalPro and Sustainability (H21). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of LocalPro on Sustainability was significant (β=0.473, t=5.279, p=0.000). With the inclusion of the mediating variables (Synergy and Road Race), the impact of LocalPro on Sustainability became insignificant (β=0.210, p=0.190). The indirect effect of LocalPro on Sustainability through Synergy and Road Race was found insignificant (β=0.101, t=1.449, p=0.099). This shows that there is no mediation between the relationship of LocalPro and Sustainability.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Road Race on the linkage between Synergy and Sustainability (H22). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of Synergy on Sustainability was significant (β=0.520, t=4.551, p=0.000). With the inclusion of the mediating variable (Road Race), the impact of Synergy on Sustainability became insignificant (β=0.368, p=0.002). The indirect effect of Synergy on Sustainability through Road Race was found insignificant (β=0.151, t=1.653, p=0.099). This shows that there is no mediation between the relationship of Synergy and Sustainability.

- Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of Road Race and Sustainability on the linkage between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality (H23). The results (Table 6.1) revealed that the total effect of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality was insignificant (β=0.115, t=0.654, p=0.513). With the inclusion of the mediating variables (Road Race and Sustainability), the impact of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality remained insignificant (β=-0,261, p=0.021). The indirect effect of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality through Road Race and Sustainability was found insignificant (β=0.044, t=1.340,

p=0.181). This shows that there is no mediation between the relationship of Synergy and Tourism Seasonality.

Table 6.1.
Mediation Analysis Results
*LP: Local Professionals, RR: Road Race, SUS: Sustainability, SYN: Synergy
TSEA: Tourism Seasonality

Total Effect		Direct Effect			Indirect Effects					
Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value		Coefficient	SD	T value	p-value	BI (2,5%, 97,5%)	Hypothesis
0.473	0.000	0.210	0.190	**H9: LP->RR->SUS**	0.125	0.069	1.800	0.072	0.008 – 0.258	*H9 not supported*
0.298	0.079	-0.101	0.434	**H10: LP->SYN->RR->SUS->TSEA**	0.030	0.024	1.220	0.223	0.000 – 0.119	*H10 not supported*
0.298	0.079	-0.101	0.434	**H11: LP->SYN->RR->TSEA**	0.150	0.121	1.239	0.216	-0.003 – 0.445	*H11 not supported*
0.593	0.016	0.496	0.043	**H12: RR->SUS->TSEA**	0.098	0.054	1.801	0.072	0.011 – 0.222	*H12 not supported*
0.675	0.000	0.373	0.023	**H13: LP->SYN->RR**	0.303	0.162	1.864	0.063	-0.027 – 0.584	*H13 not supported*
0.473	0.000	0.210	0.190	**H14: LP->SYN->SUS**	0.247	0.095	2.604	0.009	0.079 – 0.456	***H14 supported***
0.115	0.513	-0.261	0.021	**H15: SYN->SUS->TSEA**	0.108	0.054	1.994	0.047	0.019 – 0.242	***H15 supported***
0.298	0.079	-0.101	0.434	**H16: LP->SYN->TSEA**	-0.175	0.088	1.983	0.048	-0.344 – (-0.017)	***H16 supported***
0.115	0.513	-0.261	0.021	**H17: SYN->RR->TSEA**	0.224	0.155	1.446	0.149	-0.004 – 0.550	*H17 not supported*
0.298	0.079	-0.101	0.434	**H18: LP->RR->SUS->TSEA**	0.036	0.030	1.219	0.223	-0.001 – 0.102	*H18 not supported*
0.298	0.079	-0.101	0.434	**H19: LP->RR->TSEA**	0.185	0.099	1.871	0.062	0.008 – 0.399	*H19 not supported*
0.298	0.079	-0.101	0.434	**H20: LP->SYN->SUS->TSEA**	0.072	0.036	1.977	0.049	0.015 – 0.167	***H20 supported***
0.473	0.000	0.210	0.190	**H21: LP->SYN->RR->SUS**	0.101	0.070	1.449	0.148	-0.003 – 0.288	*H21 not supported*
0.520	0.000	0.368	0.002	**H22: SYN->RR->SUS**	0.151	0.092	1.653	0.099	-0.000 – 0.375	*H22 not supported*
0.115	0.513	-0.261	0.021	**H23: SYN->RR->SUS->TSEA**	0.044	0.033	1.340	0.181	0.002 – 0.162	*H23 not supported*

6.6 Hypotheses Summary

In the next table (6.2), the conclusions of the examination of all previous research hypotheses, which concern the structure of the proposed theoretical model and the strength of the assumed relationships between the various conceptual constructs, are summarized.

Table 6.2.
Seasonality Mitigation Model Hypotheses Summary

Code	Hypothesis Description	Results
H1	There is a significant positive effect of Local Professionals (LocalPro) on Road Race in Low Season Period	Supported
H2	There is a significant positive effect of LocalPro on Synergy in Low Season Period	Supported
H3	There is a significant positive effect of Road Race on Sustainability in Low Season Period	Supported
H4	There is a significant positive effect of Road Race on Tourism Seasonality	Supported
H5	There is a significant positive effect of Sustainability on Tourism Seasonality	Supported
H6	There is a significant positive effect of Synergy on Road Race in Low Season Period	Supported
H7	There is a significant positive effect of Synergy on Sustainability in Low Season Period	Supported
H8	There is a significant positive effect of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality	Supported
H9	Road Race positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Sustainability in Low Season Period	Rejected
H10	Synergy, Road Race and Sustainability positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality	Rejected
H11	Synergy and Road Race positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality	Rejected
H12	Sustainability positively Mediates the Relationship between Road Race and Tourism Seasonality	Rejected
H13	Synergy positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Road Race in Low Season Period	Rejected
H14	Synergy positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Sustainability in Low Season Period	Supported
H15	Sustainability positively Mediates the Relationship between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality	Supported

H_{16}	Synergy positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality	Supported
H_{17}	Road Race positively Mediates the Relationship between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality	Rejected
H_{18}	Road Race and Sustainability positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality	Rejected
H_{19}	Road Race positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality	Rejected
H_{20}	Synergy and Sustainability positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality	Supported
H_{21}	Synergy and Road Race positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Sustainability in Low Season Period	Rejected
H_{22}	Road Race positively Mediates the Relationship between Synergy and Sustainability in Low Season Period	Rejected
H_{23}	Road Race and Sustainability positively Mediate the Relationship between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality	Rejected

Conclusion

In the current chapter, all the procedures, which were followed for the selection of the most appropriate model of measurement and structural model of equations of the variables that participate in the proposed theoretical relationships, are presented in detail. After first coming up with an acceptable measurement model in terms of reliability and validity, then the seasonality mitigation structural model was formed based on the theory and qualitative research of the previous chapters. Then, the reliability and validity of the structural model that led to the testing of the research hypotheses were successfully examined. Out of the 23 general hypotheses, 12 were finally accepted whereas 11 were rejected due to lack of statistical significance.

Detailed conclusions and a discussion of the research results are provided in the next Chapter.

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DISCUSSION OF SURVEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The final chapter of this thesis summarizes the following: a) a brief summary of the present research effort, b) an evaluation of its results and the final proposed theoretical model, c) a presentation of the theoretical and empirical contribution of this thesis, d) the identification of the limitations of this study and a list of some suggestions for future research in the field under exploration and e) some concluding remarks.

7.1 Overview of the research results

This research effort aimed at investigating those factors in sport (running) events that could contribute to the extension of the tourist season, leaving a sustainable imprint on the destination. The reasons that led this thesis to be oriented in this direction are the following:

A. Seasonality in tourism is an inevitable problem or difficulty. Although it will never be eliminated, there are some initiatives that could be undertaken in order to extend the season.

B. Small-scale events are a strategic tool to combat seasonality with a sustainable impact on the destination. Among these, sport events may ensure tourism benefits for the sustainable development of local communities.

C. There is not enough research centered to the relation of sport (such as running) events organization and seasonality mitigation. One of the major issues for further investigation is that of assessing sport (running) events that could contribute to seasonality mitigation.

The literature review around the specific issues that was presented in detail in the preliminary data research chapter brought out important aspects of these issues through the relevant research efforts that have been recorded to date. But at the same time the absence of an integrated model to help with forecasting small-scale event factors that could contribute to seasonality mitigation was highlighted. In other words, it was found that there is a lack of a model that examines how potential factors of a local community's road race can contribute to the extension of the tourist season, leaving a sustainable effect on the host community. This lack of a comprehensive theoretical model on the specific research field in combination with the absence of solid and empirically documented attempts to model it, constituted the starting point of this thesis.

So, based on the detailed preliminary data gathering (literature review and interviewing) carried out in Chapters 2 and 3, the theoretical framework for the development of a model for the identification of those factors of road races organization that could contribute to the extension of the tourist season, leaving a sustainable imprint on the destination, was established.

As a result of the qualitative research (preliminary data gathering), five main themes (seasonality, road race, local professionals, synergy, sustainability) were identified. Then, their empirical substantiation followed. Three hundred and thirty-two (332) Greek municipalities were approached and 80 of them constituted the sample on the basis of which the necessary data was collected through a primary survey (which was carried out with the help of a structured questionnaire). The analysis and processing of this data (through the widely accepted PLS-SEM analysis) led to the confirmation of the importance of the role of these five factors and to the completion of the proposed theoretical model.

The final proposed theoretical model is presented in Figure 7.1. There, each of the five main factors is presented as a component (gear) in the organization of a road race during low-season, with tourism seasonality as the central feature.

Synergy
(Directions from authorities,
Running culture, Provide
motives, Special agreements)

Local Pro
(Sponsorships, Discounts,
Free services)

Tourism Seasonality Mitigation
(Sport Event, Running Events,
Destination Tourist Development)

Road Race
(Tour Activities, Fun for all, Exhibitions,
Love for the birthplace, Knowledge
of the area, Management skills, Organization,
Safety, Participations, Volunteers, Professionals
Contribution, Community Support,
Route, Establishment)

Sustainability
(Income Increase, Employment
Increase, New facilities, Leisure)

Figure 7.1.
Final Seasonality Mitigation Model

7.2 Evaluation of the research results

The results of the statistical processing of the primary data led to useful conclusions regarding the research roles of the thesis. Considering first the role of the five factors of the road races organization during low season, the main conclusion is that overall all factors influence the model, thus confirming the choice based on the existing research and literature to include them in the model.

The study examined the role of road race organization in tourism seasonality mitigation by exploring its direct and mediating effects through synergy, sustainability and local professionals during low-season.

Firstly, the evaluation of the results was carried out based on the reliability and validity (Figures 6.9 - 6.12). PLS-SEM analysis examined the validity of the hypotheses; out of the 23 general hypotheses, 12 were finally accepted whereas 11 were rejected due to lack of statistical significance.

So, starting from the assessment of the results for **H1** (*There is a significant positive effect of Local Professionals (LocalPro) on Road Race in Low Season Period*), it is observed that LocalPro has a significant positive effect on Road Race, supporting previous findings on similar studies on small-scale sport events (Bazzanella et al., 2019; Fotiadis et al., 2013).

LocalPro was found to have a significant positive effect on Synergy **(H2),** (*There is a significant positive effect of LocalPro on Synergy in Low Season Period).* Previous studies assessing the locals' perceptions on small-scale road race events consider local support as an essential element of successfully hosting a tourism event in tourism high season (Jönsson & Lewis, 2014; Vassiliadis, 2020). It seems that the support of this hypothesis provides evidence on local impact on synergy issues during low-season, as well.

Hypothesis **H3** that *there is a significant positive effect of Road Race on Sustainability in Low Season Period*, also turned out to be true. The results of the quantitative study showed that there is a positive economic and social impact of road races on sustainability during low season. The findings are in line with those of previous studies conducted for small-scale running events which suggest that sport event

tourism, and by extension, running events, may contribute to the sustainable development the area. Specifically, through their analysis in sports tourists and resident-hosts, Malchrowicz-Mośko & Poczta (2018), provide information on the use of the community's infrastructure by tourists and on the social potential that small-scale sport events may bring, whereas Halpenny et al. (2016) examine the sustainability of recurrent small-scale running events.

The results supported hypothesis **H4** (*There is a significant positive effect of Road Race on Tourism Seasonality)* and are aligned with the tourism literature. In this regard, previous scholars have already shown that events (like small-scale ones) play a crucial role in managing tourism seasonality (Getz & Page, 2016; Higham, 2018). Yet, at is has been mentioned in the present thesis, to date there have been no studies concerning the role of running events in the mitigation of tourism seasonality.

Sustainability was found to have a significant positive effect on Tourism Seasonality, according to **H5** *(There is a significant positive effect of Sustainability on Tourism Seasonality).* The results show that there is a sustainable impact of the organization of a road race in terms of revenue, employment income opportunities, investment in new facilities and leisure opportunities creation which affect low tourist demand.

The significance of Synergy on Road Race (**H6**. *There is a significant positive effect of Synergy on Road Race in Low Season Period)* corroborates the importance of community networks and collaborative actions during event development, to which other studies have already referred (Misener & Mason, 2006; Perić et al., 2016; Reid, 2011; Vassiliadis, 2020).

Findings revealed a positive relationship between Synergy and Sustainability (**H7**. *There is a significant positive effect of Synergy on Sustainability in Low Season Period).* Indeed, the engagement of stakeholders during the event process will probably ensure a sustainable event organization (Reid, 2011) and sustainable outcomes (Perić et al., 2016).

The results supported hypothesis **H8** (*There is a significant impact of Synergy on Tourism Seasonality).* Evidence from previous studies is little since collaboration issues mainly refer to the success of a tourism destination (Baggio, 2011).

For the next five hypotheses (H9-H13), this study did not find any mediating effects of the LP and RR in the LP-SUS link (**H9**), of the LP, SYN, RR, SUS in the LP-TSEA link (**H10**), of the LP, SYN, RR in the LP-TSEA link (**H11**), of the RR and SUS in the RR-TSEA link (**H12**) and of the LP and SYN in the LP-RR link (**H13**).

For hypothesis **H14** (*Synergy positively Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Sustainability in Low Season Period),* it is found that Synergy significantly mediates the relationship.

Sustainability significantly mediates the relationship for hypothesis **H15** (*Sustainability positively Mediates the Relationship between Synergy and Tourism Seasonality).* Therefore, the role of Sustainability as a mediator should be further examined by tourism literature.

Findings revealed that Synergy significantly mediates the relationship between LP-TSEA **(H16)** (*Synergy Mediates the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality).* Although event tourism literature has stressed the importance of synergy to highlight the tourist aspect of a destination (Misener & Mason, 2006; Vassiliadis, 2020), our findings reveal that emphasis should be given to the role of local professionals in the building of community networks with the purpose to yield new understanding of their contribution to tourism seasonality.

For the next three hypotheses (H17-H19), this study did not find any mediating effects of the SYN and RR in the SYN-TSEA link (**H17**), of the LP, RR and SUS in the LP-TSEA link (**H18**) and of the LP and RR in the LP- TSEA link (**H19**).

The results supported hypothesis **H20** (*Synergy and Sustainability positively Mediate the Relationship between LocalPro and Tourism Seasonality).* Although existing research on Synergy and Sustainability in the tourism industry has ignored the role of these potential mediators in seasonality mitigation, our findings reveal that, in order for a destination to extend the tourist season, initiatives should be more focused towards improving synergy and sustainability practices among local professionals.

As regards the lasts three hypotheses (H21-H23), this study did not find any mediating effects of the LP, SYN and RR in the LP-SUS link (**H21**), of the SYN and RR in the SYN-SUS link (**H22**) and of the SYN, RR and SUS in the SYN-TSEA link (**H23**).

7.3 Implications of major contributions

The results from this study allow for a number of theoretical and practical implications, as following:

- *Theoretical implications*

Tourism seasonality has been the subject of extensive research as it is usually recognized as a problem or difficulty, due to its negative effects for growth (Stojčić et al., 2022) and its impact on the long-term sustainability (Garanti & Berjozkina, 2022). Through the extensive literature review, the present study groups together for the first time the relevant international literature on tourism seasonality from 1974, facilitates a thorough understanding of this issue and offers valuable insights into its future prospects, by being a basis for initiating innovative practices related to event tourism planning and development in communities during low season.

Although tourism seasonality will never be eliminated, some initiatives have been suggested by literature; one of them is the development of events as a strategic tool to combat seasonality. In the current thesis, a research gap in the area of small-scale sport events and their role in seasonality mitigation was identified. Based on these issues, the writer of this thesis took the opportunity to propose a model which would focus on the identification and empirical documentation of factors that influence seasonality mitigation and expansion of the tourist season through the organization of small-scale running events.

Specifically, this study is one of the first to contribute to our understanding of some small-scale running event related factors that have not been explored in-depth in the existing academic literature. Hence, through a qualitative investigation of local professionals and organizers, we develop some constructs which make the running event happen during low-season; this is the key theoretical contribution of this thesis, which is then empirically assessed through the quantitative research. In this regard, the findings of this study reinforce the necessity to investigate this somewhat neglected area of tourism research aimed at developing and testing conceptual models that acknowledge that the relationship between small-scale events and tourism seasonality

is not always direct, but mediated by several other variables that connect them. Among these mediators, synergy and sustainability are especially relevant in the link between local professionals and tourism seasonality when organizing a small-scale event during low-season, and thus, they should be considered in new models aimed at further explaining this link.

Given the strategic role of the events in seasonality mitigation (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Cannas, 2012; Getz & Page, 2016; Sainaghi et al., 2019), our analysis usefully contributes to the academic debate in extending the tourism season. In doing so, the findings supplement the few empirical studies (Sainaghi et al., 2019) that examine events (though large ones) and seasonality. Events affect the host community; yet, seldom are local residents' perceptions considered (Chalip & Fairley, 2019). In this regard, we suggest to further examine the role of local professionals in the creation of reciprocal relationships with other event stakeholders with the purpose to pave the way to work together during the organization of a small-scale toward sustainable solutions to extend the tourism season. The present study has further provided evidence on the perceptions of locals and contributes to the knowledge of the involvement and awareness of the local professionals and organizers during a sport event in low-season. Thus, the findings contribute to the field by examining a sport event in low-season from a multi-stakeholder approach. The analysis invites event organizers and authorities to involve local professionals in the organization process of a running event during low-season.

Additionally, the scientific value of this thesis is the development of the constructs of the running events during low-season, as they have been shown in the measurement model. So, this thesis goes beyond examining the economic impacts of a small-scale event and considers the social, environmental and other intangible impacts in low-season period. Addressing the issues of success and elongation constructs of a road race, the role of the organizers as part of the sport organization process is also evaluated and attention is drawn to the factors that constitute the race organizers' construct.

Finally, the model that was proposed and tested in the current thesis provides a theoretical foundation for studying the organization of a road race in low-season with the view to extend the tourist season. It can be applied and used to compare communities that hold different types of small-scale sport events and examine the relationship among the factors to further explain and improve the constructs.

-   *Practical and managerial implications*

From a managerial perspective, it is evident that small-scale event organization initiatives play an important role in the extension of the tourist season. This way, the sport tourism industry can become part of the "solution" of tourism seasonality. Synergy is also an effective way to contribute to the extension of the tourist season; therefore, enhanced collaborative activities among stakeholders can serve as a strategic tool that authorities can use to manage their relationships with these stakeholders because these initiatives have proven to be relevant and important mediators in our empirically tested model. Synergy among various stakeholders in a successful small-scale sport event (local tourism industry, organizers and locals) has been highlighted by other researchers (Kaplanidou et. al., 2013). This study further contributes by paying attention to synergies of small-scale sport events during low-season; this kind of synergies can result in a successful event organization and probably lead to return visits, thus generating more tourism activity during low-season.

This thesis provided a framework to develop and explain how the factors of a small-scale sport event affect the extension of the tourist season. This framework will also assist the authorities and other policymakers involved to help better understand the local stakeholders' behaviors, based on their perceptions of hosting a road race in low-season. In this respect, the tourist industry must identify key activities of LP and SYN and place more weight on them. It seems that implementing collaborative activities seems mandatory in order to host a successful event in low-season. Authorities can benefit from these findings by understanding how collaborative initiatives and local-professionals inclusion may enhance the effectiveness of a small-scale sport event against seasonality. Through the model, it is demonstrated that authorities can use several initiatives to host a successful sport event in low season; this is so because, as these policymakers improve their perceptions of hosting a sport event when the season is not at its peak, they are expected to improve several intangible assets, like Synergy

and Sustainability. This is especially relevant for less developed tourist areas, where the culture of sport tourism has not penetrated the policymakers' decision-making process as a tool to fight against seasonality. Thus, in order to install successful extending-the-season principles for the sustainable development of their regions, authorities should devote resources to the implementation of sport awareness, collaborative activities and local professionals' inclusion.

Managerial implications can also be identified for Greece and for other countries that host small-scale sport tourism events in low-season. For example, this thesis may inspire the organization of similar events related to the constructs that constitute the elongation of these events, which is confirmed by the empirical analysis presented in the previous chapter, as a factor that is included in the sport event organization in low-season for sustainable tourism development. Along this line, the constructs a) tour activities (tours in the area, natural and historical sights etc.), b) fun and actions for all visitors (athletes, escorts, family) and c) exhibitions with local products of the region can be developed as part of the strategy of a sport event as an appropriate tool adjusted to the needs of the host community.

Besides, the current study offers insights into the improvement of event organization for tourism managers, event organizers, and local authorities in facilitating the future planning process of a small-scale sports event during the low season. This thesis also opens a window for them to create a holistic event marketing plan owing to the views of the local professionals and organizers and their significant support of the event. Thus, in the effort to create a sustainable model for event tourism development during the low season, all authorities and other policymakers involved are to be supported.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

As with any study, this one has some limitations that should be considered when applying its results more generally; so, although this study helps fill a gap in existing knowledge in the tourism literature and does propose some implications for practitioners, yet limitations still remain.

The first limitation pertains to the fact that this research has been conducted in Greece. To know the impact of factors in sport (running) events that could contribute to the extension of the tourist season in more depth, for future studies other countries that confront tourism seasonality, like other Mediterranean countries, should be analyzed. Therefore, in order to effectively extend the tourist season through sport events, it is important to complement the current research with further analysis on a multi-country level and increase the external validity of the tested model.

Second, future studies could ascertain the mediating role of other variables on the linkage between Tourism Seasonality and Road Race that may include the facilities, the positive word-of-mouth or the promotion of the road race, or on the linkage between Tourism Seasonality and Synergy like willingness from the part of the authorities to contribute or cooperation with organizers.

Besides, although the Road Race was affected by LocalPro and Synergy, it was found to be an insignificant mediator in our conceptual model. Future research is required to include it as a potential mediator to keep exploring its role in similar sport tourism conceptual models in order to further examine the role of Road Race on the linkage between Tourism Seasonality and event-related factors.

This study is delimited to the region of running events; therefore, a fruitful extension of the study lies in the examination of other small-scale sport events or other kind of events, such as cultural; studies in other event contexts might come to different conclusions. Through future studies, the proposed conceptual framework can be ascertained whether it is applicable to small-scale events in different settings.

Future research could also include evaluations, perceptions and experiences of the sport event participants in order to provide a more comprehensive representation of how tourism seasonality affects their decision to take part in a sport event during low-season and how the empirical framework that was proposed in this thesis, could address their issues.

Even with the aforementioned limitations, it is believed that the findings provide a much stronger picture of the mitigation of seasonality through sport events than had been previously known.

Concluding Remarks

The tourism seasonality phenomenon is experienced in almost all countries and destinations in the world. Since sport tourism industry has demonstrated its strength by maintaining a steady growth rate and by increasing its popularity among travelers over the past decades, despite the recent health crisis, it is becoming increasingly important to introduce special events during off-season in order to cover the gap.

This thesis has demonstrated that it is possible to understand the constructs that relate to a running event during low-season and the importance of identifying the attributes that influence the organization process of a sport event. There are currently no seasonality and small-scale events research publications and only a limited number of some journals have published issues that combine seasonality and (mainly) large events-related articles. The current study has identified the need for future research that extends beyond the needs of the sport tourism industry. This thesis has contributed to the theoretical basis for such research and has provided new tools and methods to practically support this endeavor.

Hopefully, the present thesis will facilitate the continuing study of seasonality phenomenon on both a global and regional level, and will thus, contribute to shaping the future of the event tourism industry.

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ΟΔΗΓΟΣ ΣΥΝΕΝΤΕΥΞΗΣ ΕΠΑΓΓΕΛΜΑΤΙΩΝ
SMALL-SCALE RUNNING EVENT

ANNEX 1

Σκοπός και περιγραφή των επιδιώξεων της έρευνας

Οι ερωτήσεις της παρούσας συνέντευξης έχουν δημιουργηθεί από ερευνητική ομάδα μελών του Τμήματος ΟΔΕ του Πανεπιστημίου Μακεδονίας με σκοπό την μελέτη του φαινομένου της εποχικότητας και της εξομάλυνσής της μέσω της διαχείρισης εκδηλώσεων μικρής κλίμακας. *Αποδέκτες των ερωτήσεων είναι επιχειρηματίες στον κλάδο της εστίασης, της διαμονής, της λιανικής και ιδιοκτήτες λοιπών μικρομεσαίων επιχειρήσεων της περιοχής της ....*.

Η συνέντευξη χωρίζεται σε 3 μέρη. Το πρώτο αφορά την εποχικότητα στον τουρισμό, το δεύτερο την βιωσιμότητα των εκδηλώσεων μικρής κλίμακας και το τρίτο την διοργάνωση εκδηλώσεων.

Τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας θα χρησιμοποιηθούν αποκλειστικά για επιστημονικούς σκοπούς και μπορούν να ανακοινωθούν στους ενδιαφερόμενους μετά από δική τους προτροπή. Σχετικό αίτημα υπάρχει στο τέλος του οδηγού. Καλό είναι οι βοηθοί έρευνας να υποστηρίξουν το υλικό της συνέντευξης με φωτογραφικό υλικό εφόσον το επιθυμούν και οι ερωτώμενοι.

(Προς συμπλήρωση από τους βοηθούς της έρευνας)

Όνομα(τα) βοηθού(-ών) έρευνας και Αρ. Φοιτ. Μητρώου:
....ΑΦΜ:...ΑΦΜ:...........
....ΑΦΜ:.........................
Τόπος ημερομηνία: ..../......./ ....

Προαιρετικά:

Επιχείρηση:_(Τίτλος επωνυμία επιχείρησης):..
Αντικείμενο επιχείρησης: ....
Ιδιότητα του ατόμου που παραχώρησε την συνέντευξη: ....
Έτη δραστηριοποίησης της επιχείρησης στην περιοχή αυτή: ....
Συνολικά έτη απασχόλησης του ατόμου στην επιχείρηση: ....
Διαμονή εντός η εκτός περιοχής: ....

ΕΡΩΤΗΣΕΙΣ

Α. ΕΠΟΧΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ

1. Αντιμετωπίζει ο προορισμός σας τουριστική εποχικότητα;; Σε ποιον βαθμό;

2. Ποιες είναι οι κύριες επιπτώσεις της εποχικότητας στην επιχείρησή σας ειδικά και στην περιοχή γενικά;

Ειδικά για την επιχείρηση:

Γενικά για την περιοχή:

3. Ποια είναι η υψηλή, η μεσαία και η χαμηλή σε απόδοση, ετήσια περίοδος για την επιχείρησή σας;

(Ορίστε εποχές, χρονικές περιόδους, μήνες...)

Υψηλή: Από .... μέχρι ....

Μεσαία: Από .... μέχρι ....

Χαμηλή: Από .... μέχρι ....

Πιθανό σχόλιο:

4. Έρχονται τουρίστες στην περιοχή σας σε εποχή που θεωρείται χαμηλής τουριστικής έλευσης;; Για ποιο λόγο;;

Ναί, επειδή.....
και έρχονται συνήθως................

Όχι, επειδή.......

Σε περίπτωση θετικής απάντησης, πρόκειται για ντόπιους ή ξένους;;

5. Πώς η επιχείρησή σας αντιδρά γενικά στην εποχικότητα;
Προσαρμόζεστε (κλείνετε για ένα διάστημα εντελώς), **Μάχεστε** (π.χ. προσφορές για ντόπιους, ανάπτυξη άλλων τουριστικών επιλογών) ή **Συνθηκολογείτε** (κλείσιμο, πούλημα της επιχείρησης);

[   ] Προσαρμόζομαι και κλείνω για το διάστημα χαμηλών αποδόσεων την επιχείρηση

[   ] Μάχομαι και δραστηριοποιούμαι με ενέργειες όπως....

για να επιβιώσει η επιχείρηση.

[   ] Συνθηκολογώ. Αποφάσισα να την κλείσω, να την πουλήσω, να απαλλαχθώ ...

επειδή.......

6. Έχετε υποστήριξη από την πολιτεία (τοπικές αρχές);

Τι πιστεύετε ότι πρέπει να πράξουν οι τοπικές αρχές;;

Β. ΒΙΩΣΙΜΟΤΗΤΑ

1. **Πώς η εποχικότητα επηρεάζει τον οικονομικό, κοινωνικό-πολιτικό και περιβαλλοντικό τομέα της περιοχής;**

Όσον αφορά την οικονομική κατάσταση στην περιοχή ......

Όσον αφορά την κοινωνική κατάσταση στην περιοχή......

Όσον αφορά την περιβαλλοντική κατάσταση στην περιοχή.......

2. **Πώς ο δρομικός αγώνας της περιοχής σας επηρεάζει τον οικονομικό, κοινωνικό-πολιτικό και περιβαλλοντικό τομέα;**

Όσον αφορά την οικονομική κατάσταση στην περιοχή ......

Όσον αφορά την κοινωνική κατάσταση στην περιοχή......

Όσον αφορά την περιβαλλοντική κατάσταση στην περιοχή.......

ΟΔΗΓΟΣ ΣΥΝΕΝΤΕΥΞΗΣ ΕΠΑΓΓΕΛΜΑΤΙΩΝ
SMALL-SCALE RUNNING EVENT

Γ. ΕΚΔΗΛΩΣΕΙΣ

1. **Πιστεύετε ότι τα εκδηλώσεις μικρής κλίμακας, όπως ο δρομικός αγώνας της περιοχής σας, βοηθούν στην εξομάλυνση των προβλημάτων της εποχικότητας;**

Ναί ή Όχι...

Επειδή......

2. **Είναι αρκετή η υπάρχουσα υποδομή της περιοχής (πρόσβαση, καταλύματα, αξιοθέατα), για να αναπτύξετε μία αξιόλογη στρατηγική εκδηλώσεων στην περιοχή σας κατά τη διάρκεια της περιόδου χαμηλής τουριστικής ζήτησης;;**

3. **Πώς μπορεί η διοργάνωση μίας εκδήλωσης, όπως ο δρομικός αγώνας της περιοχής σας, να συμβάλλει στην τουριστική ανάδειξη και ανάπτυξη της περιοχής;**

Επειδή.....

4. **Πέρα από τις εκδηλώσεις, ποιο άλλο μέτρο θα προτείνατε για να μειωθεί η επίδραση της εποχικότητας στην ζήτηση προϊόντων και υπηρεσιών στην τοπική επαγγελματική δραστηριότητα όσον αφορά την περιοχή σας;**

Δ. ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΣΕΙΣ

Παρακαλούμε αναφέρετε τυχόν σχόλια, παρατηρήσεις, επισημάνσεις.

[   ] Ναί, Θα ήθελα να ενημερωθώ για τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας. Ως εκ τούτου δηλώνω το ηλεκτρονικό μου ταχυδρομείο:..

[   ] Ναί δίνω τη συγκατάθεσή μου και συμφωνώ να φωτογραφηθώ με τους ερευνητές. Η φωτογράφηση γίνεται για λόγους τεκμηρίωσης της συλλογής δεδομένων και δεν προβλέπεται να χρησιμοποιηθεί για κάποιο άλλο σκοπό. (Στην περίπτωση που θα θέλατε το υλικό της φωτογράφησης ..)

[   ] Ναί, θα ήθελα να μου αποσταλεί ηλεκτρονικά για το αρχείο μου η σχετική φωτογραφία

ΟΔΗΓΟΣ ΣΥΝΕΝΤΕΥΞΗΣ Δρομικού Αγώνα ……………………. (Organizers)

Σκοπός και περιγραφή των επιδιώξεων της έρευνας

Οι ερωτήσεις της παρούσας συνέντευξης έχουν δημιουργηθεί από ερευνητική ομάδα μελών του Τμήματος ΟΔΕ του Πανεπιστημίου Μακεδονίας για να μελετηθεί το φαινόμενο της εποχικότητας και της εξομάλυνσής της μέσω της διαχείρισης εκδηλώσεων μικρής κλίμακας, *στην συγκεκριμένη περίπτωση του δρομικού αγώνα ……………………..* **Ειδικότερα, να μελετηθεί ποιοι παράγοντες επηρεάζουν τις αποφάσεις των διοργανωτών να επενδύσουν σε αθλητικά events και ποιες είναι οι σκέψεις τους για επένδυση σε περιόδους χαμηλής έντασης.** *Αποδέκτες των ερωτήσεων είναι αποκλειστικά οι διοργανωτές του συγκεκριμένου event.*

Η συνέντευξη χωρίζεται σε 4 μέρη. Το πρώτο αφορά την εποχικότητα, το δεύτερο τη βιωσιμότητα, το τρίτο τις εκδηλώσεις και το τέταρτο τους παράγοντες που σχετίζονται με την τοπική κοινότητα.

Τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας θα χρησιμοποιηθούν αποκλειστικά για επιστημονικούς σκοπούς και μπορούν να ανακοινωθούν στους ενδιαφερόμενους μετά από δική τους προτροπή. Σχετικό αίτημα υπάρχει στο τέλος του οδηγού. Καλό είναι οι βοηθοί έρευνας να υποστηρίξουν το υλικό της συνέντευξης με φωτογραφικό υλικό (print screen για όσες συνεντεύξεις γίνουν από απόσταση) εφόσον το επιθυμούν και οι ερωτώμενοι.

(Προς συμπλήρωση από τους βοηθούς της έρευνας)
Όνομα(τα) βοηθού(-ών) έρευνας και Αρ. Φοιτ. Μητρώου:
....…...…………………………………………………..
Τόπος ημερομηνία: ..../......./ ....

Ερωτώμενος:
Φύλο:………………………………………………………Ιδιότητα:…………………………………….
Τύπος οργανισμού:……………………………………………………………………………………….
Ονομασία Event: ………………………………………………………………………………………….
Τοποθεσία:………………………………………………………………………………………………….
Διάρκεια event:…………………………………………………………………………………………….
Έτη που διοργανώνεται το event στην περιοχή αυτή:……………………………………………….
Διαμονή ερωτώμενου εντός η εκτός περιοχής:…………………………………………………….

ΟΔΗΓΟΣ ΣΥΝΕΝΤΕΥΞΗΣ Δρομικού Αγώνα …………………….
(Organizers)

<u>ΕΡΩΤΗΣΕΙΣ</u>

Α. ΕΠΟΧΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ

1. **Γιατί επιλέξατε αυτήν την περίοδο για να διοργανώσετε το δρομικό αγώνα;;**

2. **Πώς πιστεύετε ότι συντελεί ο δρομικός αγώνας στην εξομάλυνση των προβλημάτων τουριστικής εποχικότητας της περιοχής;;**

3. **Υπό ποιες προϋποθέσεις θα διοργανώνατε το δρομικό αγώνα σε άλλη εποχή του χρόνου;;**

4. **Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας αναφορικά με την επιμήκυνση του δρομικού αγώνα σε ημέρες;;**

ΟΔΗΓΟΣ ΣΥΝΕΝΤΕΥΞΗΣ Δρομικού Αγώνα ……………………. (Organizers)

Β. ΒΙΩΣΙΜΟΤΗΤΑ

Πώς θεωρείτε ότι επηρεάζει ο δρομικός αγώνας τις τοπικές επιχειρήσεις;;

- Οικονομικά

- Κοινωνικά

- Περιβαλλοντικά

Γ. ΕΚΔΗΛΩΣΕΙΣ

1. **Ποιες είναι οι πιο αποτελεσματικές στρατηγικές για τη διοργάνωση ενός επιτυχημένου αγώνα δρόμου σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής ζήτησης;;**

2. **Πώς πιστεύετε ότι η διοργάνωση αθλητικών εκδηλώσεων, όπως ο δρομικός αγώνας που συζητάμε, μπορεί να συμβάλλει στην τουριστική προβολή και ανάπτυξη της περιοχής;;**

3. **Ποια χαρακτηριστικά είναι σημαντικά στην περιοχή ώστε η αθλητική εκδήλωση να είναι ακόμα πιο επιτυχημένη κατά τη διάρκεια της χαμηλής ή μεσαίας τουριστικής περιόδου;;**

Δ. ΖΗΤΗΜΑΤΑ ΠΟΥ ΣΧΕΤΙΖΟΝΤΑΙ ΜΕ ΤΗΝ ΤΟΠΙΚΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ

1. **Πώς θα εμπλέκατε τους ντόπιους επαγγελματίες στην διαδικασία διοργάνωσης του αγώνα;;**

2. **Πώς οι επαγγελματίες της περιοχής αντιλαμβάνονται και σχετίζονται με το δρομικό γεγονός;;**

3. **Με ποιους τρόπους οι τοπικές τουριστικές υπηρεσίες καλύπτουν τις ανάγκες των επισκεπτών/αθλητών της διοργάνωσης σε χαμηλή ή μέση περίοδο;;**

4. **Ποιες ενέργειες πρέπει να αναλάβουν οι τοπικές αρχές για να εξασφαλίσουν μια επιτυχημένη εκδήλωση σε χαμηλή ή μεσαία περίοδο;;**

Ε. ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΣΕΙΣ

Παρακαλούμε αναφέρετε τυχόν σχόλια, παρατηρήσεις, επισημάνσεις.

[   ] Ναί, Θα ήθελα να ενημερωθώ για τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας. Ως εκ τούτου δηλώνω το ηλεκτρονικό μου ταχυδρομείο:……

[ ] Ναί δίνω τη συγκατάθεσή μου και συμφωνώ να φωτογραφηθώ με τους ερευνητές. Η φωτογράφηση γίνεται για λόγους τεκμηρίωσης της συλλογής δεδομένων και δεν προβλέπεται να χρησιμοποιηθεί για κάποιο άλλο σκοπό. (Στην περίπτωση που θα θέλατε το υλικό της φωτογράφησης ..)

[   ] Ναί, θα ήθελα να μου αποσταλεί ηλεκτρονικά για το αρχείο μου η σχετική φωτογραφία

ANNEX 3

Υπόμνημα:
Εξέταση της εγκυρότητας περιεχομένου των εννοιολογικών οντοτήτων με 3 φύλλα αξιολογικών γύρων

Θεσσαλονίκη, .../20

<u>**Θέμα**</u>: **Υποστήριξη σχετικά με τον έλεγχο εγκυρότητας περιεχομένου των παραγόντων της οργανωτικής διαδικασίας των δρομικών αγώνων. Οι υπό εξέταση παράγοντες ενδέχεται να συμβάλλουν στην επιμήκυνση της τουριστικής περιόδου στο πλαίσιο του βιώσιμου τουρισμού.**

Ελπίζουμε να είστε καλά!

Καταρχάς σας ευχαριστούμε για την πολύτιμη βοήθειά σας στην προηγούμενη φάση της έρευνάς μας. Τα δεδομένα όλων των συνεντεύξεων έχουν επεξεργαστεί και έχουν διαμορφωθεί οι παράγοντες εκείνοι που ενδέχεται να συντελέσουν στην *επιμήκυνση της τουριστικής περιόδου μέσα από την ανάπτυξη συνεργειών μεταξύ των εμπλεκομένων ενός δρομικού αγώνα*.

Σε αυτήν την επόμενη φάση, θα θέλαμε για άλλη μια φορά την συνδρομή σας. Συγκεκριμένα, θα θέλαμε να αξιολογήσετε εσείς τους παράγοντες εκείνους που ορίσατε εσείς και άλλοι διοργανωτές δρομικών αγώνων. Για αυτόν τον λόγο, εκτός από την παρούσα επιστολή, σας επισυνάπτουμε μία φόρμα που αποτελείται από 3 γύρους αξιολόγησης και θα αποτελέσει ένα απολύτως χρήσιμο εργαλείο για την ολοκλήρωση της διατριβής της κας Σοφίας Γκαρανέ (Υπ. Διδάκτωρ Πανεπιστημίου Μακεδονίας, Θεσσαλονίκη).

Αυτό το εργαλείο αξιολόγησης θα χρησιμεύσει κατόπιν στην συλλογή σημαντικού υλικού από την πλευρά των τοπικών αρχών. Συγκεκριμένα, ένα ανώνυμο ερωτηματολόγιο θα σταλεί σε σημαντικό αριθμό υπευθύνων που βρίσκονται σε δημόσιες διοικητικές θέσεις που σχετίζονται με τον τουρισμό.

Θα ήμασταν πραγματικά ευγνώμονες αν θα μπορούσατε να μας παρέχετε την βοήθειά σας, βασιζόμενος-η στην εμπειρία σας αναφορικά με την διοργάνωση δρομικών αγώνων μέσω ελέγχου εγκυρότητας του περιεχομένου των στοιχείων της τουριστικής κλίμακας που δημιουργήσαμε. Στους 3 επισυναπτόμενους αξιολογητικούς γύρους θα δείτε τις ομαδοποιημένες μεταβλητές με παράλληλες επεξηγήσεις. Στο τέλος κάθε γύρου, υπάρχει χώρος για παρατηρήσεις όπου μπορείτε να σημειώσετε ό,τι θέλετε.

Για οτιδήποτε αφορά την έρευνα μπορείτε να επικοινωνήσετε με την υποψήφια διδάκτορα Σοφία Γκαρανέ στο sgarane@uom.edu.gr. Επιβλέπων της έρευνας είναι ο Δρ. Χρήστος Βασιλειάδης, Καθηγητής του Τμήματος Οργάνωσης και Διοίκησης Επιχειρήσεων του Πανεπιστημίου Μακεδονίας, Τηλ. 2310 891 581, email: chris@uom.edu.gr.

Η συμμετοχή σας μας είναι πραγματικά πολύτιμη για την επιτυχία αυτής της διατριβής. Σας ευχαριστούμε εκ των προτέρων για την αφιέρωση του χρόνου σας.

Με εκτίμηση,

Δρ. Χρήστος Βασιλειάδης
Καθηγητής Παν.
Μακεδονίας

Σοφία Γκαρανέ
Υπ. Διδάκτωρ Παν.
Μακεδονίας

ΟΔΗΓΙΕΣ

Από:
Σοφία Κ. Γκαρανέ
Υπ. Διδάκτωρ, Παν. Μακεδονίας

Προς:

....(προαιρετικά αναφέρετε το όνομά σας)

Δρομικός Αγώνας:

.... (προαιρετικά αναφέρετε τον δρομικό αγώνα που διοργανώνετε)

Οδηγίες:

Στα πλαίσια της συνεργασίας μας παρακαλούμε να μας βοηθήσετε μέσω του ελέγχου ανάλυσης περιεχομένου των παραγόντων της εποχιακής απόδοσης των συντελεστών αθλητικών (δρομικών) τουριστικών εκδηλώσεων μικρής κλίμακας.

Θα μπορούσατε να εκτελέσετε τις ακόλουθες εργασίες;;

1. Στην πρώτη κενή στήλη αντιστοιχίστε κάθε μία πρόταση σε έναν (μόνο έναν) παράγοντα από όσους παρατίθενται. Αν πιστεύετε ότι κάποια πρόταση δεν αντιστοιχεί σε κανέναν παράγοντα, παρακαλούμε δηλώστε το.

2. Στην δεύτερη κενή στήλη βαθμολογήστε κάθε παράγοντα ως εξής:

Α. Ο παράγοντας αντιπροσωπεύει απόλυτα την πρόταση.
Β. Ο παράγοντας αντιπροσωπεύει μερικώς την πρόταση.
Γ. Ο παράγοντας δεν αντιπροσωπεύει καθόλου την πρόταση.

3. Προτείνετε τυχόν πρόσθετους παράγοντες που θα μπορούσαν να ταιριάξουν.

4. Κάντε πιθανές προτάσεις που θα μπορούσαν να βελτιώσουν την έρευνα.

Σας ευχαριστούμε θερμά για την παροχή της βοήθειάς σας!

ΠΡΩΤΗ ΑΝΑΣΚΟΠΗΣΗ
ΕΠΟΧΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΔΡΟΜΙΚΟΙ ΑΓΩΝΕΣ

Ορισμοί:

1. Επιμήκυνση σε ημέρες
Αφορά στους παράγοντες εκείνους που σχετίζονται με την *χρονική επέκταση* της διοργάνωσης του δρομικού αγώνα σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής έλευσης

2. Επιτυχία δρομικού αγώνα
Αφορά σε εκείνους τους παράγοντες που δύνανται να επηρεάσουν την *επιτυχία* του δρομικού αγώνα σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής έλευσης

3. Χαρακτηριστικά
Αφορά στα *χαρακτηριστικά στοιχεία* που πρέπει να έχουν οι *διοργανωτές* για να διοργανώσουν έναν επιτυχημένο αγώνα σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής έλευσης

		Κατανείμετε τα στοιχεία σε κάθε έναν από τους ακόλουθους παράγοντες: 1. **Επιμήκυνση** (τι μπορεί να επηρεάσει την επέκταση του αγώνα σε ημέρες) 2. **Επιτυχία** (*παράγοντες που συντελούν στην επιτυχία ενός δρομικού αγώνα*) 3. **Χαρακτηριστικά** (στοιχεία διοργανωτών για επιτυχή διοργάνωση αγώνα)	Πόσο καλά το στοιχείο αυτό αντιπροσωπεύει τον παράγοντα; **Α. Απόλυτα** **Β. Μερικώς** **Γ. Καθόλου**
1.	Ο δρομικός αγώνας έχει γίνει πλέον θεσμός και έχει καθιερωθεί στην περιοχή		
2.	Η βοήθεια που προσφέρουν οι εθελοντές		
3.	Η πρόσκληση διάσημων προσωπικοτήτων στον αγώνα		
4.	Σκέφτομαι να βάλω/Έχω βάλει ήδη στον αγώνα κι άλλες δραστηριότητες εκδηλώσεων (π.χ. μουσικές, πολιτιστικές, σεμινάρια)		
5.	Σκέφτομαι να βάλω/Έχω βάλει ήδη στον αγώνα		

	περιηγητικές δραστηριότητες (π.χ. ξεναγήσεις στην περιοχή, αξιοθέατα)		
6.	Σκέφτομαι να ενσωματώσω / Έχω ενσωματώσει ήδη δράσεις για όλους τους επισκέπτες (αθλητές, συνοδούς, οικογένεια)		
7.	Στην περιοχή διοργανώνεται / θα διοργανωθεί έκθεση με τοπικά προϊόντα		
8.	Η ίδια η διαδρομή του δρομικού αγώνα		
9.	Η διάθεση των διοργανωτών να προσφέρουν στη νέα γενιά		
10.	Σωστή διοργάνωση		
11.	Χρήση ιστοσελίδων που σχετίζονται με δρομικούς και άλλους αγώνες		
12.	Η ικανότητα management (διοίκησης) των διοργανωτών		
13.	Ασφάλεια όλων των συμμετεχόντων		
14.	Ο αριθμός των συμμετεχόντων αθλητών		
15.	Η συνεισφορά των ντόπιων επαγγελματιών		
16.	Δεξιότητες μάρκετινγκ αναφορικά με τα κοινωνικά δίκτυα (social media)		
17.	Υποστήριξη από την τοπική κοινότητα		
18.	Η καλή γνώση της περιοχής		
19.	Η αγάπη των διοργανωτών για την γενέτειρά τους		

Παρατηρήσεις

ΔΕΥΤΕΡΗ ΑΝΑΣΚΟΠΗΣΗ
ΠΡΟΩΘΗΤΙΚΑ ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΝΕΡΓΕΙΕΣ

Ορισμοί:

1. Προωθητικά στοιχεία
   Αφορά στους παράγοντες εκείνους που έχουν σχέση με *προωθητικά στοιχεία που παρέχουν οι ντόπιοι επαγγελματίες, ήτοι οποιεσδήποτε χορηγίες ή δωρεές ή συμφωνίες* των ντόπιων επαγγελματιών με ή προς τους συμμετέχοντες του δρομικού αγώνα σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής έλευσης

2. Συνέργειες
   Αφορά σε εκείνους τους παράγοντες που σχετίζονται με τη *συνεργασία μεταξύ διαφορετικών φορέων*, και συγκεκριμένα αφορά *συνδυασμένες δράσεις των εμπλεκόμενων μερών* σχετικά με την επιτυχή διοργάνωση του δρομικού αγώνα σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής έλευσης

	Κατανείμετε τα στοιχεία σε κάθε έναν από τους ακόλουθους παράγοντες: 1. **Προωθητικά στοιχεία** (χορηγίες, δωρεές ή συμφωνίες με τους επαγγελματίες) 2. **Συνέργεια** (οι συνδυασμένες δράσεις όλων των εμπλεκόμενων)	Πόσο καλά το στοιχείο αυτό αντιπροσωπεύει τον παράγοντα; **Α. Απόλυτα** **Β. Μερικώς** **Γ. Καθόλου**
1. Η δρομική συνείδηση και κατ' επέκταση η αθλητική κουλτούρα των εμπλεκόμενων		
2. Η παροχή δωρεάν υπηρεσιών προς τους νικητές του δρομικού αγώνα		
3. Η παροχή κινήτρων από τις δημόσιες αρχές προς τους διοργανωτές		

4.	Η παροχή χορηγίας		
5.	Η καλή επικοινωνία μεταξύ των εμπλεκομένων		
6.	Η δημιουργία ειδικών συμφωνιών με τους διοργανωτές για τις ημέρες που διαρκεί ο αγώνας		
7.	Η παροχή ειδικών εκπτώσεων προς τους αθλητές		
8.	Η παροχή κατευθύνσεων από τις τοπικές αρχές στους διοργανωτές		

Παρατηρήσεις

ΤΡΙΤΗ ΑΝΑΣΚΟΠΗΣΗ
ΒΙΩΣΙΜΟΤΗΤΑ

Ορισμοί:

1. Οικονομική Διάσταση
   Αφορά στους παράγοντες εκείνους που έχουν σχέση με το *οικονομικό αποτέλεσμα που συνεπάγεται* η διοργάνωση του δρομικού αγώνα

2. Κοινωνική Διάσταση
   Είναι οι παράγοντες εκείνοι που έχουν σχέση με τη δυνατότητα του κοινωνικού συστήματος να λειτουργήσει σε ένα *προκαθορισμένο επίπεδο κοινωνικής αρμονίας* και να προάγει τη *γενική βελτίωση της κοινωνίας*

3. Περιβαλλοντική Διάσταση
   Αναφέρεται στους παράγοντες που σχετίζονται με τις *επιπτώσεις των ανθρώπινων δραστηριοτήτων στο περιβάλλον* για να υπάρξει ισορροπία του φυσικού περιβάλλοντος

	Κατανείμετε τα στοιχεία σε κάθε έναν από τους ακόλουθους παράγοντες: 1. **Οικονομικός** (οικονομικό αποτέλεσμα) 2. **Κοινωνικός** (γενική βελτίωση κοινωνίας) 3. **Περιβαλλοντικός** (ισορροπία φυσικού περιβάλλοντος)	Πόσο καλά το στοιχείο αυτό αντιπροσωπεύει τον παράγοντα; **Α. Απόλυτα Β. Μερικώς Γ. Καθόλου**
1. Ο δρομικός αγώνας συμβάλλει στην αύξηση εσόδων στην περιοχή		
2. Ο δρομικός αγώνας επηρεάζει αρνητικά το φυσικό περιβάλλον στην περιοχή		
3. Ο δρομικός αγώνας συμβάλλει στην αύξηση ευκαιριών απασχόλησης στην περιοχή		
4. Ο δρομικός αγώνας συμβάλλει στην επένδυση σε νέες εγκαταστάσεις στην περιοχή		
5. Ο δρομικός αγώνας ενισχύει την εικόνα της περιοχής		
6. Ο δρομικός αγώνας δημιουργεί ευκαιρίες αναψυχής για τους κατοίκους της περιοχής		

Παρατηρήσεις

ANNEX 4

RESEARCH ON:

Road Races and Extension
of the Tourist Season

The present research is carried out in the context of the writing of research part of a doctoral dissertation, which is supervised and prepared in the Department of Business Administration of the University of Macedonia. Its subject concerns the contribution of road races to the extension of the tourist season.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

For the purposes of the research, the current questionnaire has been prepared which aims to measure the degree of influence of the factors of seasonal performance of sport tourism events and races as perceived by those responsible for planning and managing relevant events.

The ultimate goal of the research is to improve the services of the Greek tourism product; therefore, your participation is considered essential for its success. At the same time, completing the questionnaire can be an opportunity for your organization to take a holistic view of the practices it follows in terms of extending the tourist season through the organization of sporting (or other similar small-scale events) in your area.

The research is confidential, your perceptions are anonymous and your answers will be used only for scientific purposes. Completing the questionnaire will not take more than ten minutes. The tourist activities of each area have significant importance for our research, therefore we kindly request you to dedicate some of your valuable time to complete the following questionnaire.

For anything related to the research, you can contact Sofia Gkarane, PhD Candidate at +30 6948253434 or at sgarane@uom.edu.gr. Dr. Chris Vassiliadis, Professor of the Department of Business Administration of University of Macedonia, is the Supervisor of the Research, Tel. +30 2310 891 581, +30 6976675057, email: chris@uom.edu.gr.

Thank you in advance for your participation and time!

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer all the questions as accurately as possible, noting your choices in the corresponding box of each question with the cursor.

Road races are defined as mountain races (mountain), non-mountain races (road) and multiple sports (multi-sports).

<u>QUESTIONNAIRE</u>

RESPONDENT' S DETAILS

Region ....**(**optional**)**

Role/Brief Description of the Tasks related to your administrative position-service ....
(We would be grateful if you could briefly present them)

Road Races mountain races (mountain), non-mountain races (road) and multiple sports (multi-sports) **organized in your area..................................**

A. ISSUES RELATED TO <u>TOURISM SEASONALITY AND SPORT EVENTS</u> IN YOUR AREA

1. The follow suggestions concern <u>tourism seasonality</u> on your region and the possibility of extending the tourist season through the organization of sport events and road races.

	I strongly disagree	I slightly disagree	Neutral	I slightly agree	I strongly agree		I do not know
1. Small-scale sporting events can contribute to the mitigation of tourism seasonality by extending the tourist season SR1							
2. Sporting events, such as the road races in our area, can contribute to the extension of the tourist season SR2							
3. The organization of road races can contribute to the tourism promotion and development of the destination SR3							

B. ISSUES RELATED TO THE <u>ROAD RACE</u>

2. The following suggestions relate to the factors that could <u>lengthen the duration of a race in days</u>. We would like to know how these factors would affect your case so that the organization of a road race in your region would last more days during a period of low tourist demand.

	I strongly disagree	I slightly disagree	Neutral	I slightly agree	I strongly agree		I do not know
1. Event Activities (music, culture, seminars) ELO1							
2. Tour activities (tours in the area, natural and historical sights etc) ELO2							
3. Fun and actions for all visitors (athletes, escorts, family) ELO3							
4. Exhibitions with local products of the region ELO4							

3. The following variables are factors that contribute to the <u>success</u> of a road race. We would like to know how these factors would contribute to the success of a road race during a period of low tourist demand.

		I strongly disagree	I slightly disagree	Neutral	I slightly agree	I strongly agree		I do not know
1.	Proper Organization SUC1							
2.	Safety of all participants SUC2							
3.	Participations SUC3							
4.	Volunteers support SUC4							
5.	Local professionals' contribution SUC5							
6.	Local community support SUC6							
7.	Road Race Route SUC7							
8.	The road race has been well established in the area SUC8							

4. The following statements have to do with the factors related to <u>characteristics of the organizers of sport road events</u>. We would like to know how these organizers' characteristics affect the organization of a road race during a period of low tourist demand.

		I strongly disagree	I slightly disagree	Neutral	I slightly agree	I strongly agree		I do not know
1.	Social media marketing skills from the part of the organizers are important in the organization of road races ORG1							
2.	Sport websites use from the part of the organizers is important in the organization of road races ORG2							
3.	Famous personalities approach from the part of the organizers is important in the organization of road races ORG3							
4.	Love for the place from the part of the organizers is important in the organization of road races ORG4							

		I strongly disagree	I slightly disagree	Neutral	I slightly agree	I strongly agree		I do not know
5.	Knowledge of the region from the part of the organizers is important in the organization of road races ORG5							
6.	The willingness from the part of the organizers to contribute to the new generation is important in the organization of road races ORG6							
7.	Management skills from the part of the organizers are important in the organization of road races ORG7							

C. ISSUES RELATED TO LOCAL PROFESSIONALS

5. The following statements have to do with the factors related to the <u>local professionals' promotive elements with respect to the road race</u>. We would like to know how the following promotive elements that local businesses would provide affect the organization of a road race during a period of low tourist demand.

		I strongly disagree	I slightly disagree	Neutral	I slightly agree	I strongly agree		I do not know
1.	Sponsorships from the part of the local professionals is important in the organization of road races LOCPRO1							
2.	Discounts for athletes from the part of the local professionals is important in the organization of road races LOCPRO2							
3.	Free services for the winners from the part of the local professionals is important in the organization of road races LOCPRO3							

D. ISSUES RELATED TO SYNERGY AMONG THE STAKEHOLDERS

6. The following statements have to do with the factors related to the <u>synergies</u> among stakeholders during a road race. We would like to know how these characteristics that are related to the synergies among the local stakeholders affect the organization of a road race during a period of low tourist demand.

	I strongly disagree	I slightly disagree	Neutral	I slightly agree	I strongly agree		I do not know
1. Directions from the part of the local authorities is important to the organization of road races SYN1							
2. Running culture is an important characteristic of stakeholders in the organization of road races SYN2							
3. Providing motives from the part of the local authorities to the organizers is important to the organization of road races SYN3							
4. Good communication among stakeholders is important to the organization of road races SYN4							
5. Special agreements with the organizers for the days of the event is important to the organization of road races SYN5							

E. ISSUES RELATED TO SUSTAINABILITY

7. The following statements have to do with the factors related to your perceptions on the sustainability of your region. We would like to know how road races affect the region in an economic, social and environmental level during a period of low tourist demand.

	I strongly disagree	I slightly disagree	Neutral	I slightly agree	I strongly agree		I do not know
1. Thanks to the road race, revenue in the region increase SUST1							
2. The road race contributes to employment income opportunities in the region SUST2							
3. The road race contributes to the investment in new facilities in the region SUST3							
4. The road race creates leisure opportunities for the residents of the area SUST4							
5. The road race enhances the image of the destination SUST5							
6. The road race negatively affects the natural environment in the area SUST6							

Remarks

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

For comments and your interest in the result of the research, you can contact Ms Sofia Gkarane, who is in charge

of the research, at sgarane@uom.edu.gr.

ANNEX 5

Δρομικοί Αγώνες και Επιμήκυνση της Τουριστικής Περιόδου

Η παρούσα έρευνα διενεργείται στα πλαίσια συγγραφής του ερευνητικού μέρους διδακτορικής διατριβής που επιβλέπεται και εκπονείται στο τμήμα Οργάνωσης και Διοίκησης Επιχειρήσεων του Πανεπιστημίου Μακεδονίας. Το θέμα της αφορά στην συνεισφορά των δρομικών αγώνων στην επιμήκυνση της τουριστικής περιόδου.

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* Απαιτείται

| | Για τους σκοπούς της έρευνας, έχει συνταχθεί το παρόν ερωτηματολόγιο που αποβλέπει στη μέτρηση του βαθμού επίδρασης των παραγόντων της εποχιακής απόδοσης των αθλητικών τουριστικών εκδηλώσεων και αγώνων έτσι όπως την αντιλαμβάνονται οι υπεύθυνοι σχεδιασμού και διαχείρισης σχετικών εκδηλώσεων. |
| Σκοπός της έρευνας | Ο απώτερος σκοπός της έρευνας είναι η βελτίωση των υπηρεσιών του ελληνικού τουριστικού προϊόντος για αυτό και η συμμετοχή σας κρίνεται απαραίτητη για την επιτυχία της. Ταυτόχρονα, η συμπλήρωσή του μπορεί να αποτελέσει μία ευκαιρία για τη συνολική θεώρηση, από μέρους του οργανισμού σας, των πρακτικών που ακολουθεί όσον αφορά την επιμήκυνση της τουριστικής περιόδου μέσω της οργάνωσης αθλητικών εκδηλώσεων (ή αντίστοιχων εκδηλώσεων μικρής κλίμακας) στην περιοχή σας. |

Η έρευνα είναι εμπιστευτική, οι απόψεις σας είναι ανώνυμες και οι απαντήσεις σας θα χρησιμοποιηθούν αποκλειστικά για επιστημονικούς σκοπούς. Η συμπλήρωση του ερωτηματολογίου δεν θα διαρκέσει περισσότερο από δέκα λεπτά. Οι απόψεις σας χρίζουν ιδιαίτερης σημασίας για την έρευνά μας για αυτό παρακαλούμε να αφιερώσετε λίγο από τον πολύτιμο χρόνο σας για να συμπληρώσετε το ερωτηματολόγιο που ακολουθεί.

Για οτιδήποτε αφορά την έρευνα μπορείτε να επικοινωνήσετε με την υποψήφια διδάκτορα Σοφία Γκαρανέ στο 6948253434 ή στο sgarane@uom.edu.gr.

Επιβλέπων της έρευνας είναι ο Δρ. Χρήστος Βασιλειάδης, Καθηγητής του Τμήματος Οργάνωσης και Διοίκησης

Επιχειρήσεων του Πανεπιστημίου Μακεδονίας, Τηλ. 2310 891 581, 6976675057, email: chris@uom.edu.gr.   Σας

ευχαριστούμε εκ των προτέρων για την συμμετοχή και το χρόνο σας!

(προαιρετικό)

Στοιχεία Ερωτώμενου

1.   Περιφέρεια

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.   Ρόλος/Σύντομη Περιγραφή Καθηκόντων που αφορούν την διοικητική θέση – υπηρεσία σας (Θα σας ήμασταν ευγνώμονες εάν μας τα παρουσιάζετε εν συντομία)

_____

_____

_____

_____

3.   Δρομικοί Αγώνες που διεξάγονται στην περιοχή σας

_____

_____

_____

_____

Α. ΖΗΤΗΜΑΤΑ ΠΟΥ ΣΧΕΤΙΖΟΝΤΑΙ ΜΕ ΤΗΝ ΤΟΥΡΙΣΤΙΚΗ ΕΠΟΧΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΔΡΟΜΙΚΟΥΣ ΑΓΩΝΕΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΕΡΙΟΧΗΣ ΣΑΣ

4.   1.   Οι παρακάτω προτάσεις αφορούν τις απόψεις σας σχετικά με την τουριστική   *
εποχικότητα στην περιοχή σας. Θα θέλαμε να γνωρίζουμε την άποψή σας σχετικά με το
ενδεχόμενο επιμήκυνσης της τουριστικής περιόδου χάρη στη διοργάνωση δρομικών αγώνων.
Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη ανά σειρά.

	Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα	Διαφωνώ Λίγο	Ουδέτερα	Συμφωνώ Λίγο	Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
1. Οι αθλητικές εκδηλώσεις μικρής κλίμακας μπορούν να συμβάλλουν στην αντιμετώπιση του φαινομένου της τουριστικής εποχικότητας μέσω της επιμήκυνσης της τουριστικής περιόδου	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. Αθλητικές εκδηλώσεις όπως οι δρομικοί αγώνες της περιοχής μας μπορούν να συμβάλλουν στην επιμήκυνση της τουριστικής περιόδου	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. Η διοργάνωση δρομικών αγώνων μπορεί να συμβάλλει στην τουριστική προώθησηκαιανάπτυξη της περιοχής	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Β. ΖΗΤΗΜΑΤΑ ΠΟΥ ΣΧΕΤΙΖΟΝΤΑΙ ΜΕ ΤΟΝ ΔΡΟΜΙΚΟ ΑΓΩΝΑ

5.   2. Οι παρακάτω προτάσεις αφορούν τους παράγοντες επιμήκυνσης ενός δρομικού αγώνα σε ημέρες. Θα θέλαμε να γνωρίζουμε πως αυτοί οι παράγοντες θα επιδρούσαν και στην δική σας περίπτωση ώστε να διαρκέσει η διοργάνωση ενός δρομικού αγώνα της περιοχής σας παραπάνω ημέρες σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής ζήτησης.

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη ανά σειρά.

	Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα	Διαφωνώ Λίγο	Ουδέτερα	Συμφωνώ Λίγο	Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
1. Ένταξη δραστηριότητας γεγονότων και εκδηλώσεων (όπως μουσικά, πολιτιστικά, σεμινάρια κ.ά)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. Ένταξη δραστηριότητας ξεναγήσεων (όπως περιηγήσεις στην περιοχή, στα φυσικά και ιστορικά αξιοθέατα κ.α.)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. Ενσωμάτωση δράσεων για όλους τους επισκέπτες (αθλητές, συνοδούς, οικογένεια)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
4. Διοργάνωση εκθέσεων με τοπικά προϊόντα της περιοχής	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

6.   3. Οι επόμενες μεταβλητές αποτελούν παράγοντες οι οποίοι συντελούν στην επιτυχία * διοργάνωσης ενός δρομικού αγώνα. Θα θέλαμε να γνωρίζουμε πως αυτοί οι παράγοντες θα βοηθούσαν και στην δική σας περίπτωση ώστε να καταστεί δυνατή η επιτυχία ενός δρομικού αγώνα σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής ζήτησης.

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη ανά σειρά.

	Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα	Διαφωνώ Λίγο	Ουδέτερα	Συμφωνώ Λίγο	Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
1. Σωστή διοργάνωση	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. Ασφάλεια όλων των συμμετεχόντων	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. Ο αριθμός των συμμετεχόντων αθλητών	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
4. Η βοήθεια που προσφέρουν οι εθελοντές	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. Η συνεισφορά των επαγγελματιών της περιοχής	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. Υποστήριξη από την τοπική κοινότητα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. Η ίδια η διαδρομή του δρομικού αγώνα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
8. Ο δρομικός αγώνας έχει γίνει θεσμός στην περιοχή	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

7.   4. Οι επόμενες προτάσεις αποτελούν παράγοντες που σχετίζονται με τα χαρακτηριστικά των διοργανωτών αθλητικών δρομικών γεγονότων. Θα θέλαμε να γνωρίζουμε πως αυτά τα χαρακτηριστικά των διοργανωτών επιδρούν στην διοργάνωση ενός δρομικού αγώνα στην περιοχή σας σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής ζήτησης.

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη ανά σειρά.

	Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα	Διαφωνώ Λίγο	Ουδέτερα	Συμφωνώ Λίγο	Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
1. Η χρήση των μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης (social media) είναι σημαντική για τη διοργάνωση του αγώνα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. Η χρήση ιστοσελίδων που σχετίζονται με δρομικούς και άλλους αγώνες, είναι σημαντική για τη διοργάνωση του αγώνα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. Η προσέγγιση διάσημων προσωπικοτήτων στον αγώνα είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
4. Η αγάπη και η περηφάνεια των διοργανωτών για την γενέτειρά τους είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. Η καλή γνώση της περιοχής εκ μέρους των διοργανωτών είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. Η διάθεση των διοργανωτών να προσφέρουν στη νέα γενιά είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. Οι ικανότητες	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

μάνατζεμεντ (management) των διοργανωτών είναι σημαντικές για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα

Γ. ΖΗΤΗΜΑΤΑ ΠΟΥ ΣΧΕΤΙΖΟΝΤΑΙ ΜΕ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΤΟΠΙΟΥΣ ΕΠΑΓΓΕΛΜΑΤΙΕΣ

8.   5.   Οι επόμενες προτάσεις αποτελούν παράγοντες που σχετίζονται με τα στοιχεία προώθησης που παρέχουν οι ντόπιοι επαγγελματίες αναφορικά με τον δρομικό αγώνα. Θα θέλαμε να γνωρίζουμε πως οι παρακάτω παροχές των ντόπιων επιχειρηματιών επιδρούν στην διοργάνωση ενός δρομικού αγώνα στην περιοχή σας σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής ζήτησης. *Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη ανά σειρά.*

	Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα	Διαφωνώ Λίγο	Ουδέτερα	Συμφωνώ Λίγο	Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
1. Η παροχή χορηγίας από την πλευρά των ντόπιων επιχειρηματιών είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. Η παροχή ειδικών εκπτώσεων προς τους αθλητές από την πλευρά των ντόπιων επιχειρηματιών είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. Η παροχή δωρεάν υπηρεσιών προς τους νικητές του δρομικού αγώνα είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Δ. ΖΗΤΗΜΑΤΑ ΠΟΥ ΣΧΕΤΙΖΟΝΤΑΙ ΜΕ ΣΥΝΕΡΓΙΕΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΜΠΛΕΚΟΜΕΝΩΝ

9.   6.   Οι επόμενες προτάσεις αποτελούν παράγοντες που σχετίζονται με τις συνέργιες των εμπλεκομένων μερών κατά τη διάρκεια ενός δρομικού αγώνα. Θα θέλαμε να γνωρίζουμε πως

αυτά τα χαρακτηριστικά που αφορούν στις συνέργειες των μερών επιδρούν στην διοργάνωση ενός δρομικού αγώνα σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής ζήτησης.

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη ανά σειρά.

	Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα	Διαφωνώ Λίγο	Ουδέτερα	Συμφωνώ Λίγο	Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
1. Η παροχή κατευθύνσεων από τις τοπικές αρχές στους διοργανωτές είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
2. Είναι σημαντικό για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα οι εμπλεκόμενοι να διαθέτουν αθλητική κουλτούρα και δρομική συνείδηση	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
3. Η παροχή κινήτρων από τις δημόσιες αρχές προς τους διοργανωτές είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
4. Η καλή επικοινωνία μεταξύ των εμπλεκομένων είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
5. Η δημιουργία ειδικών συμφωνιών με τους διοργανωτές για τις ημέρες που διαρκεί ο αγώνας είναι σημαντική για την διοργάνωση του αγώνα	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

E. ΖΗΤΗΜΑΤΑ
ΠΟΥ
ΣΧΕΤΙΖΟΝΤΑΙ
ΜΕ ΤΗΝ
ΒΙΩΣΙΜΟΤΗΤΑ

7.   Οι επόμενες δηλώσεις σχετίζονται με τις αντιλήψεις σας αναφορικά με την επίδραση των δρομικών αγώνων στην βιωσιμότητα της περιοχής σας. Θα θέλαμε να γνωρίζουμε πως οι δρομικοί αγώνες επηρεάζουν σε οικονομικό, κοινωνικό και περιβαλλοντικό επίπεδο την περιοχή σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής ζήτησης.

10. Θα θέλαμε να γνωρίζουμε πως οι δρομικοί αγώνες επηρεάζουν τη βιωσιμότητα της περιοχής σε περίοδο χαμηλής τουριστικής ζήτησης.

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη ανά σειρά.

	Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα	Διαφωνώ Λίγο	Ουδέτερα	Συμφωνώ Λίγο	Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
1. Λόγω του δρομικού αγώνα αυξάνονται τα έσοδα στην περιοχή	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. Ο δρομικός αγώνας συμβάλλει στην αύξηση ευκαιριών απασχόλησης στην περιοχή	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. Ο δρομικός αγώνας συμβάλλει στην επένδυση σε νέες εγκαταστάσεις στην περιοχή	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
4. Ο δρομικός αγώνας δημιουργεί ευκαιρίες αναψυχής για τους κατοίκους της περιοχής	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. Ο δρομικός αγώνας ενισχύει την εικόνα της περιοχής	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. Ο δρομικός αγώνας επηρεάζει αρνητικά το φυσικό περιβάλλον στην περιοχή	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

(προαιρετικό)

Παρατηρήσεις

11. Διατύπωση άποψης - τυχόν παρατηρήσεων

Παρακαλούμε πατήστε Υποβολή·

Ευχαριστούμε για την συμμετοχή σας!!

Για σχόλια, παρατηρήσεις και το ενδιαφέρον σας για τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας σας μπορείτε να επικοινωνήσετε με την υπεύθυνη εκτέλεσης της έρευνας, κα Σοφία Γκαρανέ στο mail: sgarane@uom.edu.gr.

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑΣ

60 ΧΡΟΝΙΑ
1957-2017

Αυτό το περιεχόμενο δεν έχει δημιουργηθεί και δεν έχει εγκριθεί από την Google.

Google

ANNEX 6 - CODEBOOK

DISPLAY DICTIONARY.

File Information

Notes

Output Created		10-MAY-2022 13:47:41
Comments		
Input	Data	C:\Users\user\Desktop\F O L D E R 21\e r g a s i a\Ερωτηματολόγιο\May 2022\ CODEBOOK 2022.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
Syntax		DISPLAY DICTIONARY.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,01

Variable Information

Variable	Position	Label	Measurement Level	Role	Column Width	Alignment	Print Format
Region	1	Region	Nominal	Input	50	Left	A209
Role	2	Role	Nominal	Input	50	Left	A797
RoadRaces	3	Road Races	Nominal	Input	50	Left	A571
SR1	4	SR1	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SR2	5	SR2	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SR3	6	SR3	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ELO1	7	RR - ELO1	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ELO2	8	RR - ELO2	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ELO3	9	RR - ELO3	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ELO4	10	RR - ELO4	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUC1	11	RR - SUC1	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUC2	12	RR - SUC2	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUC3	13	RR - SUC3	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUC4	14	RR - SUC4	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUC5	15	RR - SUC5	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUC6	16	RR - SUC6	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUC7	17	RR - SUC7	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUC8	18	RR - SUC8	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ORG1	19	RR - ORG1	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ORG2	20	RR - ORG2	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ORG3	21	RR - ORG3	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ORG4	22	RR - ORG4	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ORG5	23	RR - ORG5	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ORG6	24	RR - ORG6	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
ORG7	25	RR - ORG7	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
LP1	26	LP1	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
LP2	27	LP2	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
LP3	28	LP3	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SYN1	29	SYN1	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SYN2	30	SYN2	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SYN3	31	SYN3	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SYN4	32	SYN4	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SYN5	33	SYN5	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUST1	34	SUST1	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUST2	35	SUST2	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUST3	36	SUST3	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1

SUST4	37	SUST4	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUST5	38	SUST5	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1
SUST6	39	SUST6	Nominal	Input	12	Right	F1

Variable Information

Variable	Write Format
Region	A209
Role	A797
RoadRaces	A571
SR1	F1
SR2	F1
SR3	F1
ELO1	F1
ELO2	F1
ELO3	F1
ELO4	F1
SUC1	F1
SUC2	F1
SUC3	F1
SUC4	F1
SUC5	F1
SUC6	F1
SUC7	F1
SUC8	F1
ORG1	F1
ORG2	F1
ORG3	F1
ORG4	F1
ORG5	F1
ORG6	F1
ORG7	F1
LP1	F1
LP2	F1
LP3	F1
SYN1	F1
SYN2	F1
SYN3	F1
SYN4	F1
SYN5	F1
SUST1	F1
SUST2	F1
SUST3	F1
SUST4	F1
SUST5	F1
SUST6	F1

Variables in the working file

Variable Values

Value		Label
SR1	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SR2	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SR3	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree

	6	I do not know
ELO1	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
ELO2	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
ELO3	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
ELO4	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUC1	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUC2	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUC3	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUC4	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUC5	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUC6	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUC7	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUC8	1	I strongly disagree

	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
ORG1	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
ORG2	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
ORG3	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
ORG4	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
ORG5	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
ORG6	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
ORG7	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
LP1	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
LP2	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
LP3	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SYN1	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral

	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SYN2	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SYN3	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SYN4	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SYN5	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUST1	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUST2	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUST3	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUST4	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUST5	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know
SUST6	1	I strongly disagree
	2	I slightly disagree
	3	Neutral
	4	I slighlty agree
	5	I strongly agree
	6	I do not know

ANNEX 7

Sofia Garane <sgarane@uom.edu.gr>

Fwd: Πανεπιστήμιο Μακεδονίας: Έρευνα σχετικά με την εποχικότητα του τουρισμού και τις αθλητικές εκδηλώσεις

EVRYANTHI MARANTIDOU <bba20178@uom.edu.gr>   8 Σεπτεμβρίου 2021 στις 1:52 μ.μ.
Προς: ⸻ vstas@gmail.com, Sofia Garane <sgarane@uom.edu.gr>

Αγαπητοί κύριοι,

Παρακαλούμε θερμά για την συμβολή σας στην έρευνα που διεξάγεται από το Πανεπιστήμιο Μακεδονίας και αφορά στην επιμήκυνση της τουριστικής περιόδου μέσω της διοργάνωσης δρομικών αγώνων.

Η άποψή σας είναι ιδιαίτερα σημαντική για εμάς και για αυτό η συμμετοχή σας (που είναι εμπιστευτική και ανώνυμη) κρίνεται απαραίτητη για την επιτυχία της έρευνας.
Αν συμφωνείτε να λάβετε μέρος, παρακαλούμε πατήστε εδώ: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1pomEjikUwkr8v6wiHIMIND-fJ7vRa1P-ffpC6A8uzXA/edit

Σας ευχαριστούμε εκ των προτέρων για την βοήθειά σας στην
βελτίωση των υπηρεσιών του ελληνικού τουριστικού προϊόντος.

Με εκτίμηση,
Ευρυάνθη Μαραντίδου
Ερευνήτρια
Τηλέφωνα Επικοινωνίας:6984⸻86

**Εκ μέρους της Υπεύθυνης της Έρευνας
Σοφίας Κ. Γκαρανέ
Υπ. Διδάκτορας Τμήματος ΟΔΕ
Πανεπιστημίου Μακεδονίας**
sgarane@uom.edu.gr
Τηλ. 69482!⸻4