



## Nautical Sports Events Portfolio as a Driver to Innovative Dynamics

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### ABSTRACT

Sports events have been used as a strategy to attract tourists, taking an increasing role in the strategic plans of cities, regions and countries. In this paper we aim to explain how the leverage of a nautical sports event portfolio (Kite Masters Portimão World Tour, Formula Windsurfing World Championship, Sailing Audi Medcup, Power Boats World Championship, Portimão Global Ocean Race, F1H2O World Championship) hosted in a tourist community of Algarve contributed to new dynamics around the sea. In this research we adopted a qualitative-interpretative perspective, and a case study method. The data led us to the conclusion that the reinforcement of the destination's image was the main goal. Furthermore, through the study of the leveraging process, it was possible to identify a strategic goal of the studied events which was not in the leverage theoretical models, namely "to innovate sports tourism products". The events were also constituted as a platform for connectivity and diversity, creating a space and a time for local communicative interaction, facilitating the evolution of the dynamics in the Municipality of Portimão, in logic of transformative causality.

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### 1. Introduction

Tourism is the greatest industry worldwide, producing ever growing benefits. On the other hand, sport became the most generalized cultural phenomenon of this century. Therefore, sport is an added value when we talk of tourist offer, its quality and diversity, or when we talk about tourists' needs and motivations, attracting their attention and establishing their fidelity (Pereira, 2007). The primary references in the literature to the sports tourism phenomenon were about the hallmark sports events impacts and their relationship to the tourism, such as the Olympic Games in the ancient times, which attracted

different nations to Olympia (Pereira, 2007). Several studies showed that sports events have been used as a strategy to attract tourists, taking an increasing role in the strategic plans of cities, regions and countries (Pereira, Mascarenhas and Pires, 2012). The authors realized that research on events started in the 80's and initially the studies were mainly focused on the analysis, post-events, of the impacts provided to host communities. A line of research with emphasis on leveraging the benefits of the event has been developed since the turn of the century (Chalip, 2000, 2004, 2006; Green, Costa and Fitzgerald, 2003; O'Brien, 2006, 2007; O'Brien and Gardiner, 2006). Strategic leveraging is based on the premise that sports events could maximize the long and short term benefits of the events to host destination (Chalip, 2000, 2004).

Senge (1990) was one of the first researchers who used the leverage concept applying to the organizations. Inspired in the work of J.W. Forrester on system dynamics, Senge (1990) considered leverage as the bottom line of systems thinking. He defined leverage as the human competence to identify actions and changes in structures leading to significant and enduring improvements. Later, the concept of leverage points was proposed by Meadows (1999, p.1) as "places within a complex system (a corporation, an economy, a living body, a city, an

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ecosystem) where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything". In fact, the concept of leverage points is very powerful, and even being often seen as common sense is not so evident among most actors performing systems in real life (Senge, 1990). The author emphasizes the importance of characterizing and understanding the set of actions designed to maximize the benefits. For him it is essential to identify the actors involved, examine their relationships and how they relate as a whole.

Chalip (2000) transferred the concept of leverage to approach to the sports events. In the author's perspective, sports events must be accomplished by a strategic view, which should sustain the events planning in the decision making process. The emphasis on the way that sports events could be potentiate is the key to achieve benefits to the communities. Australia has been mentioned as a good example to this approach due to the touristic perspective they developed in Olympic Games organization (Chalip, 2000). The author underlined five strategic points developed in Australia strategic plan, namely: lengthen Olympics visitors to other points in Australia; improvement of capacities to host business tourism and MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions); and the creation of awareness to the Australia destination (Pereira, Batista and Pires, 2010).

In this pioneering line of research, the author developed two models for strategic leveraging sports events approach: an economic model (Chalip, 2004, p. 229), which is based on two strategic objectives: "to optimize total trade and revenue" and "to enhance host destination's image"; and a social model (Chalip, 2006, p. 114) that comprised objectives and means for "generating and cultivating liminality". In the latter, are also encompassed two specific targets, namely: "foster social interaction" and "prompt a feeling of celebration" (p. 114). Several studies have been developed in this area: Chalip and Costa (2005), Chalip and Leyns (2002), Green, Costa and Fitzgerald (2003), Jago et al. (2003), Kellet, Hede and Chalip (2008), and O'Brien (2006, 2007). Nonetheless, Chalip (2004, 2006) conceived an economic and a social leverage model (respectively) scarce studies were developed applying these models. Moreover, Ziakas and Costa (2010) reinforced the importance of focusing in the multifaceted roles of events, assuming that events could foster several goals.

This paper aims to analyze the leverage process of nautical sports events portfolio (Kite Masters Portimão World Tour, Formula Windsurfing World Championship, Sailing Audi Medcup, P1 Power Boats World Championship, Portimão Global Ocean Race, F1 H2O World Championship) hosted in a tourist community of Algarve / Portugal. For this purpose, based on the Chalip (2004, 2006) theoretical models, strategic goals defined beyond these models will be identified and the corresponding implementation process analyzed.

## 2. Methods

A case study (Yin, 2003) was used in the research. The case study allowed us to refine the instruments in the procedure of data collection and selection of the respondents, from one event to another during the investigation cycle. Eisenhardt

(2002) qualified this procedure as fundamental whenever the investigation aspires to create theory from case studies because he considered that one of the essential keys for theory development consists in the researcher's freedom to make the necessary adjustments during the process of data collection.

### 2.1. Context

Portimão is a tourist resort in Portugal's major tourism region: Algarve. The destination was qualified as a mass tourism destination, related to an inadequate urban development model. But policymakers knew that this tourist destination had another sort of potential that should be explored in order to gain visibility (Pereira, 2013). Portimão is a privileged town, set at the flank of a lagoon, a river and the sea. Policymakers decided to invest in hosting and sponsoring a set of diversified events, among which nautical events of international level represented the greatest share throughout the year. The author realized that one of the aims of this event-based strategy was to change Portimão's image from a mass tourism destination and a typical sun and beach product to that of a nautical destination by the sea. In order to implement it, a Municipal Public Undertaking was created with the mission of promoting tourism, supporting events and developing tourism products, namely sports, cultural and business tourism (Expo Arade Statutes, 2006). The events were organized by specialized events' and tourism sectors of this public company in co-operation with other divisions of the municipality, namely with the Information and the Public Relations Office. In the course of our article, we will refer to this set of actors as the local public event organization committee (LEOC). The Public Undertaking appears most of the time with a double role - as the main sponsor and as the local event organization committee (LEOC) - and always in coordination with the external private organization holding the rights of the events (external event organization committee - EEOC).

### 2.2. Data collection

The focus of data collection was the identification and description of the strategic goals and their implementation, beyond the strategic goals already defined in the economic and social frameworks created by Chalip (2004, 2006). As Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) referred, a data-driven approach is the most appropriate to study research topics which have been less investigated, such as strategic leveraging of sports events.

For this study we selected a specific international nautical sports events' portfolio established throughout a year's term: Kite Masters Portimão World Tour (KM, 8 - 13 July 2008); Formula Windsurfing World Championship (FW, 9 - 14 September 2008); Sailing Audi MedCup (AM, 15 - 20 September 2008); P1 Power Boats World Championship (P1 PB, 26 - 28 September 2008); Portimão Global Ocean Race (PGOR, 12 October 2008 to 20 June 2009); F1 H2O World Championship (F1 H2O, 4 - 5 April 2009).

Fieldwork conducted from February of 2008 until April of 2010 was based on qualitative interviewing (before and during the events), direct observation and documental research of the events. During the research process, the interviews were

carried in person lasting one hour in average and were tape-recorded. The interviewees were carefully chosen among political actors (PA, 4 actors), external event organization committee actors (EEOC, 16 actors), local event organization committee actors (LEOC, 9 actors), and local actors (LA, 30 actors from: local trade (18), tourism (8) and sport (4)). The on-site observation was a relevant part of this research (Edwards and Skinner, 2009), allowing us to understand the real practices. We observed all the events, which lasted 6 days in average, focusing on the implementation of actions related to the strategic goals previously announced in the interviews. Information was gathered in the form of strategic documents (7), and press releases of the events (52), resulting in 59 collected documents.

2.3. Data analysis

The emergent concepts were inductively analyzed based on the general principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 2000). The references related to new strategic objectives and their implementation, beyond the strategic goals already defined in the economic and social frameworks created by Chalip (2004, 2006), were coded in open concepts. Constant comparison of the later led to define the key emergent dimensions. The software - NVivo 9 by QSR International, supported the analysis and the interpretation of the information as the process was progressing (Di Gregorio and Davidson, 2008).

3. Development

3.1. Strategic goal emerging from the empirical study

The data analysis of the leveraging process showed a strategic goal of the studied events, which was not in the leverage theoretical models, specifically "to innovate sports tourism products". This strategic goal was part of the vision defined by the event organizers in order to maximize the benefits of the events. Table 1 below shows the findings related to this goal according the number of sources, type of actor and references codified.

Table 1: Innovate sports tourism products: number of sources, type of actor majority and references codified according to this goal

	Strategic goal		
	Sources	Actors	References
<b>Innovate sports tourism products</b>	22	EEOC+LEOC	33

Source: authors

The importance of events leveraging to capitalize the resources of the host destination emerged after the first event examined and was consistently found across all events, especially in the nautical wind sports events. The "innovate sports tourism products" dimension was shared mainly by LEOC and EEOC, but also by political and local actors, and was one of the main arguments used to influence the decision making process. The table 2 shows the two tactics developed to achieve that goal,

namely: "creation and improvement of nautical sports services and facilities; "positioning and promotion as nautical destination". The first one is related to the adjustments in natural resources allowing the consolidation of sport tourism practice areas and the latter mostly associated to the definition, conception and distribution of the product.

3.2. Implementation process according to strategic goal emerging from the empirical study

Findings indicate that several actions were developed in order to implement the emerged strategic goal upper identified. The table 3 displays the results related to the actions developed, according the number of sources, type actor majority and references codified.

Table 3: Innovate sports tourism products: number of sources, type actor majority and references codified according to actions developed

	Strategic goal		
	Sources	Actors	References
<b>Innovate sports tourism products</b>	17	EEOC+LEOC	32

Source: authors

The table below (Table 4) shows the number of actions developed by the different actors per event. The results display a major number of references related with to wind events, namely Kite Master and Formula Windsurfing. The kitesurf and the windsurf are niche markets directly connected with the nautical center projected to the area Alvor-Portimão.

Table 4: Innovate sports tourism products: number of actions developed by types of actors per event

	Kite Masters	Formula Wind surfing	Audi Med-Cup	P1 Power Boats	PGOR	F1 H2O
<b>LEOC</b>	2	2	1	1	2	2
<b>EEOC</b>	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>LA</b>	1	1	0	0	0	0
<b>PA</b>	1	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	7	7	4	4	5	5

Source: authors

The actions to "innovate sports tourism products" were mainly related to the promotion of the destination as a nautical destination (22 of 32 actions). Moreover, there were found two types of actions, systematically in all events, namely: press releases, celebration of contracts with specialized TV stations such as Sail TV and Sport TV (LEOC - strategic actor 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9). As one of the EEOC actors stated:

The region is always mentioned in all press releases and communication, not only because the place is Portimão and we have to remark it, but we are also concerned with increasing

Table 2: Strategic goal: "Innovate sports tourism products"

**References indicating the creation and promotion of facilities and products in the area of water sports to diversify the tourism offer**

Actor	Example
<b>Political actor 2</b>	"Our strategy is to start developing products such as sailing, windsurfing, kite in a more systematic way, looking for more interesting and emergent markets"
<b>Political actor 4</b>	"to assume a position of Portimão as a nautical center of excellence, able to receive and deliver all types of nautical competitions and thereafter provide this knowledge to the world"
<b>LEOC Strategic actor 3 Kite Masters</b>	"According to the professionals, the nearby area of Alvor [one of the Portimão's beaches] has unique conditions for the practice of windsurfing and kitesurfing. Thus, we decided to organize international events to help us position and promote these niches - windsurf and kitesurf. We must create conditions to attract people to Portimão, not only during these events, but throughout the year to spend a week and practice these sports. And at the end, this is the strategy that we chose and it was on this basis that we suggested the importance of investing in these events to the political executive"
<b>EEOC Operational actor 1 Kite Masters</b>	I think that the most important in these events is to promote tourism focused in this type of sport - kite surfing - the natural beauty, the wind and the water here in Portimão"
<b>EEOC Strategic actor 2 Formula Windsurfing</b>	"capture quality tourism in different market niches, and windsurfing can be an advantage if they,[LEOC] know how to develop it"?
<b>Creation and improvement of nautical sports services and facilities</b>	
<b>LEOC Strategic actor 1 Kite Masters</b>	"We have decided to invest more in nautical events to broadcast the message that this tourist destination holds all the conditions for the practice of nautical sports. Besides that, we have been doing investments in facilities"
<b>Strategic actor 3 Kite Masters</b>	"what we need now is to work with our partners, the local stakeholders, so that they can develop the products or niches and beyond to make people come to see and watch these events, we can create conditions so that people in other periods, than during these events, are likely to spend a week at Portimão and can practice this sport. And deep down, this is the strategy that we chose and it was on this basis that the executive hinted the importance of investing in these events".
<b>EEOC Operational actor 5 Audi Med-Cup</b>	"Somehow would be stupid, given the natural conditions that they have, not to invest in nautical tourism, in creating facilities for that nautical tourism to have capacity to grow. When I'm saying nautical tourism, I'm not just talking at sporting events, but in terms of tourism as well. And this effort has been to be done by the municipality, and there is this effort, I can tell you this"
<b>EEOC Strategic actor 1 Kite Masters</b>	"It is a strategy directed towards the development and growth of the tourist areas, through sport ... We work with product development, and there are some products - such as the Kite Masters world championships - designed so that people can see the conditions for practicing this sport. Today there are several regions of the world as Fuerte Ventura, Tarifa, Flecheiras in Brazil, among a dozen more, where kite represents 90% of the communities' economic income, generally based on tourism"
<b>LEOC Strategic actor 1 Kite Masters</b>	"The events help attract people's attention to the natural conditions of the tourist destination"
<b>LEOC Operational actor 1 Kite Masters</b>	"Portimão comprises the ideal conditions for water sports and it makes sense to develop the various nautical disciplines. We are committed to the cruise port, to the various schools of surf, windsurf and kite. It makes sense to bet on the nautical segment"
<b>EEOC Strategic actor 2 Formula Windsurfing</b>	"is something particularly directed to the outside, on the point of view of promoting the destination as a place for the practice of sport."
<b>EEOC Operational actor 2 Formula Windsurfing</b>	"Magazines and televisions showcase the pictures of the event, creating the sportsmen who practice windsurf such willingness and desire to know such Portimão or certain destination, where a big event or a World Championship was held. If you made there a World Cup because effectively there is fantastic conditions for them to practice"
<b>EEOC Operational actor 5 Audi Med-Cup</b>	"Portimão has a clear objective which is to be truly a world city. I think that Portimão is now a brand of sports, bringing Power Boats, Windsurf, the Portimão Ocean Race, the TP52 [Audi Medcup]. When they bring these major world events, are showing the world that have a fantastic regatta course, have a fantastic weather, have a great marina, have good hotels, is a place where people can come and feel good "

awareness to the product Portimão sailing, as a good spot with wind, harbor and hotels (EEOC - operational actor 4 - AM).

Since the beginning of the research we verified the implementation of actions related to the improvement of nautical sports facilities in order to contribute to the development of "innovative sports tourism products". These actions involved several actors and partnerships, as for example the one established between the LEOC and the Municipality with the Portuguese Ports Authority and the Regional Development and Coordinating Commission of the Algarve to scour the bottom areas and to create a nautical center. As a strategic LEOC actor pointed out in some public occasions, namely at Formula Windsurfing event opening ceremony:

We are renovating the Alvor beach and part of the project is to build a nautical center. This is a partnership project between the Municipality and the Regional Development and Coordinating Commission of the Algarve. We were [Expo Arade] the responsible for the idea - to have a center that could support nautical activities. The events purpose is to attract people's attention to the natural conditions but then we must create facilities in order to keep people in this area. (LEOC - strategic actor 1 - FW)

Later in our research, more precisely in 2010, we perceived actions in order to conceive nautical sports services. The Municipality created a local tourism association - Portimão Tourism Association (ATP) - with the private and the public sector. The 5th article of the Association of Tourism of Portimão (ATP) Statute stated: "to develop studies and projects to qualify the tourism products/services of the Municipality" (ATP Statutes, 2010, p. 3). A national tourism newspaper made reference to this:

The ATP was formally constituted in December last year by the Portimão Municipality and more than 60 businessmen, representing 100 local enterprises. Its aim is to "develop and reinforce the image of the city as a tourism destination, allowing a greater negotiating power with providers, international tour operators and national decision-makers (Publituris newspaper, 2011, p. 2).

#### 4. Conclusions

The results showed that the events strategic leveraging could comprise new goals, beyond those defined in the Chalip models (2004, 2006), namely "innovate sports tourism products". Innovation of sports tourism products was part of the vision defined by the event organizers in order to maximize the benefits of the events and was regularly found across all events, especially in the nautical wind sports events, and was developed through two tactics, i.e: "creation and improvement of nautical sports services and facilities; and "positioning and promotion as nautical destination". This strategic goal was shared by LEOC, EEOC, political and local actors. On the other hand, the findings showed a few actions in order to "create and improve nautical sports services and facilities".

The "innovation of sports tourism products" as a goal was highlighted mainly in the Kite Masters, Formula Windsurfing

and Sailing Audi MedCup events. Moreover, actions implemented in order to reach this goal were more focused in promotion of the destination as a nautical destination. Some of the LEOC actors believed that the events were enough to create a dynamic sport destination, and hosting the events was the main action developed and a lack of other actions was visible. In this sense, Chalip (2005) and Harrison-Hill and Chalip (2005) emphasized that when nautical events fit with the destination main resources could contribute to build the destination brand, but the events are not sufficient by themselves to create products. However, long after - 2010, the Municipality used a strategic approach involving the local private sector and created a new organization, which focus is the development of products. In our opinion, this could be a step towards the achievement of innovation in sport tourism products, as long as this organization comprises sport organizations of the community as well. Several authors (Devine, Boyd and Boyle, 2010; Weed, 2003; Ziakas and Costa, 2011) suggested, as an obstacle for sport tourism advance, the fragmentation of sport and tourism communities. The fragmented and different organizational cultures among sport and tourism organizations were already pointed out by Weed (2001). Ziakas (2010) showed that the lack of relationship between the local departments decreased the efficacy of events. Kuscer (2013) also underlined the importance of stakeholder participation to achieve innovation in order to sustain the competitiveness in tourism destinations. The results of his research in mountain destination innovation revealed the following relevant factors for innovation: stakeholder participation, sociocultural sustainability, environmental sustainability and proactivity.

We realized that the events were also constituted as a platform for connectivity and diversity, creating a space and a time for local communicative interaction, facilitating the evolution of the dynamics in the Municipality of Portimão. Being in contact with several professionals (federations, sportspeople, media and all the EEOC staff), the events created the awareness to the excellent conditions of Portimão's area to water sports practices, as so, enhanced the experience about these markets, their needs and motivations. More, besides the fact that the world championships were hosted on this destination, it was possible to strengthen the guarantee of the excellent natural conditions of the area of Portimão to innovate in sports tourism products in the minds of all involved stakeholders. Paget, Dimanche and Mounet (2010) pointed out the importance of the resources in the innovation process. The authors examined the innovations in a French ski resort and realized that existing resources can be reconfigured to create unique and innovative products that will ensure a company's success. The products "Levedas" is an example of an innovative touristic product based on the natural resources, which constitutes a niche market to nature and active tourism to the Madeira Island (Almeida, Soares and Alves, 2013).

We highlighted that the innovative vision to Portimão destination is integrated in a global vision for the country. The National Strategy for the Sea (2006-2016) approved by Resolution of Council of Ministers No. 163/2006 of 12 December advocated a series of actions and measures, particularly in Chapter

V, viewing the exploitation of the opportunities identified in the areas of tourism and the development of nautical recreational, valuing the sea as a differentiator of tourism and stimulating activities linked to the sea allowing the use of free time, leisure and sport (Pereira, 2008). In this line, Spain has been developing the nautical station concept, serving recreational and tourist purposes, allowing the practice of all kinds of nautical activities during leisure time - concept of active holiday at sea. Its aim was to take advantage of the natural resources that involvement as the Mar Menor enabled in order to break the strong seasonality felt in this region (Galindo, 2003).

Most of all, we verified the importance of the nautical even-based strategy to confirm the natural resources' quality, and to create awareness and experience to the importance of this destination as a nautical destination resort, due the connectivity and diversity of actors. Above all, we recommend a proactive and network approach in this domain to boost innovative territories, due to the lack of relationship between sport and tourism departments.

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