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**THE IMPACTS OF SPORT TOURISM ON TOURISM**  
**DEVELOPMENT IN LAHTI**

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## ABSTRACT

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<p>These days, in the developed world, sport tourism fast becoming a leisure experience. As much as it is popular, it has also become a very important economic activity as well as a marketing tool to boost a destination's tourism potentials. Current research has proven that sport and tourism contributes about 1 to 2% of the gross domestic products of industrialized economies. Thus from the above statistics, it is no doubt that sport and tourism has great impact on a destination, it can altogether change the outlook of a destination. This research focused on how a sporting event can dramatically change the tourism potential of a destination. Also, this research took a look on the impacts this event has on the host community and also detailed information on the concept of sport tourism, the different types it development, growth and future trends of sport tourism.</p> <p>For this research work, the qualitative method of analyzing data was use and the semi structure form of interview was also use to analyze the impact of the winter games on tourism development in Lahti. Organizers and managers of important sporting institutions were interviewed and their opinions were analyzed to come up with findings and recommendations for further development of tourism in this region.</p> <p>This research showed that sports tourism in Lahti greatly contributes to tourism development in the region. Despite the fact that the event last only for three to four days, tourism business still make huge profit during this days. A good idea will be for the organizers to combine this event with another event such as a music festival or a trade fair so as to attract tourists to stay longer in the region.</p>				
<b>Key words</b> Destination, events, sport , sports tourism				

**ABSTRACT**  
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 DURABILITY OF THE SPORT TOURISM INDUSTRY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.1 Sport .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.3 Categorising port tourism.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.3.1 Event sport tourism.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.3.2 Active sport tourism.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.3.3 Nostalgia sport tourism .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3 DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT TOURISM.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3.1 New trends and interests in sport tourism.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.2 Growth in sport tourism.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.3 Sport tourism markets .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.4 Evolution of the sport and tourism industry .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.5 Sport tourism places .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>4 AN OVERVIEW OF THE CITY OF LAHTI AND ITS SPORTING POTENTIALS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4.1 Sport tourism in Lahti .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4.1.1 The Lahti sport center.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4.1.2 The Lahti ski games .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.2 Marketing Lahti as a sport tourism destination .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.3 Strengths and weaknesses of Lahti as a sport tourism destination ....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4.3.1 Strengths.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>4.3.2 Weaknesses .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>5 IMPACTS OF THE LAHTI WINTER GAMES .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5.1 Economic impacts .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>5.2 Socio-cultural impacts .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>6.1 Research method.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>6.2 Qualitative research method .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>6.3 Presenting the results of the research .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>6.3.1 Presenting the interview with interviewee A.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>6.3.2 Presenting the interview with interviewee B.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>6.3.3 Presenting the interview with interviewee C.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>6.3.4 Observation and interaction with the locals in Lahti.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>6.4 Findings.....</b>	<b>37</b>

<b>6.5 Reliability and validity .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>6.6 Recommendation.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>7 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	

## **Tables**

Table1: The impacts of events (adapted from Allen et al. 2010, 61)

## **Graphs**

Graph1: Tourism growth forecast by the year 2020 (adapted from the global market for sport tourism, 2012)

GRAPH 2. Views of the sport center and surroundings from the tallest ski jump hill  
 (adapted from urheilukeskus / sports center Lahti 2

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, tourists travel long distances, chooses among thousands of destinations to reach satisfaction for their motivations. Today's tourist's motivations have became more sophisticated, that means that tourism has changed to involve different patterns as a result of a variety of physical and cultural attractions possessed by different places which appeal to people with different backgrounds, tastes, interests, needs and desires. New forms of tourism appear continuously as to reach satisfaction of tourists. According to Gibson (2002 22) the interest on sport related tourism has been of growing interest as a tourism product as well as an academic discipline. Today, sports tourism is among the world's most preferable leisure experience. Despite growing interest in sports tourism, there is still the need for a better understanding of the nature, impacts and inter relationship of sport and tourism (Gibson 2002, 22).

This thesis seeks to look into the impact and the role sporting activities plays in the growth of tourism in a country like Finland where there are so many various sporting activities organised annually. Also, the recent boom of sport relating tourism which has taken over the old fashion tourism such as beach holidays and travelling for fun, means investor should not be afraid to invest in this field, thus there is a need to look into this. Moreover, this thesis will concentrate on the region of Lahti, which host one of the most popular sporting even in Finland known as the Lahti ski Games. It is also important to know how the Finnish law looks into these issues or support sport tourism.

Sport tourism is a growing sector within both the tourism and the sport industry and it also contribute a lot to the tourism development of a destination. As such, the aim of this thesis is to look into some of the contribution sport event can add in the development of tourism in a destination and also come up with suitable recommendation to further boost the tourism capabilities of this region. For this research, the city of Lahti was chosen as a case study because of its sports tourism capabilities and the impact this sport event has left on the city.

This research has been divided into three key parts so as to ease understanding and clarity. These three parts are the introduction, theoretical part and the empirical part. The introduction gives background information about the topic, discusses the aim and objectives. The theoretical part gives a general over view of sport tourism, the different types of sport tourism, definition of key terms, and also discusses the impact of sport tourism to tourism development in a place. The final part which is the empirical part deals with the research method. In analysing the data for this thesis, the semi structure interview method was used which is a form of qualitative research method.

## 2 DURABILITY OF THE SPORT TOURISM INDUSTRY

This chapter focuses on defining the various sectors of sport tourism from different scholars' and organizational points of view. It also discusses how tourism has grown statistically with respect to human movement and mobility within Europe, Africa, America and Asia. It briefly explains the characteristics of tourism, while also shedding more light on the operating sector of the tourism industry, with the main point being sport tourism.

### 2.1 Sport

The definition of this term has proven to be a very controversial issue amongst researchers and experts. Some experts insist that coming out with a general definition which will cover all the aspects of sport will be impossible "since sport is a socially constructed activity that has varied across historical eras, societies and culture" (Brent & Daryl 2004, 3). Still, expert have tried to link sport with different kinds of activity such as bull fighting, which other expert criticize it saying that bull fighting is not a sporting contests since it is not competitive (Brent & Daryl, 2004, 3.).

Thus coming out with a generally accepted meaning has basically placed researchers and experts on two sides. However though, one of the definition widely accepted as the true definition of sport is that of Weeds who defines sports as "some form of activity, being it formal or informal, competitive or recreational, or actively, passively or vicariously participated in which also involves other people as competitors or co-participants" (Weeds 2008, 27).

Whenever people think of the idea of sport, their first thought is of some kind of physical activity that can be practiced in group or individually. Well, their thinking is not wrong but there are other features of sport that also counts. According to Hinch and Higham, in addition to physical activities, there should also clear cut rules and regulation governing the sporting activity (Hinch & Higham, 2011, 18).

Also, another formidable definition was put forward by McPherson, Curtis & Joy, (1989, 15) who also argues that sport must be something competitive and in the form of a contest with participant aiming to come out victorious. Unfortunately though, whenever we talk of sport like this, it only makes one to think of professional sport done by professional athlete whereas this same features can be seen in sport done for recreational purposes.

Despite all the discrepancies, this term was adequately given a universal definition which was widely accepted by most expert and researchers it was defined as “a social, economic and cultural phenomenon arising from the unique interactions of activities people and places” (Weeds 2008, 28). This definition was widely accepted since it portrays sports tourism as an entity on its own rather than it depending on sport or tourism for its definition. Even though, he listed similar features of sport tourism like the others he went ahead to say that sport can be done either passively, actively or vicariously. Considering this statement means that spectators are somehow participating in the sporting activities even though they are not actively taking part in the competition.

Still, the issuer of creating a link between sport and tourism still persist amongst researchers. According to the United nation World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) tourism is defined as “the movement of people to countries and places outside their usual environment” (UNWTO 2010). More meaning was added to this statement by Hinch & Hingham (2011, 19) that for a person to be considered a sport tourist, he or she must return back to his home after a certain period. They also stress that sport is an integral part of tourism (Hinch & Hingham 2011, 20). This judgement further throws more light on the question of what sport tourism is. Looking at this from a general point of view, one can easily define sports tourism as, a form of tourism whereby one travel out of his normal environment for the sole purpose of doing sport. This definition is not all that wrong but it has its own short comings. According to Weeds, (2008, 28) who added that spectator as well as those participating in the sporting event are considered as tourists. Thus someone who travels to a place to participate in a football competition and someone who travels to that same place as spectator is also considered as sport tourists as well. However, this view was not widely accepted as Hinch and Hingham wanted to place a distinction between tourists and athletes and spectators travelling for a

sporting event. They argue that these groups do not have the same reasons for travelling. According to them, tourists “participate in sport while travelling” and on the other hand, spectators and athlete pursue a passion or are competing to win ( Hinch & Hingham, 2011, 33).

Other researchers who have a different opinion on what sport tourism really is, are Deery, Jago & Fredline, who argue that the definition of sport only include competitive sport and all other forms of sport should be either recreational or for leisure purpose. Following this line of thinking, they further argue that sport tourism is basically sport event tourism and it is only focused on sports that are competitive. ( Deery et al 2004, 22).

## **2.2 Categorising sport tourism**

There have been many arguments on the different category of sport tourism by experts. One of the most widely accepted categorisation of sport tourism is that of Gibson who categorised sport tourism into three different forms. That is, event, active and nostalgia sport tourism. (Gibson 2002, 30)

### **2.2.1 Event sport tourism**

According to Gibson, event sport tourism involves individuals or a tourist who undertakes trips with the main aim of viewing sporting activities. So many researches and attention have been carried out in this field of tourism especially on hallmark event such as the Olympic Games. In event sports tourism, most people concentrate on visiting mega events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, thereby neglecting smaller events which also have huge potentials of attracting tourists. However, studies have proven that hosting such sport events have mixed impact on the community (Gibson 2002, 30). For instance, Gibson stated that, studies have proven that about 70% of the tourists and spectators who participates in this sport event comes from the area where this

event is hosted, making researchers to doubt if professional sport is actually a form of sport tourism (Gibson 2002, 30).

### **2.2.2 Active sport tourism**

Active sport tourism refers to those who participate physically in the sporting activities being either competitive or non competitive while travelling. A number of researchers have been carrying out investigations in this field of sport tourism but still, Gibson noted that research in active sport tourism is “scarce, usually descriptive and typically a theoretical” (Gibson, 1998). However, Gibson used the term ‘sport lover’ to describe those persons who will want to physically participate in sporting activities even while on business trips or leisure trip. Some other participant are also motivated to travel to certain places so as to take part in sporting activity so as to enhance their sporting ability, compete against rival or just for passion (Hinch & Higham, 42, 2009). Examples of active sport tourism consist of: Skiing, bicycle touring, adventure tourism, active participation in events such as the masters game or other sporting tournaments (Hinch & Hingham 42 2009)

### **2.2.3 Nostalgia sports tourism**

In his book according to Gibson’s classification, the least most researched branch of sport tourism is the nostalgia sport tourism. This form of sports tourism involves people who visit famous sporting places, sporting hall of fame, sport museum or meeting with famous sport personnel or taking a sport themed vacation on cruise ships or playing alongside top sport stars at fantasy camps (Gibson 2002, 31). This form of sport tourism has experienced a recent growth in recent years with many people interested in visiting famous clubs in Europe such as Manchester United, F.C Barcelona, Chelsea F.C and Real Madrid F.C. With the increasing interest in nostalgia sport tourism there have been the rise in the establishment of museums such as the national football museums in Preston, Wimbledon tennis

museum, the new market horse racing museums and the British Golf museum opened in St Andrews in 1990. These places are among the top places of interest for nostalgia sport tourists (Hinch & Hingham 58, 2009)

Also Weeds has made tremendous effort to categorised sports tourism into different categories. On his part he categorised sports tourism into four different parts. These four different parts are: tourism with sport content, sports training, sport event and luxury sport tourism. He describes sports tourism with sport content as that type of tourism whereby sport is not the main reason for the trip (Weed 2008, 12). For instance, the tourist might just find out that there is a sporting activity taking place in the destination where he is so he just decides to attend it or he might just decide to visit a famous sporting stadium or facility in the destination just for the fact that he is at that destination.

Contrary to sport tourism with sport content, sport participation tourism on the other hand pays more attention to sport as the main reason for the trip (Weed, 2008, 15). This includes travelling to a destination for playing golf, football or for skiing. Also sport can be a means of transport, that is if the tourists decides they will be riding their bike to the destination or go to the destination by kayaking, they are actively participating in sport relating tourism (Weed, 2008, 15)

Furthermore, sport training refers to holidays where the main reason for the trip is for acquiring a knowledge or training in a certain aspect or field of sports (Weed 2008,17). Weed went further ahead to subdivide this category into three different categories.

The first in his list is travelling somewhere to learn about a sport, an example of this can be a trip to Lahti during the winter to learn how to ski or a trip to Australia to learn how to dive. The second category comprised of those groups of tourists who already have the skills in a particular sport but are still interested to acquire more skills in that sport again. For instance a tourist who already knows very well how to swim but will still takes part in a tourist swimming course so as to improve his swimming skills. The last but not the least in his category is luxury sports tourism which pays more attention on the quality of the facilities where the sport is done rather than on the participants or how the sport is done (Weed 2008, 21).

This form of tourism has features such as high quality facilities, luxurious accommodation and high quality services (Weed 2008, 21).

Another brilliant idea in the division of sports tourism was also brought forward by Gammon and Robinson (Gammon & Robinson, 1997, 10). They talk about sport tourism as either being hard or soft. Their views of sports tourism are very similar to Weeds sport participation tourism. For them, hard tourism involves passively or actively participating in a competitive sport while on the other hand, soft tourism is participating in a sport for recreational purposes. According to their definition, hard sport tourism can be seen as something secondary that enriches the experience of the athletes while soft sport tourism in his part is not simply planned but happens coincidentally, for instance like playing a round of tennis just because a tennis court is found in the destination (Gammon & Robinson 1997, 11).

To conclude, it can be said that sport is a structured, competitive physical activity that has rules and that can be done either alone or in groups. Sport tourism then is a form of tourism where sport usually has an active part when it comes to planning and implementing a trip. A sport tourist is a person who takes part in sport by being either a participant or a spectator. Furthermore, sport tourism can be divided into different types according to its importance for the reasons of travelling. In this research sport tourism is understood to include competitive sport and events as well as leisure and recreational sport.

### 3 DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT TOURISM

Nowadays, a large number of people visit sporting venues either as participants or as spectators. With sport tourism regarded as the heart of leisure tourism with sporting activities being of great interest to most leisure tourists, there is the need to examine what factors have influenced this growth over the centuries. The interrelationship between sport and tourism can be traced far back to the ancient Greeks who started the Olympic Games. From that time onward, sports tourism has been rapidly growing. This growth is greatly influence by the notion people have about staying fit and healthy. From the ancient times till now, some factors have been impacting the growth of sport tourism positively and one of such factor is industrialisation. “One of the key constraints on the development of sport tourism prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the lack of suitable transport” (Weed & Bull, 2004, 5). This statement clearly explained how industrialization has impacted sport tourism; it has lead to infrastructural developments of different means of transportation as well as developing and creating new sporting destination. It is due to this industrialisation that sport tourism is regarded as the biggest sector leisure tourism.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a major boost to sport tourism with the coming of the reduction of working weeks. This meant that people had more time to travel on holiday and by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, people got four or five weeks holiday per year. From then onward, leisure time and holidays were almost regarded as a necessity, “it is a crucial element of modern life that travel and holidays are necessary” (Weed & Bull 2004, 55) Also of important, was the fact that sport was viewed as a way of fitness, health and achievements. Many people got concerned about their health and their physical appearance and thus decided to go on holiday with sport as the main purpose of their trips (Weed & Bull 2004, 55).

### **3.1 New trends and interests in sport tourism**

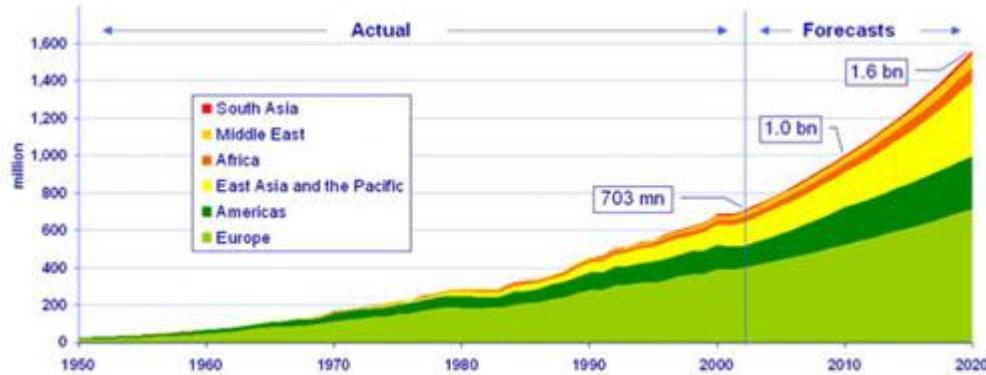
The current interest in sport tourism is not something new, it has been noticed the interest in sport tourism span far back to the time of the ancient Roman Empire who used to organised the Olympic Games. In our times, the ever increasing demand for sport tourism have placed it on number on the list of most preferable leisure activities in developed countries. New investigation has indicated that sport tourism contributes between 1 to 2 % of the gross domestic products (GDP) of developed countries and also contributes a huge percentage of 4 to 6% on tourism products. According to investigation and research carried out it was noticed that 55% of all Germans tourists trip are sport related trips while 52% of all Dutch outbound tourists has some key sporting activities. Also, across the world in Canada, an investigation carried out in 1998 showed that 37.3% tourist trips were sport related. Again, in South Africa, sport tourism makes up about 4% of the domestic tourism market. Similarly, in Australia, investigations carried out by the Bureau of Tourism research in 2000 showed that 12,900,000 domestic trip undertaken by nationals were sport related (Ritchie & Daryl 2, 2004).

Thus as we can see above sport tourism has received applause from both domestic and international organisation bringing to light its importance to tourism.

### **3.2 Growth in sport tourism**

World travel and tourism accounted for 5.890 billion dollar of economic activity in 2008 and sport tourism is considered of being a great influence in this growth. It was also documented that an increase of 9.9% in 2008 to 10.5% in 2018 in the GDP of travel and tourism will not be a surprise. It is also important to know that tourists who are interested in sport tourism tend to spend more, stay longer and also stimulate other tourism sector. Sport tourism growth can be witnessed in the case of Barcelona whose tourists visit increased times two ten years after it hosted the 1992 Olympics. Since then, Barcelona rose from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> most attractive European city all thanks to it hosting of the 1992 Olympics. All the way to

Australia, Sydney recorded an astonishing 1.2 billion pounds of business opportunities after it was the host of the 2000 Olympic Games. This recent growth in sport tourism can be attributed to continued interest people have on sporting activities and events. This interest in sport is slowly replacing the old pattern of sea and sun vacation. (The global market place for sport tourism 2012)



Graph 1 Tourism growth forecast by the year 2020 (adapted from the global market for sport tourism, 2012)

Above is a diagram forecasting the growth of sport tourism by the year 2020. This diagram suggest that by the year 2020 most continent will be making an annual profit of 1.6billion dollars in sport tourism with Europe being the major destination for sport lovers (the global market place for sport tourism, 2012).

### 3.3 Sport tourism markets

The sport tourism market is a distinct segment in the global tourism market. A detailed study of sport tourism destinations has revealed that there is a vast number of specialised sport tourism markets to explore, thus sport tourism market can be divided into distinct markets such as winter sport tourism, water sport tourism and adventure sport tourism. Also, the use of sport to attract specific tourist market has speeded considerably recently giving rise to many national tourism organisations to use sport as a means of attracting tourists. According to

Hingham, “the tourism authority of Thailand promotes diving and golf as part of the tourism product” (Hingham, 2005, 46). Thus this has seen a boost in Thailand’s tourism output with Thailand attracting about 40 000 international diving tourists per year and with golf tourism contributing about 5% of Thailand’s tourism arrival annually (Hingham 2005, 46).

It is also important to note that people have different motivations when it comes to participation in sport tourism. Maier and Weber (1993) contributed immensely in dividing sport tourism participation into three distinct demand groups. The first group is made up of professional athlete who lays more emphasis on training facilities and competition. The second group consist of tourists who participate in sport tourism for health reasons or to stay fit. The last but not the least in this grouping consists of spectators of sporting events, coaches and journalists (Maier & Weber 1993, 38). Grouping sport tourism participants into these different groups makes it easier to understand the many markets sport tourism and destinations are aiming at.

Also it is very important to separate sport tourism market into group so as to facilitate easy understanding of the concept. So, sport tourism market can be separated into two categories into those who participate actively and those who participate passively. As a matter of fact, active sport tourists travel so as to participate in physical activity and might choose a particular destination due to the quality of the facility or event it offers while on the other hand, passive sport tourists are merely spectators. There is also the possibility of sporting event to attract tourists who did not actually visit the location to participate in the sporting event. For instance, they might also attend a sporting event because it is exclusive in nature and is something that only some people have the possibility to experience (Hinch & Higham 2011, 52).

Thus it can be concluded that sport tourism markets can be categorised in different ways, but categorising them into active and passive sport tourists is the easiest way. It is very important for destination marketers to keep in mind that different markets are looking for different things and that sometimes sport tourism can be done so as to enrich the holiday experience but may not be the primary reason for the trip.

### **3.4 Evolution of the sport and tourism industry**

According to Hingham, the recent boost of sport and tourism over the centuries are very similar in many ways. Both sport and tourism have developed very fast and have turned out to become global and social phenomenon amongst tourists and have contributed massively in the development of most economies. (Hingham, 2005) Sport tourism witnessed tremendous growth and awareness between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century's (1880-1910). New rules and regulations were set down which helped transform sport such as the codification of rules, the development and regulation of competition, specialization of players rule, measurement of performance, and the maintenance of record of achievement (Hingham 2005, 4). These changes and development helped a great deal to improve the competitiveness and quality of recreational and professional sports. Then, this improvement and development was limited to certain sports like the English rugby and baseball league and the American football. But recently, there have been the emergence of a rich legacy of sport over the years mostly due to the accomplishment of prominent sport teams, for example the Brazilian sport teams or performance of famous individual athletes such as the famous boxer Mohamed Ali or basketball player Michael Jordan which has helped boost the awareness and motivated many others to developed interest in sport. (Hingham 2005, 4)

The second stage of the dynamic changes in sport and tourism was witnessed with the recent rise and proliferation of the media industry. In his book, Hingham presents the critical analysis of David Halberstam of the fashion of sport tourism that developed in the 1970s and 1980s. Halberstam focused most of his interest on cable television and the broadcast of live sport by ESPN in 1978. He also lays emphasis on the growth of commercials and the media's interest in sport and the emergence of new form of sport celebrity. At the end, it was discovered that the transformation of modern sport was a result of Halberstam's analysis and his book

on the biography on famous basketball player Michael Jordan which led to the professionalization of many discipline of sport at this time (Hingham 2005, 5).

Also, the restructuring of sport so as to increase its competitiveness in the entertainment industry have had great impacts on the tourism industry. Thus there have been some changes aimed at modifying some rules so as to suit public opinions. Sometimes, sport is restructured temporary so as to create an opportunity to improve the quality of media presentation as well as maximize commercial revenue. According to Hingham, “the supporter, spectator, the media and merchandise and market associated with some sport has expanded beyond the location that individual athletes or teams represent in competition” (2005, 5). Also, some sport competitions has attracted a wide audience due to certain changes and improvement in some of its rule thus making it more interesting and entertaining. As a consequence, Hingham quoted Bell and Campbell who made a very important statement regarding the global phenomenon of sport tourism. They stated that “its drama, its personalities, its worldwide appeal means sport is the new Hollywood” (Hingham 2005, 5). Also, on their part, Standeven and De Knop describe this developments and changes in sport tourism as the “sportification of society” (Hingham, 2005, 5).

To conclude, as a result of all this development in sport tourism, the tourism industry has witness outstanding growth especially due to the fact that some of this sport activities and facilities (stadiums, sport museums, FIFA world cup) have been transformed into desirable and well sought after tourisms products. Also, Hingham noted that athletes or sport stars in some cases can also be seen as attraction (Hingham 2005, 5). Furthermore, the notion of sport tourism as a tourism product may provide sport managers new marketing opportunities for their team and sport. Sport can also contribute with varied functions of relevance to a tourist destination. For instance, in spite of being an attraction or activity, sport may also contribute to the distinctive nature of a destination. It can also be used as a medium for the expression of culture at a destination. In his book, Hingham also noted the ideas of Andrews and Jackson (2002) who wrote that the early period in the development of sport tourism “witnessed the transformation of sporting celebrities from role models into powerful, cultural, financial and media figures and image creators” (Hingham 2005, 5). He also noted the writings of the British

tourism authority who wrote that sport is fast becoming an important tool for destination marketing. (Hingham 2005, 5).

### **3.5 Sport tourism places**

Most of the time, people tend to confuse between the terms 'place' and 'destination', thinking that the two terms are the same. But as we are going to see in this thesis, these two terms are completely different from each other. According to Hinch & Hingham,( 2011, 103) sport tourism places can be distinguished into two different kinds which are 'peripheral and central locations'.

Peripheral sport tourism places refer to those places which have natural potentials and resources to attract sport tourism lovers such as rivers, mountains and ski slopes. These natural resources are further enhanced by building infrastructural facilities in these places like hotels or restaurants to make it more appealing to sport tourists (Hinch & Hingham 2011, 84). Central locations on its parts are places which are easily accessible by tourists or travellers. Good examples of a central location are stadia and sport centres located in the heart of cities (Hinch & Hingham 2011, 84)

Peripheral locations have the tendency to attract active sport tourists due to their natural landscape. Such locations are advantageous because of their unique identity to a particular place which then attract active sport tourist. However , one of the drawbacks of peripheral location according to Hinch and Hingham is that some location with very attractive natural resources may be so remote and inaccessible that very limited amount of tourists visit it. Also some of these locations are also affected by climate change and global warming which renders them accessible only seasonally (Hinch & Hingham 2011, 97, 98).

Compared to peripheral sport tourism location, central sport tourism location stand a better chance of attracting tourists. According to Hinch and Hingham, "a central sport locations that is situated adjacent to city services and entertainment areas

have become an important aspect in the planning of sport centres" ( Hinch & Hingham 2011, 91). Eventually, it will be a wise decision for sporting centers to be built in city centres, very close to shopping malls and leisure areas so that tourist can get everything in the same location.

In addition, some places can sometimes be associated with specific sporting activities (Hinch & Hingham, 2011, 113) for example Brazil can be identified with football. A place can be identified with sports if it has many successful sporting teams, for instance the city of Manchester is famous for its two famous football clubs, that is Manchester City football club and Manchester United Football club. Barcelona is also a very famous sporting place because of the very successful football club Barcelona Football club. Some places can also be recognised as important sporting places through some sporting legends and heroes. For example Argentina can be identified with sports through heroes like Maradona and Lionel Messi (Hinch & Hingham 2011, 91)

However, it is very important to note that the potentials of locations can be developed so as to attract more visitors. Marketers should also bear in mind that for example if a peripheral location is developed too much it might loss of its natural beauty and will not be very much attractive to active sport tourist leading to limited amount of tourists visit. Likewise, if central location is over developed to cover all sporting activities, tourists might tend to think it is too much (Hinch & Hingham 2011, 102).

## 4 AN OVERVIEW OF THE CITY OF LAHTI AND ITS SPORTING POTENTIALS

Lahti is internationally recognised as the winter sport city. It is the host city of the national world cup event known as the Lahti ski games which has been hosted in this city since 1923. The Lahti sport centre is also recognised as “the world’s best winter sports venues” (the international ski federation 2013) and has already been host to the Nordic ski championship six times. Today, the Lahti ski games is recognised as the biggest ski games in the world and it also attracts tens of thousands of tourist to boost the tourism capability of this area. Because of the Lahti ski games, this city has become a very important destination for winter sport lovers drawing tens of thousands of tourists to it annually. This has made this region an important tourist destination (the international ski federation 2013)

### 4.1 Sport tourism in Lahti

Lahti is situated in the south of Finland and 100km north of Helsinki and is accessible by road and by rail. Lahti is a comparatively large region, having a land mass of 154.4 kilometer square and is also home to about two hundred thousand inhabitants. Lahti is also the fifth largest region in Finland and also forms part of the Helsinki metropolitan region. This city is also the gateway to the Finnish Lake District and is also home to the Vesijärvi Lake which also provides the possibility of water sport (the international ski federation 2013.)

All around the city of Lahti there is evidence of its sporting potentials when one takes a look at the number of tourists visiting the region. In the city of Lahti most of the tourist attractions are sport related. For example, the ski museums and the sport centre is amongst the most popular tourism attraction in this region. The ski museum is located on the foot of the ski hills and contains information about Finnish cross country skiing. Other important sport related attraction in Lahti is the

ski jump simulator where visitors and tourist can try out a ski jump experience (the international ski federation 2013)

#### **4.1.1 The Lahti sport center**

Amongst these sport related attractions, the most important one is the sport center. This sport center has gained international recognition after having successfully hosted six championships in the Nordic ski event and the annual Lahti ski games. It hosted the world championship in skiing as early as 1926. This sport center is made up of a skiing stadium, a football stadium, athletics stadium and the iconic ski jump hills. The ski stadium alone has a carrying capacity of 30 000 spectators while the athletic stadium has the carrying capacity of 30 000 spectators. On its parts, the tallest of the ski hills is 133 meters high and on both sides of this hill, there are two hills of 50 meters and 70 meters high. There is an elevator on the top of the highest hill which can be reached by an elevator for tourist to get a fascinating view of the sport center and the town (Sport center Lahti 2012.)



GRAPH 2. Views of the sport center and surroundings from the tallest ski jump hill  
(adapted from urheilukeskus / sports center Lahti 2013)

Another very interesting aspect about the sporting center is that it offers a wide variety of activities at the same place with no transportation worries. For instance, it offers services such as dining, lodging, auxiliary training and health services and activities like ski jumping, skiing, track and field sports, ice hockey and football all year round. During summer, the sport center becomes top attraction for football lovers as it is the home stadium for the city's football team FC Lahti. The ski jumping stadium becomes in summer time training ground for ski jumpers. Also very important, is the fact that Finland's first full length sport hall and trade fair halls are located in this sport center. These halls offer the possibilities for trade fairs, exhibitions, meetings, entertainments events and concerts. There is also a restaurant housing about 350 customers in connection with the halls. There is also a sauna and meeting rooms for 6 to 10 people in these halls (Urheilukeskus / Sport center, 2013.)

#### **4.1.2 The Lahti ski games**

Every year, tens of thousands of people flock to the lake side city of Lahti for the annual Lahti ski games. This event brings together athletes from all over the world to Lahti to participate in this annual event. The first of its kind was organised in 1923 and since then it has been held 88 times in Lahti. The idea to start this game came from Lauri Pihkala who wanted to bring the game to Lahti because of Lahti's unique terrain and its central location. The games are organised every year in March and last for three to four days during which participants and athletes take part in cross-country skiing, ski jumping and Nordic combined. Another popular aspect of the Lahti ski games is the fire works on Saturday night which have become an important highlight of the games (Lahti ski Games 2013). Lahti has also been the host of Nordic world ski championship six times with the most recent of this event organised in 2001. The next Nordic world championship will be organised again in Lahti in 2017 and according to Lahti (2017, 2012), Lahti will be experiencing the highest amount of tourists and visitors ever recorded, with expected amount of tourists reaching one million.

In addition to the above important sporting activity in the region of Lahti, there is also the Mesilä ski center in Hallola which is known as the main ski center in Southern Finland and is visited in winter by roughly 150,000 visitors. This ski center can boast of 10 ski slopes, 10 lifts and 70 kilometers of cross-country skiing paths. This center also offers ski training, equipment rental, a golf course, a camping and also has a restaurant and a café (Mesilä 2012).

As well, Vierumäki Leisure Park is another attractive tourist destination in the region of Lahti. It is considered as Finland's most versatile leisure centre, full of action, sports and life. There is also the prospect of having fitness as well as wellness training in this center. Also, they offer meeting and conference opportunity to its customers. What makes this center popular is its sport institute which is regarded as the number one sport institute in Finland. It is a perfect destination for professional. It also organises training courses for coaches irrespective of the kind of sport. An extra important feature of this center is the international Ice hockey center of excellence, which arranges training camps as well as educational events (Vierumäki 2011-2012).

As can be seen above, Lahti is a remarkable sport destination blessed with numerous sport facilities to attract both professional and amateur athletes. Again, acting as host city to the famous Lahti ski game has given it the reputation to be able to attract sport tourists.

#### **4.2 Marketing Lahti as a sports tourism destination**

Before the year 2004, destination marketing in Lahti was still at the primary stage. There was no real destination marketing and the only information available for tourists was the very basic service information. By the year 2004, some dramatic changes were witnessed in Lahti in the field of destination marketing. Lahti Travel Oy was founded in 2004 with its main goal being to continue marketing the Lahti

region and also to sell the products that they are marketing. In 2013, Lahti Travel Oy and other smaller destination marketing companies in Lahti decided to come together to form the Lahti development company. The city of Lahti and seven other municipalities in the region own this new company. This new company had an added task in that it also promotes the region as a place to move to and live in for people to promote in the Lahti region (LADEC 2013).

As mentioned above, the objective of the Lahti development company is to sell tourism services and to encourage people to move and live in the region. The sales this company makes are distributed into three different groups, that is meeting and business sales, event sales such as leisure and sport events and the last group which consists of day trips to the region. This company markets their business by providing catalogues, brochures, maps and other tourist information to customers. However, most of their advertisement and information are now available on their online website rather than on brochures and catalogue. Also an important decision was also made that the company will concentrate more on marketing of sport and other leisure events instead of selling their products (LADEC 2013).

Hence, Lahti region is tediously working hard to market the whole region clearer and better than before and that could be seen as their most important responsibility. Their effort in marketing this region has been successful so far with the company making a turnover of 2.3 million euro by 2013 with a staff of just 13 people (Lahti region 2012.)

#### **4.3 Strengths and weaknesses of Lahti as a sport tourism destination**

In understanding why Lahti is considered a sporting city, it will be very important to look at the strengths and weaknesses Lahti has.

#### 4.3.1 Strengths

The strategic location of Lahti plays an important role in attracting tourist to the region. Its close proximity to Helsinki–Vantaa airport makes it very accessible. In addition, Lahti is also easily accessible by road and by rail and one of the main roads in Finland passes through Lahti. Thus, we can rightly say Lahti is reachable from all directions. With such good transport system, it will be stress free for tourists who are planning to come to the region. Also, the fact that the city's rail and bus station are located at the heart of the city gives the city as well as the sport tourist an added advantage in that the sport centers and other sport facilities in the region is just a walk away from the bus and rail station (Lahti 2017).

Lahti has a reputation for successfully hosting many major national and international events such as the annual Lahti Ski games and the world ski championship, which it is going to host again in 2017. This reputation of successfully hosting major events, has made Lahti region to be recognised as “offering world class facilities” for winter sport lovers (Lahti 2007.) Consequently, Lahti has gained experience in organizing and managing major sporting events and the fact that some of these events are hosted annually has boosted Lahti's reputation as a sport-loving town. The city council of Lahti as well pays great emphasis to sport tourism. Thus, the Mayor of Lahti said,

Over the years, our city has made substantial investments to keep the facilities of big sport events in top shape and fully up to date. We will do so also in the future. For 2017 world ski championship we are able to provide the athletes and other visitors even more enhanced competition venue in Lahti sport center (Lahti 2017.)

Statements like this give the city more credential as a sport loving city.

Furthermore, another important strength that portrays Lahti as a sport tourist destination is its sport center, which provides “world class facilities for all events at the same place” (Lahti 2017.) This sport center is very diverse and some of its facilities can be used for more than one sporting activity For instance, during winter, the ski jumps hills are used for the winter game whereas during summer, the bottoms of the hills are used as outdoor swimming pools. The same thing applies to the cross-country skiing tracks, which are used during the summer as

running tracks (Urheilukeskus / Sport center, 2013). This diversity of facilities makes Lahti an important tourist destination all year round and makes Lahti a very strong contender for bidding and hosting major international events since they already have top class facilities. Thus, when Matti Sundberg the President of the Finnish ski association, was asked why Lahti won the bid for the 2017 International ski championship, he said, "We had to quickly adapt to a new situation. It was a juxtaposition of an emotional plea against our fact-based rationale and real capabilities to organise a successful event" (Helsinki Sanomat, 2012.) This statement by this important sport authority shed more light on the sport facilities this city possesses. This sport center can also house forty five thousand spectators (45,000) daily.(Helsinkin Sanomat 2012)

Thus, we can rightly say that Lahti is a major sport city if not for anything but for the fact that it has successfully hosted the Lahti ski games 88 times and the international ski championship 6 times and will be hosting it for the 7<sup>th</sup> time in 2017. With such reputation we can boastfully say that Lahti is a very active sport tourist destination.

#### **4.3.2 Weaknesses**

Despite the fact that Lahti is well known as a sport city in Finland, it is not correspondingly recognized as such abroad. This is a setback faced by many Finnish cities but it takes time to make your city to become popular. Lahti has the potentials to be recognised as a sport city all around the world but very little of that potential has been exploited so far. However, those tourists that make the effort to go to Lahti generally do so because they are interested in sports and are aware that Lahti is one of those cities in Finland, where winter sports are very vital. When it comes to such event, there is usually clearly defined focus group of people who are interested in the sport and will consider travelling to cities like Lahti to see an event. The subject here lies on how to make Lahti be as attractive as possible to get regular tourists to make the decision to visit Lahti.

As a result to the fact that Lahti is not very popular outside of Finland, the number of tourists who in the end visit the city ends up being small. Statistics have shown that those tourists who are more likely to visit Lahti are mostly Russian and German-speaking tourist mostly from Germany and Austria who mainly visit Lahti to see the sport venues and maybe buy a ticket for an event. However, this number is annually very small and it is likely that those tourists do not even show in the tourists statistic. Big events such as the Nordic ski championship attract visitors to Lahti but of those visitors usually only the athletes and crew stay in the city for a longer time. Spectators merely tend to come for the event and leave very little money in the region.

One of the weaknesses Lahti has is related to the service provided for tourists who come for sports event. As a norm, sport tourist will like to gain more knowledge of what to do apart from participating in the event, what to see and what to eat, very basic things like that. However, that is something that is very badly handled in Lahti at the moment. Many of the event organisers do not have any organisation on sites or restaurant offers and the visitors are likely to leave the city feeling that it is an unwelcoming and badly organised place. Of course, the quality of service and information is not only tied to sport tourism in the region in general. Providing basic information on the destination is vital for tourist and not telling sport fans about all the possibilities Lahti has to offer, is a wasted potential.

It was previously started that the location of Lahti is one of the greatest strengths the city has. On the other hand, the location is also one of the biggest weaknesses. It is very easy to travel to Lahti from all around Finland, especially from the southern part of the country. Unfortunately, it is also just as easy for them to leave. Thanks to the good transport connection, many visitors tend to think that they will rather spend the day in the city and return to their home in the evening instead of staying overnight in Lahti. While the city can do nothing about its location, the fact that Lahti is not being marketed as sport city worth staying in before and after an event is a significant weakness. As mentioned, the city has the tendency not to boast about the sites and venue it has for the public to use and rather keeps them as some sort of secret that you will only find out if you are willing to do extensive research (Jenni 2013, 35.)

This brings us to yet another weakness of Lahti, namely that the finding of updated and relevant information on the city and the sport there is challenging. There is a website aimed at visitors available in Finnish, English and Russian. Nevertheless, a lot of the content is based on "read more" type of instruction and finding the information you are looking for is hard. Moreover, getting opinion from the visitors regarding the sporting activities or event in Lahti is complicated. Browsing popular attractions, rating sites such as tripadvisor highlight the problem as only sport related sights found in Lahti; there is the ski museum, leaving the potential visitor thinking there is nothing more to see in the city (tripadvisor 2013). As mentioned, if one is not able to get information on the go either on ones smart phone or tablet, a tourist is likely to think there is no information on the subject there were searching. Online and mobile presence is increasingly important in this day and age and currently it is one of the most substantial weaknesses Lahti has (Jenni 2013, 36.)

Hence, compared to other major sport cities like London, Lahti is not well known outside the boarders of Finland and does not attract large numbers of foreign visitors. One of the reasons for this low turnout of tourists is because the city is not well branded as a place of sport abroad and it is difficult for tourist visiting Finland to associate Lahti with anything. There is a lot of potential to market Lahti during and through sport event, but that potential is not being use to the city advantage. Additionally, the service offers to those sport tourist who eventually go to Lahti are lacking in quality and partly in quantity. While the sport events itself may be well organised and the needs of those participating has been taken into consideration, the audience has been ignored and they are not aware of anything the city could offer. This is largely because finding relevant information on Lahti is difficult. Lastly, the location of the city is not adventurous as it is just as easy to leave, as it is easy to go. Never the less, despite this weaknesses, the yearly turnout of sport tourists who tend to come to Lahti to witness these sporting events keep increasing. According to Lahti 2017, the city of Lahti is expecting a turnout of 1 million visitors in the upcoming International ski championship schedule to take place in 2017 (Jenni 2013, 36).

## 5 IMPACTS OF THE LAHTI WINTER GAMES

Whenever events or festivals are organised, the effects of these events and festivals are always being felt on the city and these impacts are always both positive and negative. It is therefore left on the organisers to maximise the effect of the positive impacts and keep the negative impacts as low as possible. One of the ways that organisers and managers can maximise the positive impact of an event is to first develop and maximize all the foreseeable positive impacts and counter potential negative impacts. By applying this method, managers and organisers will be able to maximize and better manage the positive impacts leading to a very successful event.

It is also important to note that sport tourism brings about economic benefit to the host community since most of the athletes and spectators of the event are expected to spend money on accommodation, food and beverages, transport and other facilities. Thus the impacts of sport tourism are mostly calculated in terms of its input towards the urban revival of the host city. However, the ‘triple bottom line’ of social, economic and environmental goals/ measures should not be underestimated because government policies commonly acknowledge them. For instance, social and cultural benefits play a vital part in the calculation of an event’s overall impact. Underneath are the major impacts of events on a host community and these impacts will be discussed from both the positive and negative aspects. Below is a table which clearly list out the impacts of event tourism on a destination (Allen, O`Toole, Harris & McDonnel 2010, 60).

Table1: The impacts of events (adapted from Allen et al. 2010, 61)

Impacts of events	Positive impacts	Negative impacts
Social and cultural impacts	Shared experience	Community alienation
	Revitalization of tradition	Manipulation of community
	Building of community pride	Negative community image
	Validation of community group	Bad behaviour
	Increased community participation	Substance abuse
	Introduction of new and challenging ideas	Social dislocation
	Expansion of cultural perspectives	Loss of amenities
Political	International prestige	Risk of event failure
	Improved profile	Misallocation of fund
	Promotion of investment	Lack of accountability
	Social cohesion	Propaganda
	Development of administrative skills	Loss of community ownership and control
Environmental	Showcasing the environment	Environmental damage
	Provision of model for best practicing	Pollution
	Increase environmental awareness	Destruction of heritage
	Infrastructural legacy	Noise disturbance
	Improved transport and communication	Traffic congestion
	Urban transformation and renewal	
Tourism and economic	Destination promotion and increased tourists visit	Community resistance toward tourism
	Extended length of stay	Loss of authenticity
	Job creation	Damage of reputation
	Business opportunity	Exploitation
	Increased tax revenue	Opportunity costs

## 5.1 Economic impacts

One of the main reasons that push organisers to host major events are the economic benefits that the event contribute in the development of the region and event. Hence, one of the most vital economic impacts that have led to the development of sport tourism in Lahti is infrastructural development. Over the years, Lahti has undergone many vital renovations that have strengthened its reputation as a very important sport city. As far back as 1982, the modern track and field stadium was built which added more quality and diversity to the services that Lahti offers (Lahti ski games, 2013.) Also more recently, many infrastructural development have been going on in preparation for the 2017 Nordic ski championship. For instance, the following facilities are being developed according to Lahti 2017,

Development of the competition facilities for the 2017 WSC include new trainers platform / renovation of Judges' tower, profile modification of normal hill including change of Hill Size, competitors' lift for normal hill, Modification of upper level of stands of Ski Jumping Stadium, New multi-level arrangement of the 'Lahti curve' for Cross-Country tracks, new stadium bridge for Cross-Country tracks, extension of wind nets at back of HS130 –hill and new cabling arrangements at the area Lahti 2017).

This continued trend of development is what gives Lahti the reputation it has today and what makes it one of the best sport tourist destinations of its kind (Lahti 2017.)

Another important economic impact of this event is the revenue it generates. This is mostly seen as the main reason why organisers and event managers host event so as to ensure that profit is made from the sales of the goods and the services of the events. Local businesses such as restaurants, hotels and other businesses not related to tourism tend to gain huge financial benefit from the organisation of these events. For instance, according to the Helsingin Sanomat the Nordic ski championship organised in 2001 in Lahti made a profit of 20 million Finnish Mark (FIM). The original expectation of the Finnish ski association was that they were going to make a profit of 15 million FIM but due to the successful planning and organisation of the event, the game drew 355000 fans instead of the expected

300000 fans expected. Also very important, was the fact that this event received a rating of 4.2 on 5 (Helsingin Sanomat 2001). With such profit made, most of the money is re-invested back in Lahti to further boost its already acclaimed reputation and the rating of 4.2 also helped maintain Lahti's reputation as one of the best winter sport destinations (Lahti 2017.)

Another economic impact that helps to boost tourism in Lahti as a result of the winter games organised in the city is the fact that it creates new business opportunities. This new business in turn creates job opportunities for the locals which then provide the sport tourist who come to the region with high quality service which makes those tourists want to come back for more. As a result of Lahti's reputation due to the winter games, there has been the creation of the Lahti Region Development company Ltd (LADEC) which task is to "promotes the region's attractive business environment alongside the region's development and growth, while offering versatile business development services for companies, which cover all stages of a business's life cycle" (LADEC 2013.) This company provides the tourism business in the region with advice and ways to enhance their development and growth, with one of their goals being to develop the region through expertise. Thus it will not be surprising to get one of the best services in this region no doubt Lahti's reputation as a popular sport city keeps on growing.

## **5.2 Socio-cultural impacts**

One of the most outstanding impacts of this event is that the skiing is part of the culture of the people of Lahti. Hence, the look at the winter game as an avenue to demonstrate their culture. Interviewee A in the interview, even mentioned that skiing is something that has been passed down from generation to generation. The natives show their support to this event by giving themselves to work as voluntary workers. This goes a long way to show their passion for the culture. The effect of this is that their culture becomes popular and people get to know about them through the organisation of this game (Interview with interviewee A)

## 6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will look at the suitable research method that will best analyse the results and the findings of this research work.

### 6.1 Research method

Research is an academic discipline and it is very important to clearly define the term or use the term rightly. For a long time, the right definition of research method has been a strong debate topic amongst writer. Some writer tries to define the term from their own point of view but most of the time, their definition does not cover the whole subject matter. To a common man, research simply means the search for knowledge. However, a clear and worthwhile definition of the term research is that given by Veal. He talks about research as a form of discovery that brings into light something, some information or an idea which was previously unknown. Thus according to him, a research is a detailed study of a subject so as to come up with new information or to better understand that subject (Veal 2006, 2).

On the other hand, research methodology is an efficient way adopted to solve the research problem. According to Kothari and Garg, there are basically four different types of research method which are descriptive vs. analytical, applied vs. fundamental, quantitative vs. qualitative and conceptual vs. empirical (Kothari & Garg 2014, 2). But for the scope of this study, the qualitative vs. quantitative research method will be adopted. Qualitative research method is based on phenomenon involving quality while on the other hand, quantitative method deals with the quantitative measurement of some characteristics (Kothari & Garg 2014, 3). This research makes use of the qualitative method because it is the most suitable research method since the qualitative research method is better used in analysing factors that motivate people or situations to behave in certain manner, dislike or like certain things (Kothari & Garg 2014, 3).

## 6.2 Qualitative research method

The qualitative research method is mainly used to assess opinions and attitudes so as to generate result which are qualitative rather than quantitative. With qualitative research, the essence is to collect rich and quality data rather than quantity. Unlike the quantitative research method which limits the opinions of the people who are being analysed, the qualitative method gives more regard to the people to express their opinions. Thus through the qualitative research method, it is much easier to analyse the various factors which encourages people to act in a particular manner or which make people like or dislike a particular thing or subject (Kothari & Garg 2014, 3).

It is widely accepted that the semi-structured interview is the most suitable way of conducting a research interview because it is very flexible, and also gives room for quality data to be collected (Gilham 2005, 70). Hence it is very common for this type of semi structured interviews to be used when conducting a qualitative research. Hence, the data for this research work was collected through different method of research which includes: qualitative method, individual research and direct conversation. The kind of qualitative research method used for this research as above mention is the semi-structure interview which allowed the researcher to come up with a list of specific themes to be discussed in the form of an interview. These themes are then discussed with sport tourism experts, organisers and managers of some of the sport facilities present in this region. This method ensures that quality data are collected from those who are actively involved in organising the event. In getting all this information, an audio recording equipment was used as the recording method by the researcher because of its advantages it offers which include: concentration on listening to what is being said, ability to maintain eye contact, it allows for complete record of interview and also plenty of useful quotations for report.

### **6.3 Presenting the results of the research**

The data for this research interview was gotten directly from those who are actively involved in the organisation of the Lahti winter games and those who benefit directly from the organisation of these events and also from some of the natives of the region who have witnessed more than one of this event. Those interviewed were the event director of the ski games, Jesse Kiuru, the manager of Cumulus Hotel Lahti Jaari Heranen, and the owner of Amigos restaurant Lahti. This ensured that quality data was gotten from this interviewee whose opinions and views are highly important to come up with findings and recommendation for this work. The ages of the interviewees were between 26-65 years of age. Even though it would seem unfair to draw a general conclusion from just an interview with few individuals, but it will be very important to note that for a research of this kind, experts and professionals view are considered very important in order to come to a valid conclusion.

Thus the information provided by the interviewees will be used primarily as the basis for the findings, analysis, recommendations and finally drawing of conclusion. Their information will be relied upon based on both their positive and negative remarks of the impacts of sport tourism on the community and their impact on the growth of tourism in this region.

#### **6.3.1 Presenting the interview with interviewee A**

The interviewee in this interview who happened to have been working in this position for the past two years gave his opinion based on his experience and his longitivity of service in the region of Lahti and is also important to note that he is a native of Lahti.

Theme 1: The economic impact of the Lahti ski games on tourism development in the region. This question was asked so as to get an understand to what the region of Lahti benefits as a result of hosting this game and also how organising this

game help promote tourism development in the region. The interviewee answered this question based on his experience of working in this region for many years.

According to the interviewee A,

I guess the biggest economic benefit for the region to all the hotels for example are fully booked during the weekend so it means there are approximately 3000 people accommodating in Lahti and of course the benefit for that to have that much people in Lahti for the restaurants, for the hotel industry and the retail stores and in a way because they pay taxes for the society I think that is the biggest economic impact for the city

This comment demonstrates in a great way how this region benefits from the hosting of this event and how it impact tourism growth during this period. This is a great impact to have about 3000 people accommodating in a small region like Lahti which is not common to most hotels to be fully booked during normal working days and again the tax which then contributes to the development of Lahti

Further still on the impact of this event, Interviewee A stated that

We had approximately 80million viewers around the world so it's kind of a boost of the tourism because they know that Lahti is here and basically every day there is a bus coming from Germany and they taking pictures of the ski and of course they are staying here and spent some money in the city

From the above statement, we can see that the ski games organised in Lahti not only brings in money but it also helps to market the region. With 80 million viewers, it can be said it is a good marketing strategy for tourism in the region because people get to know about Lahti and may develop interest in the city and may then pay a visit to the city. This in a way promotes the image of Lahti as a winter sport city.

Theme 2: When asked about the socio-cultural impact of this event interviewee A's response was

At the moment am the only full time employer in this company and when the games are little bit closer we have four people in the office and during the game there are more than 1000 people working for us

and I would say 750 of those are volunteers and most of them are from Lahti so it's like 5% of the citizens are working for us so the tradition comes from our grand fathers to our fathers, from father to son, from generation to generation

Closely looking at his opinion, u will agree with me that the ski events are a demonstration of the culture of the people of Lahti. That means it is a medium for them to showcase their culture to the rest of the world. To show their appreciation to these events the people of Lahti are willing to work for free when ever this event is organised. This shows a great deal of patriotism on the part of the natives of Lahti in promoting their culture.

Theme 3: This theme discusses the environmental impact of the event on the environment. When asked about the environmental impact of tourism. When asked about how they managed to sustained the environment, the interviewee's response was

The biggest thing in Lahti that is the sustainable development of the environment is actually the ski stadium and the surrounding that have been here from 1923 so in Lahti we built for sixty years not for sixty days as they do in winter in Torino or other places.

From this statement, we can see how the organisers of this event turn to protect the environment by constructing structures that last for a long period of time. Unlike in Torino where the environment is constantly disturbed in order to create new ski jumps, the organisers have decided to construct a ski jump which last for a long time hence allowing the environment to flourish. Interviewee A also mentioned that some of the 1000 workers who worked during the Lahti ski game also helped in cleaning and disposing of refuse during the period of this game to ensure a clean and fresh environment.

Theme 4 discusses about the interviewee's opinion of what makes the Lahti sport center unique and what is being done to further improve it. This theme seeks to know how the sport center contributes to tourism development in the region. In response the interviewee replied:

Lahti's sport center is very unique because all the sporting facilities are located within a small area, it is just walking distance from one sporting facility to another and again it is located just in the city center just a short walking distance from the main rail way station. Everything is found in one place, I would say that is one of the greatest advantage of the sport center. I would say that compared to other countries like Germany who have a very high class and modern ski stadium, that of Lahti that of Lahti is constantly renovated to fit international standard.

From this response, we can see that the sport center also plays an important role in tourism development in the region. Its unique and compact structure makes it very easy to access by tourist and help save any further transport cost. This also means that it saves time for the athletes as well as the tourist to move from one event to another.

Theme 5 inquires about some of the negative impact of the games on the city. The interviewee's response was:

Lahti is a very peaceful place and I can't quite remember anything going wrong during this game except on few instances where people were fighting as a result of alcohol. Last year, five people were arrested by the police as a result of this fighting and since the game are organised during the weekend, there is a lot of partying unlike never before

From this theme, we can say that the city of Lahti reaps the full benefit of organising this event. For an event of this magnitude with 40,000 spectators flogging into a small town like Lahti and hence having only this minimal effect is a big plus for the organiser and the tourism industry in the region.

### **6.3.2 Presenting the interview with interviewee B**

Interviewee B is a manager of one of the big hotels in Lahti and has a 14 years working experience in hospitality service in this region to show of. He shares his opinion on what she thinks about the Lahti ski game.

Theme 1: This first theme seeks to understand the impact the Lahti winter games have on his business. Interviewee B's response was:

It's a good business for one weekend. That is from Thursday to Sunday its very good business buts its only three days. It's a fully booked weekend with good price so it's a good revenue for the weekend but

From this statement, you can clearly see that the impact of the event can be seen on hotel business. Having the hotel fully booked for a weekend is a great deal of business, it only leaves one to wonder what will be the case if the Lahti ski game could last a little bit longer.

Theme 2: Seeks to know what the interviewee thinks can be done to make the Lahti games to contribute more to the tourism development in the region. His response was

For the Lahti ski games they should develop something like conferences about sport before or after the skiing event to make longer the period. There has been a few years ago one conference about skiing or something like that I don't remember what it was it was only one day before the ski event so as a hotel area here in Lahti it's a good weekend but its only one weekend

### **6.3.3 Presenting the interview with interviewee C**

Interviewee C is the owner of a foreign restaurant in Lahti city center which has been functioning for one year and is very optimistic about the approach of the upcoming ski game in March.

Theme 1 was aimed inquiring the impact of the Lahti ski game on his business and in response, he said:

Come so much clients to the restaurant when this game is organised foreigners come here to eat for one week before the game and after the game. In a normal day we are working two people here and when the game is coming four or five people are working here and we open for the whole day during the game

From this response, we can see that the Lahti ski game is very instrumental in tourism development in the region. As mentioned by interviewee C, the ski game brings him so much profit and also creates employment opportunities for others. Unlike in a normal business day, this restaurant opens for 24 hours and employs

two more workers as a result of the Lahti ski game. Thus this is evidence that the Lahti ski game is an important tool for tourism development in the region

#### **6.3.4 Observation and interaction with the locals in Lahti**

While carrying out this research, the researcher had the opportunity to free talk with some of the locals in Lahti to seek their own opinion about the winter games organised in Lahti. It is important to note that these locals are natives of Lahti who have spent a greater part of their live in Lahti and have witnessed more than ten different winter games organised in this region. During the process of interaction, some vital information which is worth mentioning in this thesis, was received.

Asking one of the locals about the winter game in Lahti, he said it is one of the biggest events organised here in Lahti and you can see so many people working in the streets and the bars and shops are busy with customers. It is one of the best times in Lahti. Another local mentioned that “it is the best weekend in Lahti”. All the locals that were talked to only gave positive remarks about the games and are very optimistic about the forth coming game in March. When asked about the Nordic ski world championship, I recalled one of the locals saying that “it's not an event to be missed”.

Comments like this goes a long way to show the appreciation and great love the people of Lahti has for the ski game. They are so committed to the game and see it as a demonstration of their culture and for them, it is a very sad thing if no local athlete in Lahti wins a medal in any of the tournaments.

### **6.4 Findings**

The purpose of this research work was to find out the impacts of sport tourism on tourism development in a destination and for this thesis, the destination was Lahti. As a matter of fact, sport tourism is amongst the world most popular leisure

activity and as such, it could be deduced that the hosting of sport events has a great effect on development of tourism in the host community in many ways. The following paragraphs reveal the findings based on these impacts of the Lahti winter game on tourism development in Lahti.

From the responses gotten from the research, it can be widely deduced that hosting the winter games has been contributing so much in the development of tourism in the area. Tourism business in the region witnesses tremendous economic booms whenever this event is hosted in Lahti. Businesses turn to get unusual high amount of customers and it also creates employment opportunity to the people of Lahti which in turn generate taxes to the government. Economically, this event is beneficial to Lahti.

An added finding from this research was that the winter games organised in Lahti also contribute as marketing tool for the region. The event organised in Lahti draws a lot of media attention. According to interviewee A,

last year, we had 32 million TV spectators from Germany and 30 million from Poland.

This research found out that this event helps to promote the image of Lahti as a winter sport city.

Another issue raised in this event is the cultural representation the natives of Lahti demonstrate when these events are organised. The native people of Lahti see the event as a means to demonstrate their culture since skiing is considered as a culture in Lahti. They do so by voluntarily offering their skills as workers whenever the events are organised in Lahti. This help in a way to promote the event since money which would have been used to pay salaries are instead reinvested in developing and renovating the event site as well as tourism in the region.

Furthermore, an extra finding from this research work is based on the friendliness and the kind heartedness of the Lahti people toward the tourists and athletes who come to the event. Lahti is considered a relatively peaceful town and very friendly people to who are very happy to let the world know about the skiing tradition. With comment from some of the locals such as 'it is the best weekend in Lahti' goes a long way to express their joy and happiness. This friendly atmosphere has made

this event to register very few negative impacts and according to interviewee A, from his “so many years” experience in working in the Lahti ski game he can remember only 5 arrests by the police of some people who were drunk. Thus this research has seen that such friendly atmosphere is very conducive for sport tourism development in the region of Lahti.

Another point that arose from this analysis was the commitment the organisers have in preserving and managing the environment for sustainable development. For the organisers of the Lahti ski game preserving the environment is a vital issue and they do this by constructing facilities that will last for a long period of time so that most part of the natural environment is left untouched. They also have so many volunteer workers who do the cleaning and disposal of the refuse left behind by the tourists, this ensures that the city is always clean and fresh.

On the other hand, one of the short coming of the Lahti ski game according to this research is that it is too short, that is the event lasts only for 3 to 4 days. According to this research, the Lahti ski game is a good business avenue for most businesses in Lahti but most of the managers and owners of these businesses think that the event is too short so as to have a lasting impact on their business. According to interviewee A, there are plans to make another event such as a music festival or something else to add to the Lahti ski games so as to increase the time duration in Lahti. This will be a very good step forward for the tourism businesses in the region that will make them get more profit hence encouraging tourism development in the region.

Finally, another issue the researcher noticed during the process of this research was that Lahti does not have other interesting tourist's facilities that could make these athletes and spectators who come to Lahti to stay longer in Lahti even after the event. As a result, most of the athletes and spectators leave Lahti immediately after the event is over.

The above illustrations or findings are the holistic summary derived from the interviews conducted with organizers and experts of the Lahti ski games and managers of some tourism business in the city. It shows that sport tourism had both positive and negative impacts on the tourism development in a destination. Therefore, much is still needed to be done in the area of financing, selling, and

cooperation and consultation. This will help the management of the winter games to aim for more positive impacts. The next main chapter will highlight some recommendations that emerged from the findings by the researcher.

## **6.5 Reliability and validity**

When a research is carried out, it is very important to consider its reliability and its validity so as to ascertain all the results with backup points. No research is exempted from this law of reliability and validity and this is because it is important both for the researcher and the readers of the research. When talking of reliability of a research, this is in other words to say that if the research, or test or even an experiment is conducted repeatedly, it will yield the same results without any omissions. While on the other hand, validity signifies the accurate extent to which a research assesses the precise ideology or concept that the researcher seeks to measure. However, in the case of social science for example tourism, where people have different behaviours, opinions and backgrounds, a repetition of an experiment will rarely be identical. So, reliability concentrates on accuracy while validity focuses on the success of the study or research which the researcher seeks to measure. (Veal 2006, 41.)

This qualitative research which focuses on impact of sport tourism on tourism development of a place is considered as reliable for the reason that the research was based on actual facts with the help of interviews and interaction which were later on analyzed to come out with this findings. The interviewees in this research were expert organisers of the winter games in Lahti with more than two years working experience, managers of renowned tourism businesses in the region and also locals of Lahti who have been leaving in Lahti for a greater part of their live. Questions were formulated and interviews were carried out which facilitated the smooth flow of the research and its findings. What makes it more reliable is the fact that these interviewees answered the questions with knowledge based on their experiences of the Lahti ski game and the effect it has on their various businesses.

Validity on the other hand, is the extent to which the information collected by the researcher truly reflects the phenomenon being studied (Veal 2006, 41). This is quite difficult to accomplish when it comes to leisure and tourism research because they mainly deal with people's behavioral attitude and for information on these, the researcher greatly relies on the responses gotten from the interviewees. The validity of this research work can be seen from the way the interview was carried out, presented, analyzed and findings arrived at. In the subsequent sub-chapter the recommendations will be given and conclusion arrived at and this will add more to its validity. Even though only a few persons were interviewed, it is believed that their responses are what matters most to the outcome of the research.

## **6.6 Recommendation**

After carrying out a detailed interview, presenting the interview, analyzing the interview and presenting the findings on the basis of the analysis, there is the need to come up with suggestions and recommendation of possible ways in which the organisers of the Lahti ski game can adopt so as to foster its already acclaimed reputation and impact on tourism development in the region.

One of the most vital suggestions for the Lahti ski games is that the organisers look for a means of making the game last for a bit longer. This is because though most of the businesses and the management of the Lahti ski game accept that the event contributes to tourism development in the area they also acknowledge the fact that the event period is too short so the benefits are short live. The writer thinks they should organise another event in Lahti which coincide with the Lahti ski game so that those athlete who come there could stay a bit longer. This will increase the impact of tourism in the city and businesses will benefit more.

Another suggestion for the city of Lahti is that tourism needs to be developed further in the city. Different attractions should be developed in Lahti so that those tourists who come to the region could stay a bit longer. This is because it is very

common that whenever this event is organised most tourists leave the city immediately the event is over. If other tourist attraction are developed this trend may stop and the city will witnessed tourists staying longer in the region.

Another thought is that Lahti is not well marketed, this might be the reason why most of the tourists leave the city when the event is over. Nowadays, with the rise of technology and the use of smart phones, most tourist destination developed specific application that gives full details about the different attraction in the area. This should be something Lahti has to copy so as to ensure effective marketing.

Apart from those above mentioned recommendation, the winter games are a great avenue for the development of the region. It provide so many opportunities to the businesses in the region and to adequately promote tourism development in the region, there is the need extent the length of the games in this region so as to ensure that tourists stay longer in the region.

## 7 CONCLUSION

To start with, this thesis has been a very enlightening and a great accomplishment for me, to actually write this work on a topic I truly cherish. The fact that this topic was of major interest to me, motivated me throughout the thesis process. More so, actually finding a very popular sport tourism destination in Finland which is renowned for hosting 88 different events was also added motivation in this thesis process. I learned a great deal of new things related to sport tourism and understood that it is crucial to pay attention to all the aspects of the concept instead of focusing only on events or winter sport tourism. It needs to be said that I greatly enjoyed doing interviews as well as they brought into my attention things I had not thought of myself before. Among those things was the importance of sport tourism as a marketing tool for destinations development and how they can impact the city or the whole region.

To conclude, it is important to note that the theoretical framework of this thesis fully answered all the issues and questions raised in the introduction. The theoretical framework made mention of the different types of sport tourism and discusses the fact that different sport tourism markets focus on different things. The separation of sport tourism places into peripheral and central locations turned out to be very important when talking about Lahti, which is clearly a central location. Some of the trends and topics discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis are very relevant to Lahti, especially trends and topics such as the role of social media, sport tourism places and markets. Also the impacts of sport tourism in Lahti were also discussed and were also proved to be very significant for tourism development in the region.

In addition to that, this research has proven that many villages, towns and cities now consider themselves as destination regions because of benefits derived from hosting a sporting events. This is because sport tourism is used by many destinations as marketing tools so as to promote other tourism facilities. Lahti is an example of such cities which owe their tourism growth thanks to contribution from the winter ski games organised in the region and its long lasting tradition of

skiing. Therefore, based on the research analysis, findings and recommendations of this research, conclusion could be drawn.

From this research, it can be said that the winter games organised in Lahti has had tremendous impact on tourism development on the region. Relying on the responses gotten from the interviewees, we can conclude that Lahti has really reaped the benefit of organising the ski games. If not for anything, but for the fact that the Lahti ski games can boast of about 32 million TV spectators from Germany and 30 million from Poland alone, and also the fact that the hotel managers accept that their hotels are fully booked during this period and the restaurants confirmed that they work two shift during the game and also employs extra workers, goes to show the extent of the impact on tourism in this region. Thus we can say that sport tourism should be promoted in other region in Finland as a means of further development of tourism or as a means of marketing the region.

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**Interview themes for organisers and sport center.**

**Interview type: semi structured interview**

**Theme one: Economic impacts of the Lahti ski Games**

- 1     “What remarkable positive changes have your events made on the people and the city of Lahti?”
- 2     “What are the economic impacts of your event on Lahti as a host community?
- 3     “What major developments can be put in place in other for the city to benefit more from Events hosted here in the future?”
- 4     In your opinion, do you think Lahti ski games has contributed so much in making Lahti a strategic sport tourism location

**Theme 2: Social Impacts**

- 5     What effect does the social and cultural life style of the people have on this event?
- 6     “Based on your experiences about events hosted here in Lahti, how can you Rate the level of these events and what are your expectations on the forth coming events?

**Theme 3: Environmental Impacts**

- 7     Does organising this event generate some kind of waste or pollution to the environment and how it is managed?

**Sport center questions**

**Theme 1: Economic impacts**

- 1     What makes this center very remarkable and considered as one of the best in the world.
- 2     In your own opinion, how do u think the activities organised in this sport center affect the life of the people and the city economically.

- 3 What do you think can be done to further develop this sport center to boost its already acclaimed reputation

**Hotels and restaurant interview**

**Interview type: semi structured**

Hotel and restaurants themes

**Economic Impacts**

- 1 How does the Lahti ski games do affect the business of your hotels?
- 2 In your own opinion, how do you think the Lahti ski games has Contributed to the tourism development of Lahti?
- 3 What further developments do you think should be put in place to enhance Lahti's sport tourism capabilities?

**Socio-cultural Impacts**

- 1 What are the socio-cultural impacts of the Lahti ski games on your Hotel?

**Environmental Impacts**

- 2 Does organising this event generate some kind of waste or pollution to the environment and how it is managed?