

# Running events in the city of Bahía Blanca (Argentina): An approximation to its tourism and economic impacts

## Los eventos running en la localidad de Bahía Blanca (Argentina). Una aproximación a los eventos running en la localidad de Bahía Blanca (Argentina). Una aproximación a su impacto turístico y económico

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**Resumen:** El impacto de eventos deportivos ha sido motivo de numerosas investigaciones. Actualmente el impulso de dichos eventos puede considerarse como una estrategia de desarrollo local. En la Argentina el turismo de eventos deportivos es una modalidad que moviliza miles de personas en torno a la gran cantidad y diversidad de eventos que se realizan tanto a nivel internacional, nacional como regional. Una práctica deportiva que está creciendo a gran velocidad en los últimos años es el running. En relación al turismo, la ciudad de Bahía Blanca, que es un centro de orden intermedio y se ubica en el sudoeste de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, está posicionada como un lugar "de paso" y de distribución hacia destinos turísticos cercanos. El objetivo del presente trabajo es analizar el impacto turístico y económico de los eventos running en la localidad de Bahía Blanca. Dicho estudio se realiza utilizando un enfoque mixto de investigación, a partir de metodologías cualitativas y cuantitativas. Los principales resultados muestran que, si bien Bahía Blanca posee una gran variedad de atributos para el desarrollo del running como actividad turística, el amplio calendario de competencias existentes en la localidad no resulta ser muy convocante, ya que el mayor porcentaje de participantes proviene de localidades cercanas o son de Bahía Blanca. Por ello, el trabajo presenta propuestas para mejorar y diversificar la oferta de eventos running en la ciudad, como elemento dinamizador de la actividad turística.

**Palabras clave:** Turismo deportivo, eventos running, impacto turístico y económico.

**Abstract:** *The impact of sporting events has been a deeply researched subject in the literature. At present, the promotion of these events can be considered as a local development strategy. In Argentina, sporting events tourism is an activity that attracts many people in relation to the great number and diversity of events that take place at international, national and regional levels. In recent years, running is a sport practice that has been growing quickly. In terms of tourism, Bahía Blanca, which is a city located in the southwest of the Province of Buenos Aires, is positioned as a "gateway" to tourist destinations nearby. The aim of this study is to analyze the tourism and economic impacts of running events in Bahía Blanca. The study uses a mixed research approach, based on qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The main results show that, although Bahía Blanca has a great variety of attributes for the development of running as a tourist activity, the broad calendar of existing competitions in the city does not seem to be very attractive, since the greater percentage of participants comes from nearby locations or lives in Bahía Blanca. Therefore, this work presents proposals to improve and diversify the running events offer in the city, as an important element to boost the tourist activity.*

**KeyWords:** *Sports tourism, running events, tourism and economic impact.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

The relation between sport and tourism has been close since its inception and its main antecedent corresponds to the Olympic Games held in Athens in 1896. However, it was not until the end of the twentieth century that this relation began to be addressed with the importance that it possessed and from there, a large number of authors and the main institutions worldwide of each activity dealt with the sports and tourism binomial. The events that marked a before and after were first, the cooperation agreement between the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the World Tourism Organization made in 1999; and, secondly, the First World Conference on Sport and Tourism, held in 2001 in Barcelona (Latesa & Paniza, 2006).

Social and economic changes, and the revaluation by people to improve their quality of life in recent decades, have been the main drivers of both activities, free time and leisure time are integrated today into daily life, not as an isolated activity, but as a further part of daily life. The most significant feature of this leisure time is freedom of choice and its main objective is personal and social enjoyment. On the other hand, the presence of sport, understood as an enhancing element of quality of life, is associated with the concept of recreation. Therefore, sport understood as recreational physical activity, is determined and defined by a number of characteristics, such as fun and pleasure as the main purpose, and others such as health, social relation and relaxation (Nogueras, 2010).

The result of the sport-tourism relation and its development is the so-called sport tourism, which has been defined by Paties & Paniza (2006:136) as "all activity related to sport that takes place outside the usual place of residence, either in artificial facilities or in the natural environment to perform a physical activity or observe sport shows, whether there are competitive purposes or not", González Molina, A. (2008) states that the same responds to the search of new personal challenges and they have a clear social projection and healthy objectives. In addition, its main motivation is to perform very specific physical-sporting practices, which require technique, good physical state, organizational infrastructures and clearly specified rules.

Brasileiro et al. (2008:78) state that "the tourism and sport binomial constitute a market of great social and economic profitability", thus highlighting that sports tourism gene-

rates significant positive impacts in the locality in which they are carried out. The analysis of the impact of sporting events on the economy was analyzed by different authors, who consider that holding such events can be an element of socio-economic development and a strategic option to improve competitiveness of cities (Burgan and Mules, 1992; Tyrrell & Johnston, 2001; Daniels, 2003).

In Argentina, sport tourism is an activity that mobilizes thousands of people around the great amount and diversity of events carried out at international, national and regional level. Among the most outstanding events, it is possible to mention the Moto GP as a great event of global interest, motoring in all its categories, soccer, basketball, running, cycling, swimming and triathlon, among others.

In the city of Bahía Blanca (Argentina), where business tourism is the main modality due to its geographical location, its infrastructure, the proximity to the Petrochemical Pole and the Port of Bahía Blanca. Thus, sporting events have begun being of great importance for the city, due to the number of visitors it mobilizes, with Olimpo participating in the championship of the 1st Division of Argentine soccer, Weber Bahía participating in the National Basketball League and the League of the Americas and the Summer Midget Tournament.

With regard to running, there is now a wide range of pedal skills that take place in the locality and represent an alternative to sports tourism. The objective of this work is to analyze the tourist potential of runner events in Bahía Blanca (Argentina) and its economic impact from the study of demand and the supply of pedestrian competitions in order to make proposals to improve the attractiveness of this sporting practice. The importance of this research lies in serving as a trigger to know the characteristics of the supply and demand of such events in order to outline proposals that enable local sports policy makers, improve the potential tourism of them.

**METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

The empirical analysis uses a quantitative research perspective based on the analysis and interpretation of both secondary and primary information. First, for the study of the demand and supply of running events in Bahía Blanca,

secondary information provided by websites specialized in the subject is used, such as [www.BahíaCorre.com](http://www.BahíaCorre.com) (local website) and [Frieni.com](http://Frieni.com) (national website). Secondly, to analyze the profile of people who practice running, to know what their preferences are when participating in an out-of-town event and the expense they perform, primary data from a survey conducted in the July and August 2017 was used. These surveys were conducted on people who practice running in Bahía Blanca. The survey was designed from a Google form. It is important to note that the use of this tool has limitations as a means of implementing surveys, such as leaving a side of a significant segment of the population since it only allows to reach those people who have the Internet and the control of informant selection is difficult. However, it has several advantages such as conducting surveys quickly and easily, and the absence of intermediaries between the questionnaire and the interviewee allows for greater objectivity and lower costs in the survey.

The total number of people surveyed was 103. The sample size was determined on a population of 1,000 people who actively practice the sport in the locality. Those who participate in at least two events in the year were considered active. This number was determined on the information provided by the coach of one of the most important groups in the city. Considering that for finite populations ( $N < 100.000$ ) the formula generally used is  $n = Z^2 p q / (e^2 + Z^2 p q / N)$ . Here, the number of surveys conducted allows working with a confidence level of 90%. The sample size is representative of the population. Based on the information obtained, an exploratory-descriptive analysis is carried out, in order to study the tourist and economic impact of the running events in the locality of Bahía Blanca to then make proposals in order to improve their tourist potential.

## REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

### Tourism of Sporting events

It is possible to affirm that sporting events represent a great volume of the total events organized over a year in the world. Taking into account the social, economic and media interest of sport, there are many the sporting events of greater or lesser importance that are carried out.

Añó Sanz (2000: 271) defines sporting events as "that sporting activity that has a high level of social impact translated into a strong media presence and generates economic income by itself". The author refers to large events, and which attracts a huge volume of visitors. According to this author, a sporting activity to be transformed into a sporting event, must have the following characteristics: (i) social impact, (ii) broad level of public assistance, (iii) presence of the media, (iv) audience (v) sponsors and (vi) own income.

From an organizational perspective, sporting events can be organized by a diverse type of organizations, such as national sports bodies, clubs, associations, federations, companies, educational institutions, etc. (Graham, 2001 in Cerezuola 2003). There is no specific typology when it comes to hosting a sporting event, there are a lot of examples that prove this, from a World Cup to the most important marathons in the world, such as the one in New York, or Berlin and the half marathons carried out throughout the world. The trend in Argentina, presents a typology of organization in which public bodies, as well as private, participate, with an important presence of the latter through advertising, providing economic resources for its realization.

Regarding sports event tourism, Delpy (2003) defines it as "those sports activities or competitions capable of attracting a considerable number of visitors in order to participate or attend as spectators" (quoted in Revuelta, 2006:2). This type of sports tourism has acquired a great relevance, being today, a great opportunity for destinations that seek to increase their attractions, both for the number tourists that attract and for its economic impact (Getz, 2003, in Alles, 2014).

Numerous authors emphasize that this tourist modality generates significant and positive impacts in the town in which they are made (Burgan and Mules, 1992; Tyrrell and Johnston, 2001; Daniels 2003; Daniels 2004; among others). Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2013) emphasize that among the beneficial aspects for the territories are the increase in income, the construction of facilities and the improvement of the image of the town. For their part Jago & Dwyer (2006), propose that the realization of an event generates an initial injection of money that has a direct im-

impact on the local economy and another secondary. The direct impact comes from the expenditure made by visitors in the different sectors of the economy. The side impact is related to the mult effect of the initial money injected into the economy (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2013). Crompton (2006) also defines the economic impact as the spending flow attributed to visitors and converted into income for the host community.

In the literature, works that have analyzed the impact of mega events can be found (Brunet, 1992; Baade y Matheson, 2004; Baade, Baumann & Matheson, 2010); as well as those medium-size and smaller-scale events (Wilson, 2006; Késenne et al., 2011; Barajas & Sánchez, 2011). Works that analyze the difficulties of tourism in sporting events (Getz, 1997 and 1998) and study issues related to planning, development and marketing of this type of tourism (Getz, 2003) are also highlighted.

Sports events, as well as other events such as cultural, artistic or sporting events, can be a great opportunity for the tourism development of cities, regions or countries as they encourage local socio-economic development. These contribute to the generation of jobs, as well as the creation and improvement of infrastructure (Alles, 2014:62).

All of the above shows that the development of sporting events can become a tool for local development. According to Henderson et al. (2010:60), certain events have the capacity to attract a large number of tourists, as well as the expense they make, hence the interest of public servants in attracting them for their current and potential contribution in the development of tourism (Alles, 2014: 60).

**New trends: running**

It is important to note that running as physical activity is a specific discipline of athletics and it presents different versions. These range from the most famous tests of speed of 100 and 200 meters to the emblematic 42 kilometers of the marathon as the most representative expression of the cross-country race or endurance. For many years and until 1960, athletes who ran, did so with the intention of training in the discipline in which they were specialists or sport practiced as a complement to their physical preparation.

Bill Bowerman was the person who drove the change in running as mass activity. Bowerman was a renowned athle-

tics coach in the 1950s, in Oregon, USA and trained a large number of athletes. However, in the early 1960s his vision of athletics as an activity changed sharply, noting that in New Zealand, there were groups of people who formed groups of "jogging" in order to improve their physical condition, improve their health or simply by taste and enjoyment. He then moved the idea to Eugene, his hometown, along with physician Harris in order to assess the health of participants as they attended jogging trips. On the other hand, he noted that the call gradually became massive in his locality and began to spread to other cities in the United States. In 1967 Bowerman and Harris published a book titled "Jogging: A Physical Fitness Program for All Ages" that sold more than a million copies and helped spread what they called trot. It highlighted that you trot, "is a type of simple exercise that does not require highly developed skills. Its great appeal is its simplicity itself, almost anyone can practice it and anywhere" (Athletes, 2014).

Another major driver of physical activity to improve quality of life of the common people was Kenneth Cooper, a physician in the United States Military, who published the 1968 book "Aerobics" (Crummy, 2016). After both Bowerman and Harris, as well as Cooper, she first appeared in the US and, later, in other countries of the world jogging/running fashion, which is the most popular way to practice an aerobic endurance training. In the early 1970s the practice of jogging continued to grow and in parallel there was a sporting event that brought acceleration to its growth. In 1972 they competed at the Munich Olympics and in the main marathon event, American athlete Frank Shorter won and arrived in fourth place another American athlete, Kenneth Moore, since the last time he had won that event an American, had been in 1908. This event gave an extraordinary boost to the fledgling movement of running, transforming athletics into a popular practice in the United States (Atletas, 2014).

Subsequently, in 1977 James Fixx published "the complete book of the runner" that immediately became a success, where he described the benefits the goodness of the running practice: increased oxygen in blood, pumping blood through the heart with less pressure, increased air to the lungs, muscle development and strength, development of more and better resistance, etc. However, Fixx not only mentioned the improvements in health and functions of the human body, but also considered running as a "fun" in their lives, running for fun and not for health, or to get a good body, or to win. This was the secret of his editorial

success and through which, they contributed massively to the phenomenon and contributed to people distant from the sport, approaching in search of improving health and vitality problems (El Nuevo Diario, Nicaragua, 2009).

Running was already a hallmark of American society and was beginning to spread throughout the rest of the world. Sports brands took advantage of this move and accompanied the process. Suddenly companies and new technologies began to appear that supported and encouraged the massive group of runners that joined day by day. A new discipline had been born, running as a popular expression and open to the masses was a fact.

On the other hand, in recent decade the growth of running as a factor of attraction has been considerably high. There are innumerable examples that prove it, such as the Buenos Aires Marathon, created in 1984 and that has become the most convener in Latin America in 2016, with more than 10,000 participants from different parts of the world. In addition, in Buenos Aires, the Middle Marathon, more than 20,000 people in the last editions is held. This has become the most important competition in Argentina.

Running can be considered as a tourist attraction. According to Kotler et al. (2007:185), a tourist attraction can refer both to the physical characteristics of the destination and to the events that take place there, being its fundamental objective of the latter to convene citizens, new residents, visitors, entrepreneurs and investors.

Finally, the most important aspect of running as a tourist attraction, is the number of days that the runners remain in the destination where the competition takes place. This is because they stay at destination 2 or 3 days and consume various services during their stay. Therefore, the type of trip performed causes great benefits not only to the organization of the event, but also the service area in general and consequently the locality (Miraglia, 2017).

Por último, el aspecto más importante del running como atractivo turístico, es el número de días que permanecen los corredores en el destino donde se desarrolla la competencia, ya que pernoctan en destino 2 ó 3 días y consumen diversos servicios durante su estadía. Es por el tipo de viaje realizado que beneficia en gran medida no solo a la organización del evento, sino también al área de servicios en general y por consiguiente a la localidad (Miraglia, 2017).

## The case of Bahía Blanca

### Study area

At 38°44' South Latitude and 62°16' West Longitude west. The city of Bahía Blanca is located on the southwestern coastal front of the province of Buenos Aires (Argentina) and is the capital of the homonymous party (Figure 1). It is made up of the cities of Bahía Blanca, Ingeniero White, General Daniel Cerri and Cabildo; and borders the parties of Tornquist, Coronel Rosales, Villarino and Coronel Pringles (Municipality of Bahía Blanca, Tourism Area).

The city has a population of 301,572 inhabitants (Census 2010), making it the seventeenth urban conglomerate in the country. At the regional level, it is the most important urban center due to port and industrial activity and its great cultural, commercial, financial, academic, sports and health value. In turn, due to its important road, rail and airport infrastructure, it functions as a transport and communications node of national relevance, making it a center of scale.

The locality is a center of passage for tourists heading to other parts of the country, and also the distribution center within the Southwest of the province of Buenos Aires, not only because of the characteristics of Bahía Blanca, but because it is located in a strategic place in terms of the proximity of important tourist towns such as Sierra de la Ventana, Monte Hermoso and Pehuen C6, among others. These localities are approximately 100 km from Bahía Blanca. Due to the plurality of cultural, scientific and recreational activities, among others, tourism activity has increased markedly (Gambarota and Leonardi, 2016), which is reflected in the observed growth in hotel occupation in the 2009-2017 period, which is 14%<sup>3</sup>. It should be noted that the city has a varied tourist offer, regarding the hotel equipment. According to the Association of Hotels, Restaurants, Bars, Confectioners and Related of Bahía Blanca and Southwest region, it has more than 40 accommodation establishments, with a total of approximately 2,200 places. The offer includes 1, 2, 3, and 4-star hotels, as well as motels, hostels, apart hotels and residential accommodation. It is noteworthy that the vast majority of these establishments are located in the micro and macro-center area.

<sup>3</sup> National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) and Ministry of Tourism. Hotel occupancy survey, <https://www.indec.gob.ar>, September, 2009-2017

**Figura N° 1. Localización del área de estudio.**



Source: own, based on ArcGis.

## Supply and demand analysis of running events

### Supply analysis

The supply of running competitions in the city of Bahía Blanca is diverse, though concentrated in the offer of short distance races, that is, races to travel distances of 10 kilometers or less. Only one competition of the 17 that make up the 2016 calendar, is considered a medium-distance competition. This must cover 21 kilometers and it has been organized since 2011. This is the only certified half marathon in the city and the region (Windward Half Marathon). The calendar of competitions in 2016 is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Competition calendar in 2016**

Month	Day	Competition	Distance
January	5	Circuit of Kings	8.5k
February	-	-	-
March	20	IV Integrar edition I run for the inclusion	8.5k and 3k hike
April	3	Sanidad Corre	8k and 3k hike
	17	10k Bay	10k
	24	Native	5k
May	8	Cross UNS	6k
	25	Barlovento	21k, 14k and 7k
June	-	-	-
July	-	-	-
August	7	100 years Club Independiente	10k
	14	Argentinian Television Union	7k
September	11	Carrera Aniversario Asociación Bahiense de Atletismo	10k and 3k hike
October	16	Pharmacist's run	10k
	23	Correcaminata Club Pacifico	10k and 4k
	30	Trade clerks	8k
November	20	UNS Run	8k and 3.5 K hike
	26	Believe Yes	5k
December	4	Color Light Run	10k and 5k
	8	10K STMBB	10k and 3k hike

Source: own with data obtained from the BahiaCorre.com website

The most important competences are the "Circuit of Kings", "I run for inclusion" and "Bahía 10 K", not only because of the convening power they have, but also because they are the events in which a greater number of actors participate, both from the public sector and three events are declared year after year of municipal interest by the Honorable Deliberative Council of the Municipality of Bahía Blanca,

The first race mentioned is the most important circuit in the city and currently 60 editions have already been carried out. It is organized by the Alumni Athletic Association and the Municipality of Bahía Blanca and is characterized by being one of the oldest athletic events in Argentina. Figure 2 shows the historical and characteristic circuit of the competition, where 8.5 km are covered. The registration fee in 2017 was \$150. The second competition in order of importance, called I run for inclusion, is that one organized by the NGO Integrar, which fights for the rights of people with down syndrome. It has been held since 2013 in a unique circuit created by the Municipality of Bahía Blanca, shown in Figure 3. This circuit is adapted so that its distance is 8.5 km and also a hike of 3 km is made. For both the 8.5km competition and the bed had a cost of \$200 per person in 2017.

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Figure 2: Circuit of Kings.

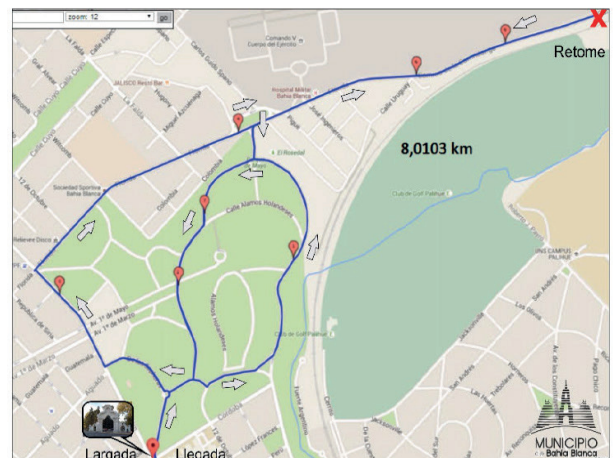
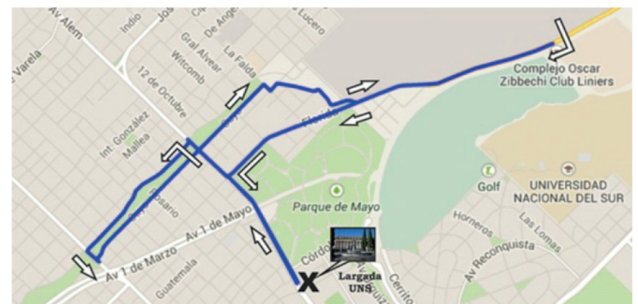


Figure 3: Unique circuit, Bahía Blanca

Source: Municipality of Bahía Blanca, 2016.

The 10 k Bahía Blanca competition is organized by the Undersecretary of Sports of the Municipality of Bahía Blanca in commemoration of the date of the foundation of the city, it has been held since 2009. The circuit is shown in Figure 4 and is the most convoking 10k competition in the city with more than 600 participants in the 2017 edition and in 2016 more than 700 participated. Its cost in 2017 amounted to \$ 150 per person.

Figure 4: 10 k Bahía Blanca.



Source: Municipality of Bahía Blanca, 2016.

With regard to the cost of the three competitions identified, if this value is compared with other competitions in localities of the Province of Buenos Aires, it is noted that it is considerably lower. For example, to participate in a competition of similar distance (10K) in Sierra de la Ventana<sup>4</sup> (Buenos Aires), the registration fee was \$550, in Necochea and Mar del Plata, of \$300 and to participate in the Mar del Plata Half Marathon, was \$350, This is 75% more expensive than the Windward Half Marathon in Bahía Blanca (\$200). In Bahía Blanca, the races with the highest registration costs (\$250), were "The Pharmacist's Run" and "Trade clerks' Union Marathon". A relevant aspect of them is that they were two of the competitions that the least number of runners had.

Finally, it should be noted that the Secretariat of Sports of the Municipality of Bahía Blanca, has created the so-called Unique Circuit, in order to carry out the pedestrian competitions without greatly hindering the

vehicle transit of the city, which it also allows to reduce the costs for the organization of the event and for the municipality. For this reason, 11 of the 17 competitions that took place in 2016, were held in the Unique Circuit fulfilling the objective set out above. However, its implementation led to competitions being similar and not very attractive to people in the city and the region, causing a decrease in the interest of runners to participate in such events.

**Historical and real demand for running events**

The analysis of the historical demand for running events was carried out for the period 2010-2017, on data obtained from the three main competitions organized in the city of Bahía Blanca, the "Circuit of Kings", "10 K Bahía" and "I run for inclusion". Table 2 presents the evolution in the number of participants of the three races mentioned above.

**Table 2: Number of participants in three of the main races held in the city of Bahía Blanca.**

Year	Circuit of Kings	10 K Bahía	I run for inclusion	Total
2010	1,093	1,327	-	2,420
2011	1,402	2,154	-	3,556
2012	1,996	695	-	2,691
2013	2,012	1,123	891	4,026
2014	2,676	577	940	4,193
2015	2,960	638	948	4,546
2016	3,079	732	1,030	4,841
2017	3,200	638	1,104	4,942
Total	18,418	7,884	4,913	31,215

Fuente: www.bahiacorre.com.ar

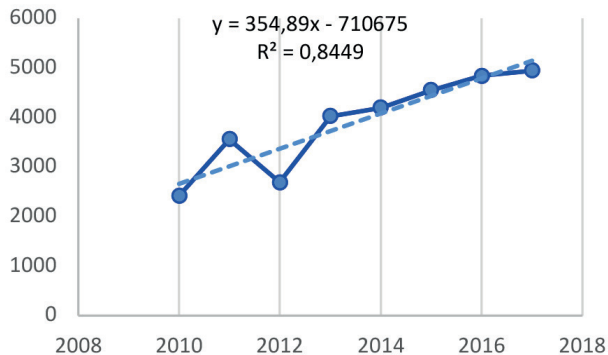
Table 2 indicates that in the period analyzed there was a significant increase in the total number of enrollees in the careers studied. The cumulative annual rate (T.A.A.) yielded a value of 0.44 indicating that year-over-year the number of enrollees in the three major races grew by 44<sup>5</sup>%.

Figure 5 reveals that the number of participants grows over time, whereas Figure 6 presents the evolution in the number of participants for the three main races. It is clearly visualized that the most important and the one that has grown the most in time is the "Circuit of Kings".

<sup>4</sup> Sierra de la Ventana is a tourist locality, located 125 km al northwest of the city of Bahía Blanca.  
<sup>5</sup> TAA was calculated as  $(VF/VI) 1/n - 1$ , where VF is the final value of the variable, and VI is the initial value.

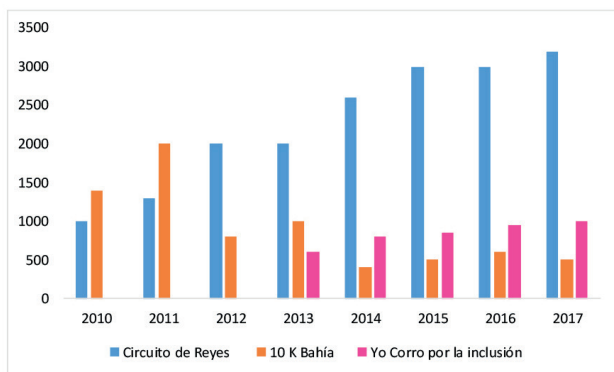


**Figure 5: Time series analysis. Evolution in the number of participants in the three main races.**



Source: own based on data from Bahía Corre (www.bahiacorre.com.ar)

**Figure 6: Evolution in the number of participants per race.**



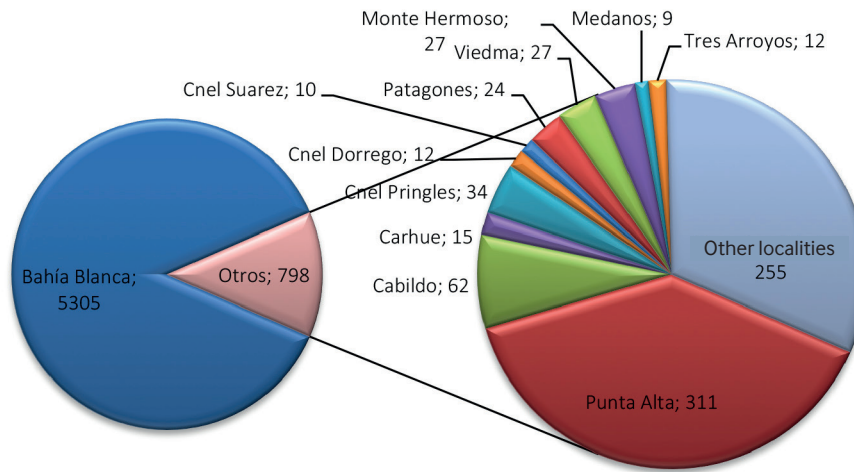
Source: own based on data from Bahía Corre (www.bahiacorre.com.ar)

Then, the study of real demand of the running events held in the city of Bahía Blanca was carried out. This analysis was formalized through secondary information and the collected data, come from the sports event monitoring organization "Bahía corre" (Bahía Runs). The information corresponds to eight races in the calendar of running events held in 2016.

The most outstanding characteristics of the demand are presented as follows:

- The resulting number of the total participants was 6,103 runners distributed in the 8 competitions, being the "Circuit of Kings", the most attractive event.
- 87% of the participants came from the locality of Bahía Blanca, that is 5.305 runners. The remaining 13% were visitor, adding 798 participants. Figure 7 details the precedence of the visitors, who mostly come from localities in the Province of Buenos Aires, specifically, from the southwest of the Province and Viedma. 67% of the visitors received by the city of Bahía Blanca in the events analyzed come from nearby towns located at most, 250 km away. The remaining 33% is covered by representatives from more than 30 localities in the Province of Buenos Aires and also from the rest of the country.
- The "Circuit of Kings" was the most summoning race of the running calendar of the city. Here, 3,079 athletes officially participated, with a high percentage of people from Bahía Blanca (88% of the total), equivalent to 2,699 people.
- In some of the races, the number of participants was less than 200 runners, with a negative result not only for the organization, but also for the running calendar of this city.
- The results indicate that men, participate more in long-distance competitions. For example, in the only long-distance competition that took place in the city, "Half Marathon of Windward" (21k), was the competition where the percentage of men (82%), far surpassed that of women (18%).
- In the shorter distance competitions (5K and 7K), women equaled and even, exceeded the number of male participants.
- Most organizations that competed throughout 2016 set an average price of \$150. The races with the highest registration cost were, the "Pharmaceutical's Run" and the one organized by the Trade Clerks Union, the same was \$250 pesos. A relevant aspect of them is that they were two of the competitions that the least audience reached.

**Figure 7: Origin of the participants in the competitions in 2016**



Source: own based on data from Bahía Corre (2016)

**Potential demand of running events**

This section is aimed to know the profile of the people who practice running in Bahía Blanca, their preferences when participating in a running event, determine the spending they spend on average at each of the events they participate in and know their evaluation of the proposals that are presented to improve the tourist potential of this type of sports tourism in the city. For development, as already mentioned, 103 surveys were conducted on people actively running, considering active runner to those who participate at least two events in the year.

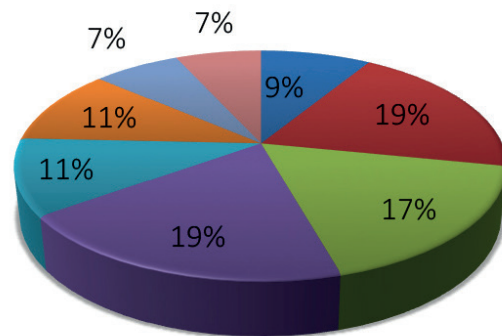
The information obtained from the survey is presented as follows: (i) Profile of the people who practice running, (ii) Number of days remaining in the destination and daily expenditure, and (iii) Aspects valued at the time of selecting an event in a destination, and willingness to pay for a sporting event.

**Profile of the people who practice running**

From the analysis of the results of the surveys, it is observed that 52% of athletes participating in events are male, thus surpassing the female gender. With regard to age, running is visualized as an activity that covers all ages, including those over 60 years old. Age ranges ranging from

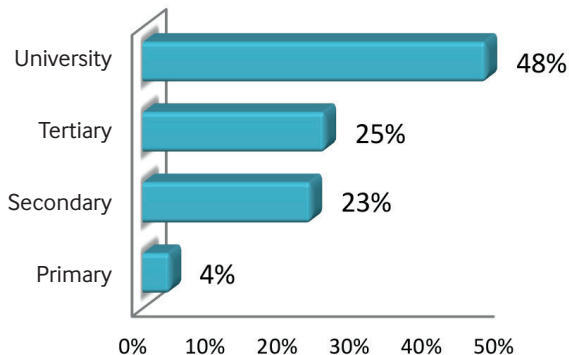
29 to 34, 35 to 39 and 40 to 44, make up more than half of the people surveyed (Figure 8). One of the most popular aspects of people who practice running is their academic training, as presented in Figure 9, approximately 75% have university or tertiary studies

**Figure 8: Age**



Source: own, based on survey

**Figure 9: Highest level of education achieved.**



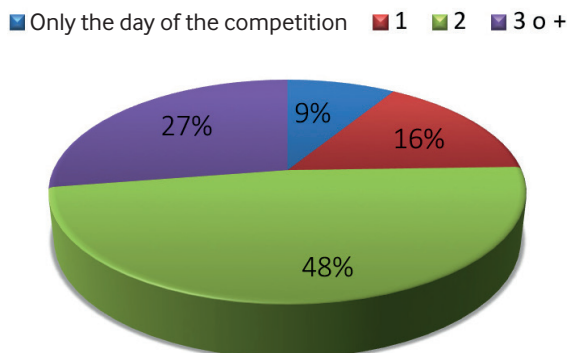
Source: own, based on survey

- (i) Number of days remaining in the destination and daily expenditure

Part of the preparation for the events, includes the rest days that the runners have in the destination where the competition will be held, for this reason, consider the arrival 2 or 3 days before the competition essential. Figure 10 shows the answer to the question: if you participate in events in other cities, how many days does the person usually stay?

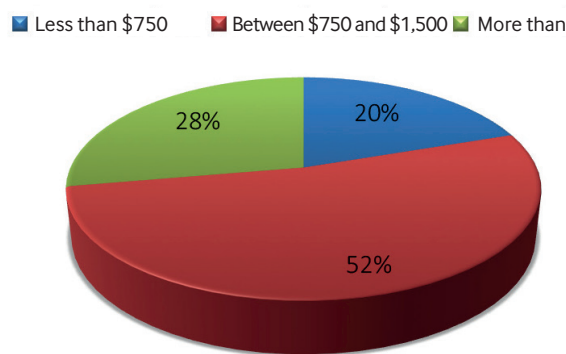
Figure 11 presents the answers to the question, during the stay: How much did you spend per day, including accommodation, transfer and meals?

**Figure 10: Number of days that runners remain at the destination**



Source: own, based on survey

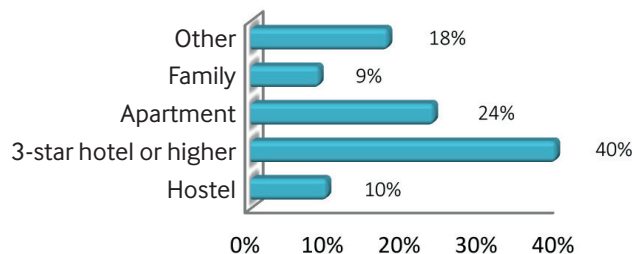
**Figure 11: Daily expenditure, including accommodation, transfer and meals**



Source: own, based on survey

In relation to the expenditure made at the destination, Figure 11 shows that 52% spent between \$750 and \$1500 per day, i.e. 52% spent on average \$1,125 per day, 28% over \$1500 and the lowest percentage (20%) spent less than \$750. A demonstration of the daily expense made by a person who is running when participating in an event is the type of accommodation that he or she uses on the days that he or she stays at the destination. A total of 40% of the 98 people who answered the question: What type of accommodation does the person usually stay? They do it in 3-star or higher hotels (Figure 12). On the other hand, the apartments are one of the most chosen accommodation and it should be noted that in the "others" option, a significant number of people prefer cabins as accommodation.

**Figure 12: Type of accommodation usually chosen to stay**



Source: own, based on survey

- (ii) Aspects valued at the time of selecting an event in a destination and willingness to pay:

The survey sought to know what the likes and preferences are when choosing a destination to compete in a running event. To this end, the question about what he values of the fate in which the race is made was asked. 51% responded that the natural resources existing at the destination are the most valued aspect, mainly because of the type of circuit they will travel in the competition since the running adventure or cross running competitions tend to differ greatly from the Rest.

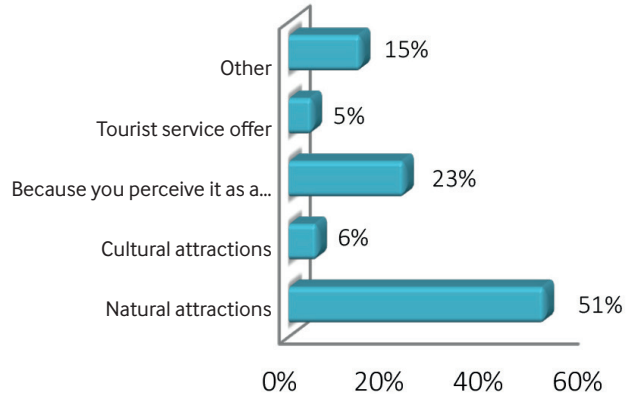
On the other hand, those cities that are perceived by people as important tourist destinations received about 30% of the answers. However, framed in the answer "other(s)", it is necessary to emphasize that there are many variables that influence the choice of the destination, However, there are related to the event itself, such as its organization, the number of participants, the distance and circuit to be traveled and the importance of the event, among others. It should also be emphasized that people who practice group running, are interested in attending events involving a large number of participants of the same training group. For this reason, it is of paramount importance when organizing an event, convening not only those who participate individually, but the running groups, since they are the ones that contribute the most participants.

Figure 13 shows the percentage of answers obtained to the question: What do you appreciate of the destination in which the race is made? It should be noted that people who practice running, give great importance to the adventure running circuits, since they consider it one of the main factors of attraction because it represents a personal challenge varying according to the conditions of each one of the participants.

Then, a question was asked about how much they had paid to participate in an event. Figure 14 reveals that about 50% have paid more than \$1000, 29% between \$500 and \$1000, and only 24% paid a maximum of less than \$500. In addition, in a large number of cases, they have come to pay US\$700 to participate in "The Columbia Crossing", one of the most famous and important events in South America. However, to participate in an event in Bahía Blanca, respondents mentioned that the average price they would be willing to pay would be \$150, with the minimum

value to be paid in Bahía Blanca to participate in an event.

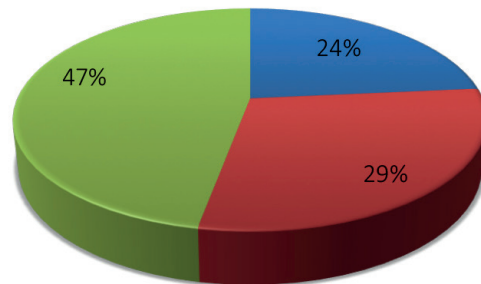
**Figure 13: Aspects valued at the time of selecting an event in a destination.**



Source: own, based on survey

**Figure 14: Maximum amount paid to participate in an event.**

■ Less than \$500 ■ Between \$500 and \$1,000 ■ More than \$1,000



Source: own, based on survey

**The incidence of running events in the local economy**

The analysis of the incidence of running events in the local economy is carried out in accordance with Crompton (2006). As already mentioned, such author defines the economic flow of expenditure attributed to visitors and converted into incomes for the host community.

Considering the number of tourists and visitors who participated in the running events held in Bahía Blanca in 2016 (Figure 7) and taking into account the average expense that the runners show when registering for an event (Figure 11), the estimated income generated for the locality is calculated. The estimate becomes formal by considering the following aspects:

- Of the total participants in running events in Bahía Blanca, only 13% turned out to be visitors, resulting in a total of 798 runners (Figure 7).
- Of the 798 runners who participated in the events, 53%, that is 423 participants come from nearby localities, located less than 100 km of Bahía Blanca.

Therefore, the assumption that they only spend one in town is established.

- The remaining 375 runners are considered to remain in Bahía Blanca for two days as they come from towns located more than 100 km from the city.
- The distribution of daily expenses in transfer, accommodation and food, carried out by event participants is as follows: 52% spend on average \$1,125, 28% make an average expense of \$1,500 and 20% only spend \$750.

From the data presented, the following calculations are made. These are presented in Table 3:

**Table 3: Expenditure made by participants in running events that come from other localities.**

Number of runners that remain one day in the destination, multiplied by participation in the expense.	Average expenditure per participant year 2016 (\$)	Number of days remaining in the destination	Expenditure expressed in Argentine pesos (\$ year 2016)
423 * 0,52 =220	\$1.125	1	\$247.500
423 * 0,28 =119	\$1.500	1	\$178.500
423 * 0,20 =85	\$375	1	\$31.875
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>\$457.875</b>
Number of runners that remain two days in the destination, multiplied by participation in the expense.			
375 * 0,52 =195	\$1.125	2	\$438.750
375 * 0,28 =105	\$1.500	2	\$315.000
375 * 0,20 =75	\$375	2	\$56.250
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>\$810.000</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$1.267.875</b>

Source: own, based on field work.

Observing Table 3, it is first highlighted that the events held in the city are not relevant as a factor of attraction for tourists or visitors, and secondly, that the expense made by such visitors represents an income of \$1,267.875 for the local economy. To this expense it is necessary to add the payment that the runners must make to participate in the different races in respect of registrations. As already mentioned, the average value of races in Bahía Blanca in

2016 was \$150 and the total number of participants in the eight analyzed competitions of 6,103 runners, therefore the income generated from registrations was \$915,450.

In summary, it can be said that the events analyzed in the town in 2016 contributed an income of \$915,450 in registration and \$1,267,875 in expenses in accommodation, transfer and food. As for the number of participants

registered in the different events, it can be said that they did not turn out to be highly convoking, so there are two proposals below that could increase the tourist potential of the same.

Proposals to improve and diversify the supply of running events in Bahía Blanca.

In the survey, two proposals for sporting events linked to running were presented and both obtained a significant percentage of acceptance. The two proposals were carried out based on the need of the city of Bahía Blanca to diversify the offer of pedestrian competences that it currently has. As noted in the analysis of the offer, those events that took place between the months of November and March, had a greater call. For this reason, it is suggested that the following proposals be made in these months.

Proposal 1: Create an event that includes a sports show. Name of the event: "21K Bahía runner fair"

The first proposal is to make a sports show in the days before the competition and a certified 21k (half marathon) race together with a participatory 8k and a 3k hike. The circuit of the main competition, will be the traveling through the most attractive spaces of the city, such as Alem Avenue, Colón Avenue, Alsina Street, Sarmiento, Urquiza, Paseo de las Esculturas, Camino de la Carrindanga and Paseo de la Mujer, among others. In the "expo" there will be stands of brands and local and national sports venues, as well as the exhibition of the new collections of clothing not only for the practice of running, but also stands of specialized health professionals, as for example, in the improvement of the techniques of runners and in pathologies suffered by sports practice. In addition, there will be speeches by running leaders, including physical education graduates, nutritionists, sports physicians and Olympic marathoners. The distance to be traveled has been set at 21k (half marathon) as it has been observed that people tend to travel a greater number of kilometers, pay an expensive registration and stay more than one day in those competitions in which 21k (half marathon), or longer distances, e.g. marathons, ultra-marathons, etc.

This first proposal obtained 95.2% approval from the respondents.

Proposal 2: Create a circuit that includes the city, moun-

tains and sea. Name of the event: "City, mountain and sea circuit".

The results obtained from the survey have shown that a large percentage of the runners prioritizes the natural attractions offered by the destinations, and how in Bahía Blanca, which is an urban destination, it becomes necessary to combine an event with destinations of sun and beach and mountain.

The next proposal consists of a three-day pedestrian competition that will take place in three different places, an urban circuit in Bahía Blanca, a another rugged in Sierra de la Ventana and finally a beach circuit in Monte Hermoso. Bahía Blanca will be used as the main city of the event and distribution to Monte Hermoso and Sierra de la Ventana. The distances to be traveled in each locality will be 10km. There will be one winner per competition, but the times made in the three competitions will be counted to determine the winner of the same.

This second proposal obtained 99% approval from the respondents. The organization of the competitions will require a joint work with the Municipalities of Bahía Blanca, Monte Hermoso, Tornquist and Coronel Suarez.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Sports tourism represents an ever-developing phenomenon. The change that has taken place in recent years in the social sphere, regarding the interest on the part of people in improving their quality of life and their direct connection with sports practice has driven the activity of running. Year after year, the number of people who engage in daily physical activity has increased and running is a clear example of this. The demand for running is characterized by being completely heterogeneous, it is an activity that is practiced by people of all ages and both genders, as well as from different economic sectors, but who have a factor in common, to carry out an activity linked to enjoyment and improving their quality of life.

Regarding Bahía Blanca, the city has a wide variety of attributes for the development of running as a tourist activity, the infrastructure and equipment necessary to host important events, such as the possibility of developing attractions urban circuits. In addition, it presents a strategic

location in the southwest of the province of Buenos Aires and an important historical, cultural and commercial offer. However, the city has no natural attractions, an important factor for runners when selecting a destination, for this reason, destinations such as Monte Hermoso and Sierra de la Ventana are important competitors in what regarding running.

Likewise, Bahía Blanca has a broad calendar of competitions, with three being the most attractive for both, local and regional population. These are the "Circuit of Kings", "10K Bay" and "I run for inclusion". The analysis of the historical demand of these three events indicates that a significant growth in the number of participants has produced in the 2010-2017 period. However, the highest percentage of participants are local or from nearby localities. This indicates that the conditions of attractiveness of such events could be improved and therefore, the incomes generated for the locality. Two aspects to be improved are those related to the distance that is traveled in each circuit and to the definition of the circuit itself. It was observed that they travel distances not exceeding 10 km, it is a negative aspect when analyzing events as tourist attractions, since through fieldwork it was shown that people move a greater number of kilometers and allocate more money to medium- or long-distance competitions, such as half marathons or marathons. Another negative aspect is the definition of a single circuit for the development of events. Always touring the same circuit in the different events, has led to a loss of interest in athletes for participating in the events.

This research is relevant as it can contribute to enabling local sports policy makers to improve the tourist potential of runners' events. In the fieldwork two proposals were presented, create an event "Feria runner Bahía 21k" and create a circuit that includes the city, the mountains and the sea, "City, sea and saw circuit", thus taking advantage of the advantages of location of the city. These proposals were widely accepted by the athletes surveyed and could be a starting point to improve the tourist potential of the runner events held in the city.

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