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Foreign Market Entry Modes of Running Events
-the internationalization of Göteborgs Varvet Half marathon

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Graduate School

Master of Science in International Business and Trade

Master Degree Project No. 2011:12

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Abstract

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Sports events are becoming increasingly globally important in social and economic terms. The number of people traveling abroad aiming to participate in those events has strongly increased in recent years. However, in the world's largest half marathon - the 'GöteborgsVarvet' - held annually in Gothenburg, Sweden, the rate of foreign participants is still relatively low. Although a wide range of studies have been conducted within sports and event management, the attention towards developing an internationalization strategy for such kind of events is relatively low. The aim of the thesis is to fill this gap, by analyzing the case of GöteborgsVarvet and developing possible foreign market entry modes. The modes discussed in the thesis rank from cooperative forms, e.g. joint venture and marketing alliances, to wholly owned modes, like sales outlets and qualification races. The survey is based on qualitative and quantitative data. The results indicate that, in addition to choosing a foreign market entry mode that fits the specific event, there needs to be a close fit between destination and event in order to be able to attract foreign runners. Furthermore, in order for the internationalization of GöteborgsVarvet to succeed, it requires for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to truly find or develop motives for it. The first step is then for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to develop their website. If there is a desire to further internationalize, our recommendations are to explore the possibilities of qualification races abroad and establish partnerships with other running events.

Acknowledgements

There are a lot of people we would like to thank that have played a big part throughout the process of this thesis. First, and most importantly, we would like to say an extensive thank you to our supervisor Harald Dolles. Without your guidance and invaluable advices we would probably still be stuck on writing the background. Thank you also to our co-supervisor, Tommy Andersson, who helped us enormously with interpreting the questionnaire data.

Big thanks to the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, for introducing us to the subject of this thesis and providing us with the necessary information and data.

We would also direct huge thanks to all of our interviewees, who were all kind enough to put aside time in their busy schedules to present their interesting views and stories to us. A special thanks to Siri Terjesen, who made our work so much easier by giving us several recommendations of people to contact.

Thank you!

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1. Introduction

This section provides the reader with a short introduction of the subject of this thesis; internationalization strategy and foreign market entry modes for running events. Firstly the background is described followed by the problem discussion and the purpose of the thesis.

1.1. Background

'The board of GöteborgsVarvet is having a meeting at the Athletic Center (Friidrottens Hus), discussing the recently held running event. Once again they have had a successful event with increased participants compared to last year. However, GöteborgsVarvet Half Marathon¹ faces the issue of a low ratio of international runners. The city of Gothenburg has been in contact with the organization of GöteborgsVarvet in the matter of improving within this field. But the question remains, how should the organization of GöteborgsVarvet develop their internationalization strategy and what are the most appropriate foreign market entry modes?'

The number of people traveling abroad with the main mission to participate in sports events has increased dramatically the past decades (Hinch & Higham, 2001). The raised awareness of health, and consequently the importance of it, have also increased significantly and is one of the reasons why people choose to go to running events abroad. Phenomena such as "serious leisure" and "sport tourism" are terms that have become more common (Shipway & Jones, 2007). The latter has expanded mainly due to shorter working weeks and people making more use of their holidays. This has contributed to the time increase spent on mass traveling, leisure and self-development (Kotze, 2006). Running events are one of the fields associated with sport tourism that have become more popular. In Gothenburg, Sweden, the world's largest half marathon (21.1km), GöteborgsVarvet (= The Lap around Gothenburg), is held annually (Balkander, 2009; GöteborgsVarvet, 2010). However, this running event presents a contradicting trend of foreign participation. GöteborgsVarvet had 4.5% foreign runners in 2010 and in 2011 this figure decreased to 3.8% (GöteborgsVarvet, 2010; GöteborgsVarvet 2011).

1.2. Problem Discussion

In order to maintain constant economical growth, companies in general need to have an international approach even though the business only occurs in the home country (Kalantaridis, 2004). This also applies to sports events such as GöteborgsVarvet. The reason is that constant growth is not only in the interest of the organization itself, but also their various stakeholders. However, in Table 1 we can see a comparison between some of the world's largest running events which demonstrates that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has not been successful with their internationalization strategy and the number of international

¹ From here on GöteborgsVarvet Half Marathon will be referred to as GöteborgsVarvet. The whole event of GöteborgsVarvet, including all six races, will be referred to as the event of GöteborgsVarvet.

runners it attracts (GöteborgsVarvet, 2010). GöteborgsVarvet is currently behind its competitors both in terms of number of countries represented in the event and international participants. ING New York Marathon has double as many countries represented as GöteborgsVarvet and as much as 50% of the participants are from foreign countries (ingnycmarathon, 2011a). Edsberger (Own interview, 2011), Chief project manager of the event of GöteborgsVarvet, declares that the aim is to increase the ratio of international participants to 10%. According to Edsberger (Own interview, 2011) the main reasons for this is that foreign runners generate more profits in the form of longer stays and that they follow out and actually show up at the day of the event when they have registered.

Table 1. Comparison of Worldwide Running Events (2010)

Event	Location	Entrants	Finishers	No. of countries represented	International Participation (of the entrants)
Half Marathons					
<i>GöteborgsVarvet Half Marathon</i>	<i>Sweden</i>	<i>58 122</i>	<i>38 459</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>4.5%</i>
Paris Half Marathon	France	27 000	22 032	62	13%
Vattenfall Berlin Half Marathon	Germany	23 799	21 263	94	25%*
Marathons					
ING New York City Marathon	US	45 350	45 103	105**	50%
Virgin London Marathon	UK	36 984	36 549	64	7%
Stockholm Marathon	Sweden	20 136	14 715	76	43%

*Data from 2011, **Data from 2009.

Sources: Asics Stockholm Marathon (2011); German Road Races (2011); ingnycmarathon (2011a); ingnycmarathon (2011b); Runner's world (2011); SCC (2011a); SCC (2011b); GöteborgsVarvet (2010); londonmarathon (2010); Semi Marathon de Paris (2010); Virgin London Marathon (2010)

Sports events are also seen as not only making big financial contributions and enhancing the profile of the city it is held in, but also of the surrounding region. A big successful sports event can actually have the great impact of changing the whole image and identity of a city. In result it has long-term economic as well as social benefits (Kotze, 2006). In some ways this can be seen as a form of co-creation of values since the runners also have other motives for choosing to travel outside their home country to participate in events. Usually the feeling of achievement is higher when performed in foreign grounds, because of the unfamiliarity and thus extra challenges. Furthermore, Gothenburg as a tourist destination differentiates itself with key elements related to safety, environment, friendliness of locals and tourist information (Chen & Funk, 2010). But why then does GöteborgsVarvet still have so few international runners?

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010, pp. 28, 203), marketing has a dual goal. The first one is to attract new customers by promising excellent value, whereas the second goal is to maintain and increase the existing customers by delivering satisfaction. Hence, to be able to attract new runners and compete with other international and domestic running events, it is vital for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to understand the customers' needs and preferences across the different cultures.

In this thesis we will therefore explore how the organization of GöteborgsVarvet can attract more international runners and further develop their internationalization strategy to raise the awareness of GöteborgsVarvet. To be able to fulfill these goals we attempt to answer the following main research question.

How should the organization of GöteborgsVarvet develop its internationalization strategy?

In order to be able to answer the main research question, the following three sub-questions will be answered:

- *What are the motives for participating in running events viewed by international customers (runners)?*
- *What can be done from an organizational point of view in terms of attracting foreign customers (runners)?*
- *What foreign market entry modes should the organization of GöteborgsVarvet develop and/or adapt?*

1.3. Purpose

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore possible internationalization strategies and foreign market entry modes for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet in order to increasingly attract and maintain international customers (runners).

1.4. Disposition

Case Description: GöteborgsVarvet

This chapter provides the reader with the background information about the choice of study; GöteborgsVarvet. It gives an insight to the event and its participants, the customers and finally the vision of GöteborgsVarvet.

Conceptual Framework

This chapter provides a literature overview that establishes a conceptual framework in order to outline the most central aspects of the internationalization strategy for running events. Thereby, issues concerning internationalization drivers, network linkages, customers' main reasons to participate in running events abroad, the obstacles of internationalizing, together with foreign market entry modes are discussed. In addition, each section contains assumptions for GöteborgsVarvet based on the theories.



Methodology

This chapter is intended to describe the methodological approaches employed in this research process. Thereby we outline the chosen research approach, research design, the data collection method as well as the reliability and validity of the thesis.

Empirical Findings

The main objective of this chapter is to lay out the empirical findings collected through primary data, both in-depth interviews and questionnaire data. We will also present the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, the stakeholders and the runners, which together form the network linkages of the event of GöteborgsVarvet. Lastly a presentation of possible foreign market entry modes for GöteborgsVarvet has been conducted.

Analysis

This chapter provides the reader with a detailed analysis of our understanding of how the organization of GöteborgsVarvet should develop its internationalization strategy. Thereby, the assumptions made in the conceptual framework is examined and tested. Hence, this chapter aims to answer this thesis' research questions.

Conclusion

This concluding chapter provides the reader with a final discussion of our findings. This is mainly achieved by providing the answers to our main research question, as well as answers to sub-questions. A recommendation for the future strategic work with the internationalization of GöteborgsVarvet is also presented.

2. Case Description: GöteborgsVarvet

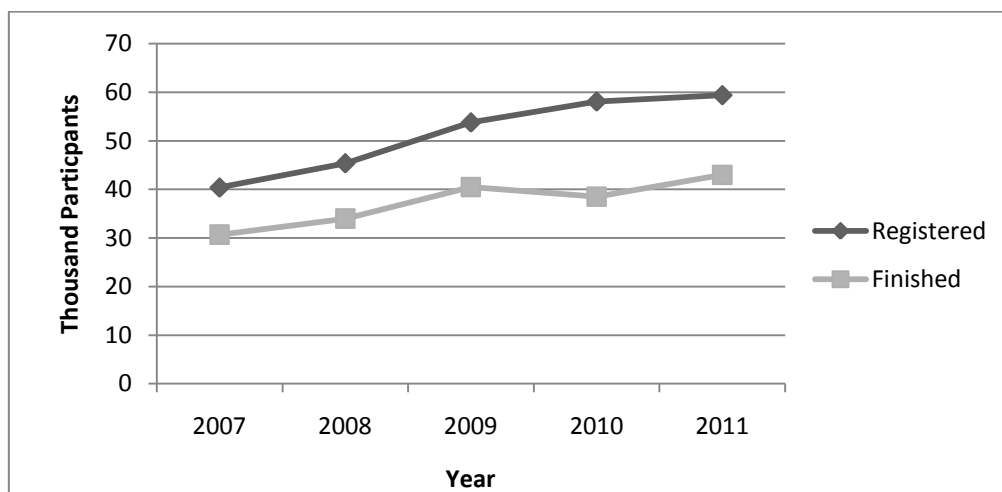
The following description provides the reader with the background information about the choice of study; GöteborgsVarvet. It gives an insight to the event and its participants, the customers and finally the vision of GöteborgsVarvet.

The registration for GöteborgsVarvet 2011 has once again set new records. However, in preparation for future races the organization of GöteborgsVarvet is facing a dilemma. Out of the 38 459 participants that ran the race 2010 it was only 4.5% that came from a country outside of Sweden and in 2011 only 3.8% out of the 43 026 runners were foreign participants (GöteborgsVarvet, 2010; GöteborgsVarvet, 2011a). This is a low number compared to similar running events in other countries. The organization of GöteborgsVarvet needs to decide if they should continue as usual, or if they should increase their efforts to try to internationalize the race in order to attract more foreign runners.

2.1. The Event and the Participants

The race was established in 1980 with only 1 800 runners and since then the number of participants has increased significantly, as can be seen in Figure 1. The majority of the increase throughout the years has mainly consisted of Swedish runners. Distributed among six different races as many as 71 597 registrations were made in 2010 and out of these 58 122 had registered for the half marathon. For 2011 a new record was set; around 75 000 contestants were registered to participate in the event and 59 417 of those had the purpose to run the half marathon (GöteborgsVarvet, 2011b).

Figure 1. Number of Participants in GöteborgsVarvet 2007-2011 (thousands)



Source: GöteborgsVarvet (2011b)

Besides the half marathon, the event of GöteborgsVarvet offers five other races: “GöteborgsVarvet Youth Race” (5.1km), “GöteborgsVarvet Young Kids Race” (1.2 or

2.4km), “GöteborgsVarvet Mini Kids Race” (250m), “GöteborgsVarvet Special Needs” (2.4 or 4.1km) and “GöteborgsVarvet Walk Event” (7 or 10km).

The event of GöteborgsVarvet is organized by Gothenburg Athletic Association (Göteborgs Friidrottsförbund) and the profit that is generated from the event goes first and foremost to the maintenance of the Athletic Center (which also is GöteborgsVarvet’s headquarter) located by Slottskogsvallen, Gothenburg. The rest of the surplus is then distributed to the member clubs of Gothenburg Athletic Association and additional sport clubs who are supporting GöteborgsVarvet as an event. It is also the members of these different sport clubs that usually volunteer to act as organizers during the days that the different races take place. For 2011 GöteborgsVarvet had 3 400 volunteers working during the event.

GöteborgsVarvet is a race which takes the runners through both sides of Gothenburg, which is split by the river Göta Älv (see appendix 1 for the track). The runners get to cross two bridges, enjoy the view of the harbor, and also run through the city center (Johansson, Own interview, 2011). Except from being a running competition the spectators, which were around 200 000 in 2010, and runners will also be entertained by 52 different orchestras and DJs, as well as six large screen TVs placed all over the city which shows the race.

2.2. The Customers

For a running event there are several customers beside the runners. As the organization of GöteborgsVarvet wants to promote it as a folk festival with involving the spectators, these automatically become their customers as well. The event also has the customer group of sponsors; companies that wants to be associated with the event of GöteborgsVarvet. The main reason is in general the media attention that the event gets, but also because of the amount of coverage and the fact that they might identify themselves with the event of GöteborgsVarvet’s three core values; creating a folk festival, competition and health (Edsberger, Own interview, 2011). The two main partners of the event are the sport brand Adidas and the local paper Göteborgs Tidningen (GT). In addition the event of GöteborgsVarvet has several official cooperation partners, official suppliers and charity partners. Last but not least media is stated as a customer group, which includes everything from daily newspapers to radio. The race is also aired live via the website of GT.

2.3. The Vision

The vision of the event of GöteborgsVarvet is to be;

”Europe’s best running event which contributes to better health and good atmosphere for runners and audience” (GöteborgsVarvet, 2010, p. 15).

Hence, the focus does not lie in trying to promote it as an event for just the runners, but encourage the fact that the event of GöteborgsVarvet is an opportunity for the creation of an annual big folk festival in the city of Gothenburg, involving runners, elite and hobby, and the audience.



3. Conceptual Framework

This chapter provides a literature overview that establishes a conceptual framework in order to outline the most central aspects of the internationalization strategy for running events. Thereby, issues concerning internationalization drivers, network linkages, customers' main reasons to participate in running events abroad, the obstacles of internationalizing, together with foreign market entry modes are discussed. In addition, each section contains assumptions for GöteborgsVarvet based on the theories.

3.1. Internationalization of Sports

The internationalization activities for companies have increased significantly the past few decades, especially so in the service sector. This is inter alia due to the emergence of better information- and communication technology that has assisted in creating wider market reach and better product potential for the services (Miozzo & Miles, 2002). Modern technology has worked as a simplifier for firms that are internationalizing, made it easier for narrow targeting and for businesses to reach niche markets (Dolles, 2009; Nancarrow, Wright & Page, 1997). Dolles and Söderman (2005) also mention that the characteristics of the football business makes it appropriate to categorize it as a branch of the service sector, as well as it can be compared with the entertainment industry. This statement opens up for drawing parallels between the latter and the sporting sector in general, as well as the running business.

For the past two decades, the attitude towards sport has improved significantly and its importance has also increased. This is mainly due to its unique characteristics of being unpredictable and able to stir up strong emotions and reactions from customers, which in consequence also explains why there are so many loyal fans. The turnover rate does now cover about 3% of all world economic activity (Dolles & Söderman, 2008a). For this reason sports events have lately been exhaustively researched by scholars (Hallman, Kaplanidou & Breuer, 2010; Terjesen, 2008; Gratton, Shibli & Coleman, 2006; Faulkner et al., 2001). However looking at previous research that has been done in the field of internationalization of sports, one will find that the majority only covers the international recruitment and trade of team players as well as the global marketing perspective. Very little literature covers the area of research aimed for this thesis, which are the entry mode strategies in a foreign market.

According to above statements the trend of increased internationalization of sports events suggest that this may be a good time to create an internationalization strategy for GöteborgsVarvet to capitalize on this interest.

3.2. The Internationalization Drivers of Running Events

Why is it that many events lately have tried to expand outside their country borders? There can be various underlying reasons, with the importance and relevance of each of them varying depending on the event itself. When it comes to sports events there are usually four different

aspects, or types of drivers, that can affect the internationalization decision; economic, marketing, social, and cultural.

Assumption A: There are four different aspects which drive the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to internationalize; economic, marketing, social and cultural.

3.2.1. The Economic Aspect

One of the most mentioned benefits for hosting sports events has been the capability to generate a major economic impact for the host region. However, these studies have mainly focused on mega sports events such as the Olympics and the World Cup in football (Baade & Matheson, 2004; Faulkner et al., 2001). Coleman and Ramchandani (2010) on the other hand discuss the benefits of non-elite mass participation sports events and refer throughout their study to marathons and other running events. The authors demonstrate that non-elite events also are capable of generating a significant economic impact on the host region. This is further discussed by Funk, Toohey and Bruun (2007). More specifically they argue that a running event with international participants would imply an economic upswing for the host destination² as international participants' foster longer stays and thereby spend more money. Getz and Fairley (2004) further argue that the economic benefits are generated from both the participants and the spectators. In addition to longer stays, the authors discuss organization's desire to build or enhance a competitive position which includes imaging through international participants.

3.2.2. The Marketing Aspect

As sport has become a part of the globalised world, media is also becoming an increasingly significant member of the sport system (Chadwick, 2009). Positive marketing through media can encourage people to return to the destination, and non-elite mass participation sports events are argued to be a perfect instrument for promotion. Running competitions bring people, both the active runners and spectators, to the host city, it promotes the surroundings and make the people visit the city again (Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010; Dolles & Söderman, 2008b). Furthermore, in terms of marketing in relation to sports, running events are stated to be highly current. A large share of the participants is highly educated, high-income earners and in many cases they have traveled to participate and thereby spend money on the trip. This is a popular target group for many advertisers. In addition, larger running competitions tend to have health and fitness exhibitions which yearly attract thousands of visitors. This implies a perfect opportunity for both domestic and international brands to promote themselves (Georgiadis, 2010).

² From here on 'destination' and 'location' is referred to as the same thing, and will therefore be used interchangeably.

3.2.3. The Social Aspect

Social factors constitute another important ground for internationalization. Sports in general have an important role in international relations. It is not only able to enunciate national interests (such as status improvement and visibility), but also has the capability to test foreign relations initiatives and increase cultural exchange and acceptance over borders (Frey & Eitzen, 1991). Furthermore, people tend to travel more internationally in order to take part in organized running events, socialize and meet equals (Funk & Bruun, 2007). This fact implies that there is a global social demand of international running events. Furthermore, Nettleton and Hardey (2006) argue that a running event is a show which helps the cities to enter not only the national but also the world stage, verifying status and reputation with images of a healthy lifestyle. The fact that the healthy lifestyle and especially running has increased in popularity can be seen by the development of special equipment such as pulse watches, the number of running clubs providing training sessions, and the different sport specialists in for instance sport injuries, sport psychology and nutritionists.

3.2.4. The Cultural Aspect

As stated above, sport tourism is a popular way of combining peoples' interest in traveling and sport (Funk & Bruun, 2007). This gives both the sports event itself and its stakeholders a great opportunity of promoting their cultural identity and heritage for an international audience. In general, global brands are symbols of cultural ideals and can be rejected by customers just because of that. However, usually a sport brand does not have this problem. This is mainly due to the fact that sport has a broader worldwide appeal which often tends to unify people from different cultures (Richelieu, Lopez & Desbordes, 2008).

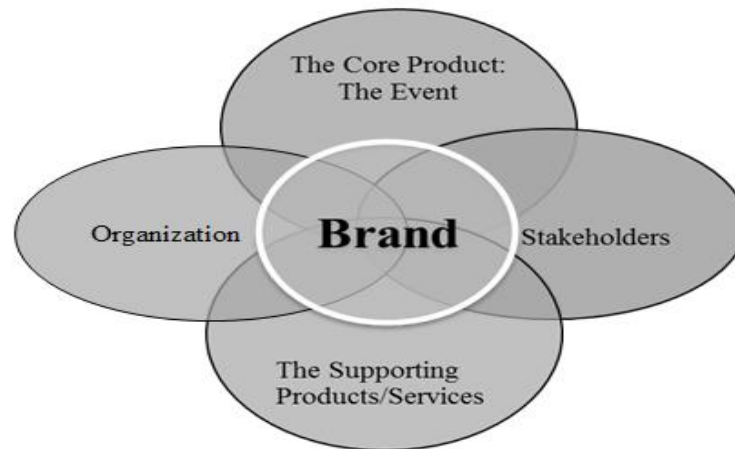
3.3. The Network Linkages

In light of recent findings, theory suggests a linkage between diverse factors within the sports events industry (Hallman, Kaplanidou & Breuer, 2010; Getz & Fairley, 2004; Roy & Cornwell, 2003). Gummesson (2007a; 2007b; 2006) further discusses the concept of network theory and explains that multiple forces are interrelated in very complex systems. Networks “come in many shapes and are shaped by many forces” (Gummesson, 2007a, p. 239). Hence, in the case of the event of GöteborgsVarvet the stakeholders (e.g. customers and employees), the sports event itself, the organization and the supporting products/services have a linkage which together shape the system and brand image of the event that is promoted to the general public.

***Assumption B:** There are four interrelated forces (the organization, the core product, the stakeholders, the supporting products/services) which are influencing the brand of the event of GöteborgsVarvet.*

The more loyal and aware international runners are of these forces, the more international runners will participate in the event. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The Network Linkages



As theory indicates, several forces can be interrelated (Gummeson, 2007a; 2007b; 2006), but a sports event may be perceived in a certain way due to one specific force (Hallman, Kaplanidou & Breuer, 2010; Getz & Fairley, 2004; Roy & Cornwell, 2003). This fact can be demonstrated with a few examples. Firstly, Berlin Marathon is well-known for being one of the world's fastest races. In fact, most marathon world records have been set on this course, the latest by the several-fold World Champion Haile Gebrselassie in 2008 (SCC Events, 2011). Thereby one can name the race to be the force which distinguishes Berlin Marathon from other marathons. However, it is the linkages that the race has with the other forces, such as the organization and the stakeholders, which together create the result of a distinguishing feature for the event. A second noteworthy example is ING New York Marathon, one of the world's greatest marathons in terms of participants (AIMS, 2011a). The runners have a tendency to motivate their enthusiasm of participating in this specific marathon by the fact that it is held in New York. For that reason, the location is of great importance and moving the event to another city would probably have negative consequences. Here we can see yet again that the different forces collaborate together to accentuate that specific unique factor.

Hence, in order to establish an international market entry strategy for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet we firstly have to make clear what the different forces are in the event of GöteborgsVarvet's network. The actual relationships between them will later in the thesis be identified with the help of empirical data, which thereafter will explain how they collaborate with each other to accentuate the unique characteristics of this running event, compared to other. Through this way it is possible to appreciate how an increase of international runners would affect the different factors, actors and the relationships between them.

3.3.1. The Organization

According to Funk, Toohey and Bruun (2007), one of the main reasons why people are motivated to participate in running events is the desire to take part in an organized event. This

indicates that a running event well-known for its organization (in terms of for example the security, logistics and information) could have an impact whether a person chooses one running event over another. This fact is further proven by Rong and Song (2009, p.33) who conclude that “the event being really well organized” is the most important factor for the runners participating.

3.3.2. The Core Product: The Event

According to Getz (2008) planned events are defined as a spatial-temporal phenomenon. Each event is unique because of the interactions among the setting, people and management systems, including the design of it and the program. The distinctiveness of events is that they are never the same and that you have to physically be there to fully enjoy the uniqueness of the experience.

Based on the core values that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet identifies themselves with and the categorization that Getz (2008) makes of different events based on their purpose and program, the event of GöteborgsVarvet can be seen as a cultural celebration, sports competition as well as a social event. The event of GöteborgsVarvet is generally offering three different kinds of core products. The primary and most obvious one is naturally the races that are being held annually in the end of May. Secondly, in combination with the race, the event also offers the product of a big folk festival, targeting runners as well as spectators, and with a lot of different activities to participate and look at along the race track. Lastly, the event of GöteborgsVarvet also offers advertising space that is visible through various media channels, on the official website, etc. Edsberger (Own interview, 2011) stated that the companies that are most likely to advertise are those that either identify themselves with the core values of the event of GöteborgsVarvet, want to be associated with these, or simply just want the big media exposure that this event can offer. These partners and customers are explained more in detail in the following section.

3.3.3. The Stakeholders

According to the stakeholder theory, originally outlined by Freeman (2010, pp. 5-22), a corporation should base their decisions with all stakeholders' interests in mind. This implies that all parties that either affect or is affected by a corporation, both internally (e.g. customers, employees and owners) and externally (e.g. special interest groups and media), should be taken into account. The influence different stakeholders have on a corporation depend on the relationship they have with other forces in the network, and further what kind of power they possess (Frooman, 1999). Furthermore, according to the stakeholder theory the relationship between the different parts can be analyzed based on the interaction and interdependency with the core unit. This also explains how much each of them are affected if a change should occur in any link (Merrilees, Getz & O'Brien 2005). A few examples of stakeholders will be discussed here.

First and foremost, the event of GöteborgsVarvet is understood to have three categories of customers, as mentioned in the case study. In addition to the runners the event of GöteborgsVarvet has two main partners and beyond these five official cooperation partners and 15 official suppliers. Moreover, the runners have the possibility to run for charity. Finally the spectators are seen as a third group of customers.

Additional stakeholders of the event are the three agents situated in Norway, Denmark and Germany. Their main tasks are to attract and support runners that are about to participate in GöteborgsVarvet. Authors and scholars have for decades discussed the concepts of uncertainty and risks in relation to the principal-agent theory in different industries (Clark, 2009; Maskin & Tirole, 1990; Eisenhardt, 1989). The theory treats the difficulties that may arise when a principal contracts an agent to fulfill certain commitments. Problems can occur for instance when the agent and the principal have divergent goals, the agent is acting in self-interest or there exist information asymmetry between the two actors (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Moreover, the location of the event, the city of Gothenburg, is also a stakeholder. Traffic, hotels and tourist attractions will be heavily affected the days of the event. The city is situated on the west coast of Sweden and has approximately half a million inhabitants (Göteborgs Stad, 2010). The concept of location images and the close relation with sports events images are discussed by Hallman, Kaplanidou and Breuer (2010) and Funk, Toohey and Bruun (2007). The authors argue that the image of sports events is perceived differently in diverse destinations, indicating that sports events may depend on the location. In other words, the location of the event and the event itself is highly connected.

Assumption C: The location and GöteborgsVarvet has the strongest connection among the different stakeholders.

3.3.4. The Supporting Products/Services

A running event usually provides different kinds of products/services. Except from the core ones that already have been established (races, folk festival and advertising), GöteborgsVarvet as an organization offers two products outside of the running event. One of them is the renting out of the Athletic Center, the facility of the Gothenburg Athletic Association. Here people practice, elite as well as amateur, young as well as old, whether it is for a specific event, to keep healthy or simply just for fun. The building is also rented out and used frequently for various different competitions, mostly for track and field but also other sports. The hall can also be rented by companies for exhibitions or different company events. In addition, at the days of the event of GöteborgsVarvet there are often stands where different kinds of products such as clothes and water bottles are sold.

3.3.5 The Brand Image of GöteborgsVarvet

As the four forces we described above are understood to be interrelated, it is also assumed that they together shape the brand image of GöteborgsVarvet. The importance of a well-recognized brand is apparent. Aaker and McLoughlin (2010, p.175) state that “it is

strategically crucial to develop, refine, and leverage brand assets”. Hence, it is further assumed that it is these forces that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet needs to work with when trying to attract international runners to the event.

A brand is defined as “the overall impression that the name or symbol creates in the minds of customers, including the product’s functional and symbolic elements” (Jago et al., 2003, p. 5). Moreover, Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002, p.17) define brand equity as “the brand assets (or liabilities) linked to a brand’s name and symbol that add to (or subtract from) a product or service”. According to Aaker and McLoughlin (2010, p.176), there are three types of brand assets: brand awareness, brand loyalty and brand association. Hence, the familiarity of the brand, the resistance of customers to switch to another brand, and that the customers relate the brand to positive external assets play a vital role in their attitude towards the product/service (Aaker & McLoughlin, 2010, pp.176-179; Xing & Chalip, 2006; Merrilees, Getz & O’Brien, 2005).

Furthermore, Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002, pp.141-142) discuss the concept of co-branding and what may happen when brands from different organizations unite. According to Xing and Chalip (2006) and Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002, p.142) the value of co-branding depends on the strategic alignment of two brand’s marketing objectives and communications. In order for the association to be successful there is a need of community support and a strategic and cultural fit. Other important factors are the uniqueness of the event in the way that it has to be able to differentiate itself from others, the long term tradition of the event at the specific destination, cooperative planning between the different key players involved but also media support for the event. This can somehow be connected to ‘event tourism’, a phenomenon which is defined by Getz and Wicks (1993, p.2) as “the systematic planning, development and marketing of festivals and special events as tourist attractions, catalysts and image builders”. Xing and Chalip (2006) and Jago et al. (2003) further explain that the relationship between the event and the destination can sometimes be that the images or values can be transferred between them, and therewith strengthen, enhance or change the brand. This can also apply to sponsorship where an outside company (the sponsor) pairs its brand with the event brand. They have then formed an alliance and have expectations on each other that benefits will be created together (Xing & Chalip, 2006).

Assumption D: There exist possibilities for co-branding between the organization of GöteborgsVarvet and various forces in the network.

3.4. The Customers’ Motives to Take Part in Running Events Abroad

This section regards previous research on the topic from a customer point of view. This is accomplished by looking at how customers can be divided into different segments as well as their motives of participating in foreign countries’ running events.

Assumption E: International runners participate in GöteborgsVarvet for different reasons.

3.4.1. Customer Segmentation

The customers of GöteborgsVarvet can broadly be segmented into different customers; customer segmentation can be done. According to Marcus (1998) this is one step further from making market segmentation, and entails that you take the approach of finding out and analyze customers' buyer attitudes, motivation patterns of usage, and preferences when taking marketing decisions. Kim et al. (2006) further state that customers are grouped based on their value and cross-selling opportunities. The segmentation is also important for the allocation of resources and adaptation of product mixes, as well as to know how to develop new products/services and market approaches (Teichert, Shehu & von Wartburg, 2008). Therefore there is a need to group the customers to be able to identify how to serve certain groups as effectively as possible. GöteborgsVarvet's customers can be broadly divided into three groups: runners, spectators, and partners/sponsors. These can subsequently be further separated into different types, as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Example of GöteborgsVarvet's Customer Groups

Customers		
Runners	Spectators	Partners/Sponsors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Elite •Hobby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Families •Couples •Locals •Tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Main partners •Official suppliers •Charity partners •Official cooperation partners

3.4.2. Main Motives of Customer Participation in Running Events

Several scholars (Chadwick, 2009; Funk, Toohey & Bruun 2007; Funk & Bruun, 2007; Moshin, 2005) further emphasize the importance of understanding the customers' needs and preferences. All sports events, have the opportunity to attract participants, audience and media attention and thereby bring both social and economic benefits for the host region. However, in order to do so it is vital for an organization to understand one's customers and establish what motives the individuals have to participate in running events.

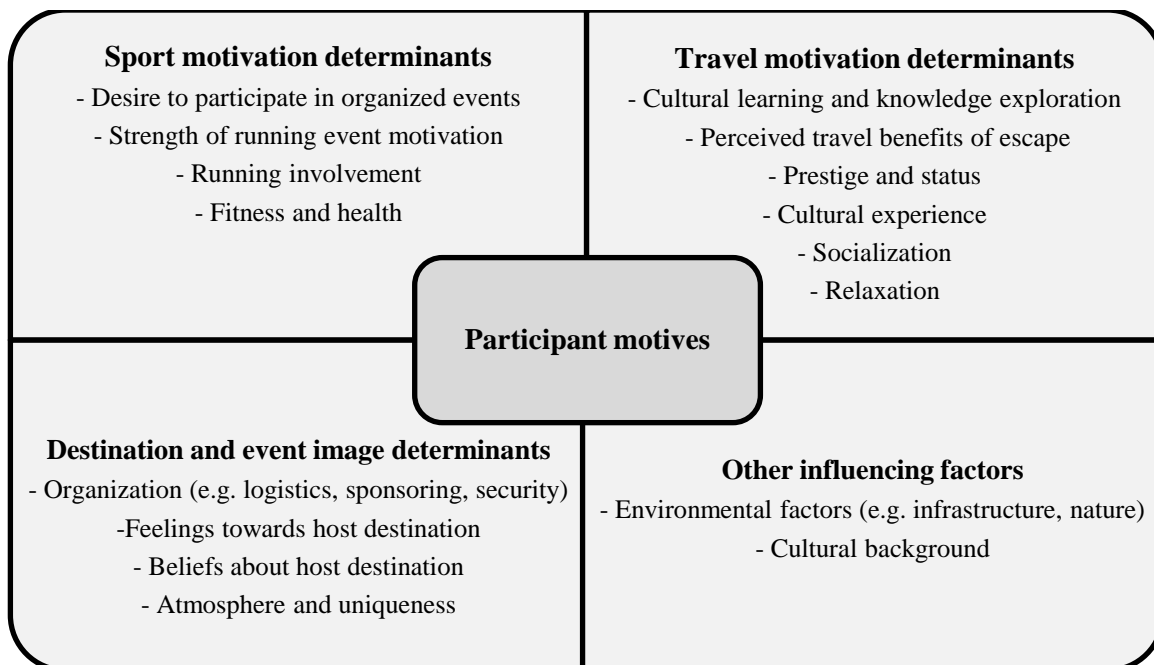
The reason why runners choose a specific event and destination have been examined by several scholars (Hallman, Kaplanidou & Breuer, 2010; Funk, Toohey & Bruun, 2007; Funk & Bruun, 2007; Kotze, 2006). Hallman, Kaplanidou and Breuer (2010) performed a study on German marathon runners' perception of four domestic races where they drew parallels between sports events images and destination images. The result showed that the destination was an important reason for participating. They then state that the event perceptions depends whether you are an active (the runner) or a passive sport tourist (the spectator). The latter links the emotional theme with historical and social aspects of the destination, as the active marathon runner connects their emotions more with physical and organizational features. Furthermore, the authors state that different sports events destinations are perceived

differently and therefore it is recommended to use the uniqueness of the destinations when marketing the sports events. In addition, as there are differences between active and passive sport tourists, the authors further suggest customized marketing.

Funk and Bruun (2007) conducted another study investigating the socio-physiological and cultural-education motives' contribution to participate in international sports events through a case study of the 2005 Gold Coast Airport Marathon in Australia. This specific case was later further examined by Funk, Toohey and Bruun (2007) who chose to look at the overall motives of the international participants. The studies demonstrate that runners are not only motivated to participate due to the sport itself, the host destination's or the enthusiasm of traveling, but also reveal that cultural background have an impact. For instance, people from a culture that differs from the host destination are more likely to experience travel benefits of relaxation and cultural learning. Kotze's (2006) study is more concentrated on the impact that a marathon event has on the host destination, but also mentions that the main reasons of people participating in marathon events can be categorized as followed: physical motivations (needs such as fitness and sports), interpersonal motivations (e.g. socialization) and status and prestige factors.

Based on the above mentioned studies (Hallman, Kaplanidou & Breuer, 2010; Funk, Toohey & Bruun, 2007; Funk & Bruun, 2007; Kotze, 2006), Figure 4 is constructed and summarizes the motives for competing in running events abroad.

Figure 4. The International Participants' Motives to Attend Running Events



3.5. Barriers to Internationalization

Several authors (Lópes-Duarte & Vidal-Suárez, 2010; Hallman, Kaplanidou & Breuer, 2010; Chalip & Costa, 2005) discuss different kinds of barriers when it comes to internationalization and how businesses should try to overcome those.

***Assumption F:** The organization of GöteborgsVarvet has identified their threats and obstacles in beforehand for precautionary reasons in able to minimize the risks and costs of internationalizing.*

As has been established, there is a big extent of literature that has identified the very strong link that exists between the event and the destination in able to create a successful outcome (Hallman, Kaplanidou & Breuer, 2010; Chalip & Costa, 2005). Since both the city and the event play a significant role in the ability to improve people's perception of the host city, cooperation is highly important. Furthermore, in a study made by Ritchie, Sanders and Mules (2007) it showed that a city's and event's image can be changed considerably with the help of various media channels, in particular televised events. However, if a city originally has a dull or negative image, the requirements for the efforts and time spent on trying to improve it will naturally be more. The authors further point out that promoting a city during normal circumstances is already hard enough, while doing it in combination with bad press or stereotypical images is perhaps even harder. According to McHone and Rungeling (2000) another challenge is the economic impact analysis that events have to do in order to convince policy makers and the general public that this particular event should be supported. This goes hand in hand with Chalip and Costa (2005), who look at it from a brand equity perspective. According to these authors cities should only choose to host events that will contribute to the value of the destination brand. However, this poses a problem when several industries are still very new and can therefore be very hard to define. Furthermore, measurement issues can also appear as it can be difficult to separate the specific event's induced spending with the spending caused by other activities. If the different impacts an event have is relatively unknown, it will therefore be hard to set up goals, promote it and convince the various stakeholders to support it. Furthermore, an unwanted effect of co-branding can also occur. This phenomenon is supposed to be an effective way of changing a brand image, by transferring desired characteristics of the event brand to the destination, or vice versa. However, sometimes the result might not always turn out as expected. Occasionally unwanted characteristics might instead be transferred, and this is especially so when previous accurate research and identification of the two different brands have not been done, thus leading to the two brand images clashing instead of working together to enhance each other (Chalip & Costa, 2005).

***Assumption G:** If the organization of GöteborgsVarvet does not have a close collaboration with the city of Gothenburg its activities will face the risk of not reaching its full potential, as well as this will pose as a hindrance to further international growth.*

Languages and other cultural differences are also argued to be common internationalization barriers (Lópes-Duarte & Vidal-Suárez, 2010; Quinn et al., 2009; Hutchinson, Fleck & Lloyd-Reason, 2009). Lópes-Duarte and Vidal-Suárez (2010, p. 578) argue that the language barrier “may significantly influence internationalization decisions and entry mode choice”. The authors further state that a language barrier between two organizations or individuals can disturb the information flow between them and lead to a loss of trustworthiness. On the other hand they reveal that language skills can provide an individual or organization with power and opportunities.

Assumption H: *If the organization of GöteborgsVarvet does not have a certain language quality in the information that is shared on their website, this will pose as a hindrance to further international growth.*

Lastly, another challenge for a company when facing internationalization is to find a good balance between the three different factors that influence the choice of foreign market entry mode; control, relational friction, and resource commitment. Erramilli and Rao (1993) mention that the default option for firms will always be that they prefer to have an entry mode that will allow them to have full control, there will thus exist no relational friction, and a choice where they have to make as little resource commitments as possible. Achieving this is not always possible or desirable in the end. For instance, transferring or sharing some of the control with a partner can have its advantages, especially when there is high uncertainty and the partner has more knowledge of the foreign market the company wishes to enter. However, when collaborating with another company there is always the risk of relational friction appearing. Working independently on the other hand means full control, but also more resource commitments (Blomstermo, Sharma & Sallis, 2006). A more thorough description and discussion of these three factors will be presented in ‘Characteristics of Foreign Market Entry Modes’ in the next section.

3.6. Foreign Market Entry Modes of Running Events

The general motives why the organizers of an event want to internationalize have now been identified, as well as the reasons why runners want to participate in an event abroad. The next step is to investigate what different modes the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has to choose between when entering a foreign market.

When looking at previous research about internationalization of businesses, a fair amount covers the traditional entry modes such as exports, greenfield investments, foreign direct investments, etc. Other existing literature covers the internationalization process that a company has to go through. However, services are usually unique and because of this some firms are client followers, thus they go wherever the customers are (Blomstermo, Sharma & Sallis, 2006).

Assumption I: *The organization of GöteborgsVarvet is, in accordance with other service firms, following the customers in their internationalization process.*

Furthermore, a model that has been introduced for studying a firm's internationalization process is network perspective theory. This means that firms develop business relationships in networks abroad to be able to expand internationally. So as the relationships in the foreign markets develop, so does the firms operation in that particular market. This also includes international social and personal networks, which emerge over time and creates trust. Having these social bonds is highly vital to gain information about business networks and will make it easier to access and be successful in new markets (Björkman & Kock, 1997). However, in the case for the organizers of sports events it is quite different to choose an appropriate entry mode. Sport is considered by its customers as a "process consumption", an experience that is something more exclusive than consumption of physical goods. However it has become easier to satisfy the needs of these sport fans, regardless of where in the world they are, due to the advancement in information technologies (Dolles & Söderman, 2008a).

3.6.1. Characteristics of Foreign Market Entry Modes

According to Blomstermo, Sharma and Sallis (2006) *control* is the single most important factor when choosing a foreign market entry mode since it determines both the risk and return of the expansion. It also decides the *relational friction* between the different parties and the international performance. This is defined as the occurrence of misunderstandings or misinterpretations between two firms, due to for instance divergent interests or culture (Blomstermo, Sharma & Sallis, 2006). Javalgi and Martin (2007) and Blomstermo, Sharma and Sallis (2006) further continue this argument and state that control is very crucial also for ensuring that the purpose of the organization is fulfilled. As the importance for a service firm to personally interact with its foreign customers increase, they should select an entry mode that will permit high control over the expansion abroad. Having a high level of control is also important when dealing with a high value brand. It should be kept in mind though that more control will come with the price of more *resource commitment*, which is preferable avoided during normal circumstances. Furthermore, the level of risk, cultural distance and vertical integration also determines the level of resource commitment required of a firm when entering a foreign country (Quer, Claver & Rienda, 2007).

In contrast, low control entry modes are usually preferred when the organization has little previous knowledge about the market it is entering, thus when there is a high uncertainty level and demand is unknown. This is explained by the fact that the firm wants to gain some experience, which is gathered by cooperating with a local firm (Blomstermo, Sharma & Sallis, 2006). This conflicts with what Quer, Claver and Rienda (2007) mention in their article. According to them firms prefer high-control entry modes such as wholly owned or joint ventures when experiencing a very high uncertainty level in the foreign country they want to enter. This further proves that the previous research results differ distinctively between each other and that the appropriate foreign market entry mode to apply in the end should be adapted to each unique company or situation.

***Assumption J:** The final choice of foreign market entry mode depend on the organization of GöteborgsVarvet's level of resources, how much control they want to keep and how willing they are to cooperate with partners.*

Below follows a description of the different entry modes that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet can choose between. According to Ekeledo and Sivakumar (2003) events like running events that are location bound cannot be exported and therefore only entry modes with the help of foreign direct investments or through contractual modes can be established.

***Assumption K:** The organization of GöteborgsVarvet's current international strategy with agents and the Internet is the best alternative in terms of attracting foreign runners to the event.*

3.6.2. Contractual Arrangements

Among the contractual forms of sports events internationalization, agents seem to be one of the most significant one. For example, ING New York City Marathon has 100 different agents dispersed in 40 countries and Virgin London Marathon has 30 tour operators located in 18 different countries (New York City Marathon, 2011; Virgin London Marathon, 2011). The agents are contracted by the principal (the running event) with the main aim to attract international participants to a specific event. Furthermore, the contracted agents function as coordinators and handle all requests of those who wish to participate in a certain running event (Getz & Fairley, 2004).

Franchising is another form of contractual arrangement. The concept denotes that the owner, the franchisor, have a service or product that another firm, the franchisee, is contracted to sell (Norton, 1988). Compared to other service industries there are rather few sport franchising examples. However, in the United States franchising of the four major leagues (National Football League, Major League Baseball, the National Basketball Association and the National Hockey League) has been very popular. Cities that are large enough have competed in attracting the events (Rappaport & Wilkerson, 2001).

Awareness can also be created with the help of either exhibitions or, specifically in the case of running events, qualification races. Bellamy (1993) demonstrates that the National Football League in the United States has chosen to have pre-season exhibition games in various cities around the world as their internationalization strategy. For running events this could translate in either taking part of various sport or health related exhibitions, or have qualifications races in cities of the markets they are targeting in order to create a curiosity and gradual awareness of the event.

A final way of getting people to recognize a brand is through branch magazines. Getz and Fairley (2004) argue that when it comes to running events, international exposure is primarily achieved through advertising in international magazines for runners.

When it comes to the three characteristics of a contractual foreign market entry mode, Quer, Claver and Rienda (2007) argue that the approach is applied less frequently the more uncertain the environment is. This is due to the fact that adaptations cannot be made fast enough as the two parts must come to an agreement on the matter first. This implies that the control of the matter is shared between the principal or the owner (the running event) and the agents (in this case either the agent, franchisee, running magazine, exhibition or the contracted agent handling the qualification race). Nevertheless, the established contract between the parts makes it possible for the principal or owner to have certain control of their interest. By clearly stating the agents' rights combined with attractive incentives for the agents, the contract should function as a control mechanism (Tosi, Katz & Gomez-Mejia, 1997). Furthermore, as the control is shared, we can assume that the resource commitment is fairly low and that there is a risk of misinterpretations between the different parts.

3.6.3. Cooperative Arrangements

Wittenberg and Morse (2011) argue that cooperation between stakeholders is necessary in order to further develop and raise awareness of running as a sport. Cooperative arrangements between two or several parts, who strive for the same goals by pooling of resources and activities, have become significantly more important recent years. These arrangements can take various forms, for instance strategic alliances, supplier-buyer partnerships, marketing alliances, joint ventures and joint research projects are common (Teng, 2007; Grant & Baden-Fuller, 2004). Several examples confirm that running events are following the trend of creating cooperative arrangements. Getz and Fairley (2004) declare that the Gold Coast Airport Marathon in Australia has international collaborations with different kinds of sport organizations and sport industry companies in order to attract international attention. Furthermore, in 2006 five of the world largest marathons (Boston, Chicago, New York, London and Berlin) got together and created World Marathon Majors (WMM). The organizers' main aims are to develop and raise awareness of the sport along with increasing the interest for elite racing (WMM, 2011; Wittenberg & Morse, 2011). Furthermore, there are also examples of marathon event alliances where the parties attempt to pool their resources and promote one another's events, that is, a marketing alliance (Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010).

Qualification races can also be established through a cooperative arrangement. The basic motives are the same as for contractual, however, here the running event in question works together with one or several partners and thereby share both the control and costs. That is, instead of letting an outside actor handle the entire qualification race by themselves, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet will initiate collaboration with a partner and together they arrange the qualification race as tool for attracting more foreign runners to GöteborgsVarvet.

Another cooperative arrangement is word-of-mouth (WOM), which is when a customer recommends or tells other people about his/her opinion of a product or service. This has become an accepted notion to be effective and has a strong influence on people's judgment of



a new service or product (Herr, Kardes & Kim, 1991; Johnson-Brown & Reingen, 1987). WOM is a form of entry mode which a firm cannot control due to the fact that it is an interpersonal form of informal communication which can either be positive, neutral or negative (Anderson, 1998).

Furthermore, there are a number of different marathon calendars, or marathon guides, online. On these kind of websites runners all over the world can find information where and when different running events take place together with statistics and other useful information (ahotu marathons, 2011: AIMS, 2011b; MarathonGuide, 2011). A final cooperative way of getting people's attention is through branch magazines. But instead of paying a magazine for publishing advertisements, a running event can invite the magazine to write an article about them. The level of control for the firm of the message that is sent to the target group is then very low, with the publisher of the magazine having the upper hand. The occurrence of relational friction is very rare, but might happen if the image of the magazine and the event does not match.

The main problematic issue with a cooperative arrangement has to do with the shared control. Firstly, it is difficult to identify who a "good" and suitable partner is. Secondly, there might emerge conflicting objectives and opportunistic behaviors. Nevertheless, cooperative arrangements provide an alternative to avoid full resource commitment (Teng, 2007).

3.6.4. Wholly Owned Arrangements

A final form of entering a foreign market is to establish wholly owned subsidiaries/sales outlets, qualification races or websites. The established sales outlets are meant to offer the local customers booking services and the essential information about the running event. This form can be seen as a substitute to agents, but implicate more control (Yiu & Makino, 2002). Furthermore, qualification races abroad can, as described above, be established through a contractual agent or together with a cooperative partner. However, it is also possible for a running event to set up a qualification race abroad on their own. A website is a third channel to be used that is wholly owned by the organization. This channel does not physically mean that the organization enters a foreign market, but instead first-hand knowledge is distributed to the foreign markets online. This approach provides a supply-side advantage of lower production and transportation costs compared to physical distribution activities (Geyskens, Gielens & Dekimpe, 2002). On the website the organization has full control to present all kinds of information in different languages.

However, the first two described wholly owned arrangements imply that the flexibility of moving away fast from the country is more problematic compared to using contractual or cooperative entry modes (Quer, Claver & Rienda, 2007). Furthermore, establishing a wholly owned subsidiary implies high costs of resource commitments.



3.6.5. Matrix of Foreign Market Entry Modes

Table 2 summarizes the foreign market entry modes and their different characteristics demonstrated above. It clearly illustrates that control comes with the cost of resources.

Table 2. Matrix of Foreign Market Entry Modes

	Control	Cost of resource commitment	Relational friction
<u>Contractual</u>			
Agents	shared	low	moderate
Franchising	shared	low	moderate
Qualification races	shared	low	moderate
Exhibitions	shared	low	moderate
Running magazines	shared	low	low
<u>Cooperative</u>			
Strategic alliance	shared	moderate	high
Joint venture	shared	moderate	high
Qualification races	shared	moderate	high
Word-of-mouth	no	low	low
Marathon calendars	shared	low	low
Running magazines	low	low	moderate
<u>Wholly owned</u>			
Subsidiary/sales outlet	full	high	low
Qualification races	full	high	low
Website	full	low	low

4. Methodology

This chapter is intended to describe the methodological approaches employed in this research process. Thereby we outline the chosen research approach, research design, the data collection method as well as the reliability and validity of the thesis.

4.1. Research Approach

The main purpose of this thesis was to explore how the organization of GöteborgsVarvet should develop its internationalization strategy. When reviewing existing literature it became evident that the concept of internationalization and foreign market entry mode are heavily investigated when it comes to manufacturing and service industries. However, in terms of sports events, and more specifically running events, we concluded that there existed a research gap. Due to this lack we constructed a conceptual framework with the help of previous studies concerning internationalization of sport or running events. However, in the cases where this was not possible, parallels were drawn with the service industry.

Furthermore, the fact that there was a need to construct a new framework for the study, the investigation in its nature is called exploratory. However, as the study has been about describing the unique case of GöteborgsVarvet, it also became a descriptive research (Yin, 2003, pp.7, 23). We have further chosen to follow the recommendation by Yin (2003, p.33) and Patton (2002, p. 131) who declare that a qualitative research is suitable when dealing with inadequate evidence and there is an attempt to describe and explain one specific case in a general pattern. It should also be mentioned that we used features of quantitative data provided from the questionnaire.

In addition, we consider the thesis to have been conducted with an abductive method. This means that the process of forming the research has not been restricted to only one single theory. We started with having a theory in mind that could be relevant for our case study. Research was then conducted and as new information was gathered, the conceptual framework was developed. In most cases this results in additional theories being identified and used for complementary purpose. In other words, it was an ongoing process of finding theories, gathering data and trying the theories out; we constantly went back and forth between theory and reality (Patel & Davidson, 2003, p. 25; Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

4.2. A Single Case Study

The research design of this thesis is a case study. The decision to use a qualitative case study is supported by Swanborn (2010, p.25) who argues that this approach is appropriate when “the project lies in some broad, familiarizing questions about a social process”. Merriam (2009, p. 40) further suggests that a case study is a preferable research design when the research is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system”. Furthermore, as this thesis is not focusing on all kind of running events, but specifically on GöteborgsVarvet, the thesis is considered as a case study.

Yin (2009, p. 8) also argues that when a report is characterized by a “how” or “why” question and has the objective to investigate a phenomenon within its real-life context, the most suitable research approach is a case study. As the main aim of this thesis was to examine how the organization of GöteborgsVarvet should arrange their internationalization strategy, we were confident with the research approach decision.

Moreover, Merriam (2009, p. 42) discusses the importance of deciding the unit of analysis. The basic motive for choosing GöteborgsVarvet as the selected case in this thesis was that there already existed an established contact between the organization of GöteborgsVarvet and our school, the Gothenburg University – School of Business, Economics and Law. The selection was therefore a conscious one. Furthermore, there was an underlying request from the organization of GöteborgsVarvet that this matter should be investigated. However, even though it was a matter of convenience, we concluded early in the process that the problem of a low ratio of international participant was a characteristic of GöteborgsVarvet.

4.3. Data Collection

For us to be able to gain a better understanding of the internationalization strategy of running events, both primary and secondary data were collected.

4.3.1. Primary Data

Interviews

To get a better picture of what internationalization strategy and which foreign market entry modes might be good for GöteborgsVarvet, identification and understanding of the opinions of the runners, the organization and the stakeholders needed to be established. This could best be done with the help of interviews with people belonging to these different groups. Therefore we collected primary data mainly with the help of ten explorative interviews. To be able to find out about the motives behind why the organization of GöteborgsVarvet wants to attract more international runners, an interview with a relevant employee was conducted. In order to examine how the city of Gothenburg, one of GöteborgsVarvet’s main stakeholders, perceives the event and the internationalization of it, interviews were conducted with two representatives. Furthermore, to better understand why people choose to participate in running competitions outside of their home country and how they choose where to go, seven in-depth interviews with both elite and hobby runners were conducted. Information about how they found out about running events was also assembled, which helped us when analyzing what internationalization strategy and which foreign entry modes would fit the event.

According to Kvale (1996, p. 1-2) the best way to find out and understand how people perceive a certain thing is to talk directly with them. During a qualitative research interview the interviewer gets the chance to understand it from the interviewees’ point of view by allowing them to use their own words, expressions and explanations. This is why it is called an *inter view*, an inter change of views between two parts in a conversation about something both have an interest in. Furthermore, it should also be mentioned that using qualitative

research interviews is more about interpretation, summary and integration, than trying to count and correlate (Warren, 2002, p. 83; Weiss, 1995, p. 3).

Choice of Respondents

According to Weiss (1995, p. 17) there are two types of respondents; people who are experts in a field and can therefore be very informative (key informants); and people who taken together can be representative for a population. In this thesis we chose to conduct interviews with both categories. To be able to enhance the understanding of the motives why the organization of GöteborgsVarvet wants to attract more foreign runners, why international runners choose a particular running event and further why they choose to run GöteborgsVarvet, we tried to interview people who looked at this thesis subject differently or knew about different aspects of it. This was to gain such a wide range of knowledge as possible.

Developing the Interview Guide

Before the interview it is very important to think about the design and structure of it. This is to avoid too big of surprises, prevent things from going wrong as well as it determines the interaction and outcome of the interview. In preparation for the qualitative interviews we lined up some rough topics to be covered together with suggested questions. We chose to put the more easy and general questions about the organization or the runners background, depending on who was interviewed, at the beginning of the of the interview in order to get a soft start and allow the respondent to feel more at ease. Thereafter, the topics were constructed based on the knowledge obtained from the conceptual framework. The categorizations were also so that the answers received could later be assembled into different topics and thus ease the work of analysis (Kvale, 1996, pp. 83, 126, 130).

The Interview Process

When we had the chance, we chose to conduct the interviews face-to-face. This occurred during two occasions. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 91) this approach is appropriate when “thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptions are involved” and therefore also considered as suitable for this thesis. However, as several of the interviewees were living in foreign countries, this was not always possible. In those cases the interviews were conducted over Skype, which happened six times, and during two occasions the questions were answered by mail.

Qualitative in-depth interviews are characterized by being more like conversations than formal happenings with pre-determined types of responses. The interviewer give suggestions on topics to cover, but is flexible and let the interviewee frame and structure the responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). The interviews were carried out in a semi-standardized and semi-structured nature. The same main questions were asked to all the runners; however as the purpose of the interviews with the organizer and the stakeholders were not the same as with the runners, we chose to use a different interview guide for them. Furthermore, the order and follow-up questions varied depending on the flow of the discussion.

Before the interviews we prepared a sequence of themes to be covered as well as potential questions. However, we are of the opinion that the questions were of open character, and therefore we were also open to changes of order. The length of the interviews also varied depending on the interviewees; how much time they had and their additional knowledge in the subject. A majority of the interviews lasted for approximately one hour, while a few roughly took half an hour. The answers given provided us to discover different concepts and true relationships between different factors, and thus allowed us to organize and relate back to existing theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11).

Questionnaire

In addition to the interviews, we used the primary data from a questionnaire of GöteborgsVarvet's participants in 2008.

The questionnaire survey was sent by e-mail to a sampling of 3 325 participants. The sampling was conducted with a 10% random selection, using a SPSS procedure. The participants who chose to respond all did it voluntarily, and therefore it was a self-selected sample of 1 863 respondents. The total response rate was therefore 56%. However, it should be mentioned that there was a variation in response rate for each question asked. Furthermore, the respondents had the choice to either answer in Swedish or English. 92% chose to answer in the former language, and therefore the assumption was made that the remaining 12%, who then answered in English, were foreign runners (Getz & Andersson, 2010).

The questionnaire was developed by Tommy Andersson, professor at School of Business, Economics and Law – The University of Gothenburg. The questions were arranged in a set structure and are considered quantitative, since most of the answer choices provided were in the form of tick boxes.

4.3.2. Secondary Data

In order for us to get an initial understanding of the research field we collected and analyzed secondary data. This which mainly consisted of previous research papers, articles, journals, books, as well as a variety of different company based publications. This was collected in order to build the conceptual framework. In addition, initial knowledge of the phenomenon was also required to gain a stable theoretical grounding before writing the empirical part of the thesis, thus to be able to pose significant questions for the interviews (Kvale, 1996, p. 96). The gathering of the secondary data also made us realize that writing about this subject would be a challenge since not much initial studies or data was available about specifically internationalization strategy and foreign market entry modes for running events. However, the existing data provided an understanding of which different aspects an event has to look into when contemplating which foreign market entry mode to choose. The information found together with the conceptual model was later confronted with our empirical findings, which later led to the discussion and recommendations.

4.4. Research Credibility and Generalization

To be able to get a picture of how credible the results of this study are, a description and discussion has been done regarding the reliability and validity. Also methodological problems are brought up, which were the issues we faced while researching about the subject of this thesis. Furthermore, the level of generalization of the results and whether it can be applied to other cases is also discussed.

4.4.1. Reliability and Validity

Reliability means how credible the information gathered is in the way that it can resist external influences that are not relevant for the case. For instance, standardized interviews have high reliability because there are no space for random deviation since there are only set answers the interviewees can choose between. The level of reliability when using interviews is highly related to the interviewer's ability and how she/he registers the answers. Therefore it is fairly easy at this stage to make a lot of mistakes in the estimation. To achieve high reliability the researcher has to be critical and always question the information he/she has gathered (Troost, 2001, pp. 59-60; Patel & Davidson, 1994, pp. 85-87). Good validity on the other hand means that the instrument used to measure something is the right tool to use so that it measures what it is aimed to measure (Troost, 2001, p. 61; Patel & Davidson, 1994, pp. 85-86).

According to Troost (2001, p. 61) the correlation between reliability and validity does not always have to be positive. For instance a study can have high reliability but low validity. However, if the reliability is low the validity automatically also becomes low, since the outcome of the random deviations lead to the fact that you no longer measure what you are supposed to.

To be able to gain a high reliability and validity in this thesis we spent a lot of time in developing the different interview guides. We had long discussion about what questions to ask and how to formulate them so that as little room as possible could be made for any sort of misunderstandings. Furthermore, we chose to interview runners with different backgrounds and origins in order to avoid biased answers. Before each interview was conducted the topics to be discussed were e-mailed to the respondents so that they could receive a hint about what would be brought up. Furthermore, the interviews conducted face-to-face or over Skype were all recorded, which allowed us to go back and play the parts we did not understand or might have missed. It also permitted us to transcribe the interviews word-for-word, which further decreased the risk of misinterpretations. The fact that we were two persons who registered, categorized and interpreted the answers from the interviews, and compared our views with each other, raised the reliability of the study. After the transcription and summary were done of the interviews, the material was then e-mailed to the interviewees in order for them to get a chance to read the summary and to get confirmation whether they were correctly interpreted. This maintained the credibility of the paper, and we therefore consider the results of this study very credible.



4.4.2. Methodological Problems

A problem that always appears when doing case studies is that there is very little knowledge about how representative the study object actually is of the whole industry in question. Even though the overall concept of running events is the same, there are always differences between each event. Another problem has been that there is very little literature about foreign market entry modes for running events. Therefore we have looked at literature that covers the foreign market entry modes of mainly other sports events, but also at some extent other service companies. Thereafter we have tried to apply and compare these to our case. Furthermore, it is possible that our own subjectivity may have affected the collection, use and presentation of the data in this thesis. With this we mean that it may have affected the focus on what was brought up in the empirical section, and also that our personalities and opinions may have been reflected in the way we presented the collected data; we only mentioned the information that we thought was most significant.

4.4.3. Generalization

Even though this thesis is based on the case study of GöteborgsVarvet we feel that the research and conclusions can also be applied to other running events. But since every event is different from each other and have diverse capabilities, goals and resources, the final foreign market entry mode chosen should of course be adapted to the event in question. However, the models we have developed that lists the different foreign market entry modes is simple and general. Therefore we feel that it can also be used by other running events organizers, with only some minor changes being made where it is necessary. Furthermore we think that the learning established in this thesis about the network linkages is supported by previous studies conducted within this particular field. Therefore the result of this study can be generalized, and applied to other running events.

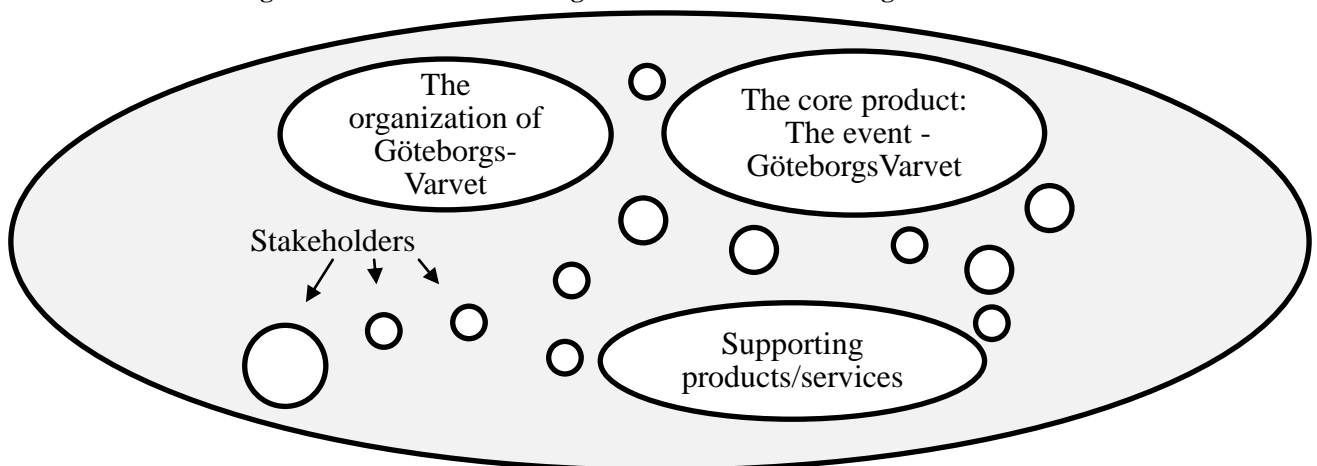
5. Empirical Findings

The main objective of this chapter is to lay out the empirical findings collected through primary data; both in-depth interviews and questionnaire data. We also present the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, the stakeholders and the runners, which together form the network linkages of the event of GöteborgsVarvet. Lastly a presentation of possible foreign market entry modes for GöteborgsVarvet has been conducted.

5.1. The Organization of GöteborgsVarvet

The organization of GöteborgsVarvet is considered to be extremely important according to Organizer 1³. She states that the runners should go home with the feeling of being well taken care of and with the eagerness to return. This is also something the organization continuously is working with and can be everything from ensuring that there is enough water at the start to making the race less crowded. Organizer 1 further states that they have an expressed desire of handling the event as much as possible on their own. The main reason for this is that the organization feels more secure to handle everything from the inside. There must be a certain level of quality if something should be done in the name of GöteborgsVarvet. Therefore the organization prefers playing safe and not involve so many external actors in their work. However, it is also clear that for such a big event the organization of GöteborgsVarvet cannot do everything by themselves. Figure 5 shows that there are certain forces linked with the event of GöteborgsVarvet that both affect and are affected by the event and the brand image of the event. The organization of GöteborgsVarvet has three main related forces; the core product, its stakeholders (represented by the empty bubbles in Figure 5) and the supporting products/services. However, it is only the event and the supporting products/services that belong to the organization. Therefore the stakeholders will be described later in this thesis.

Figure 5. The Network Linkages of the Event of GöteborgsVarvet



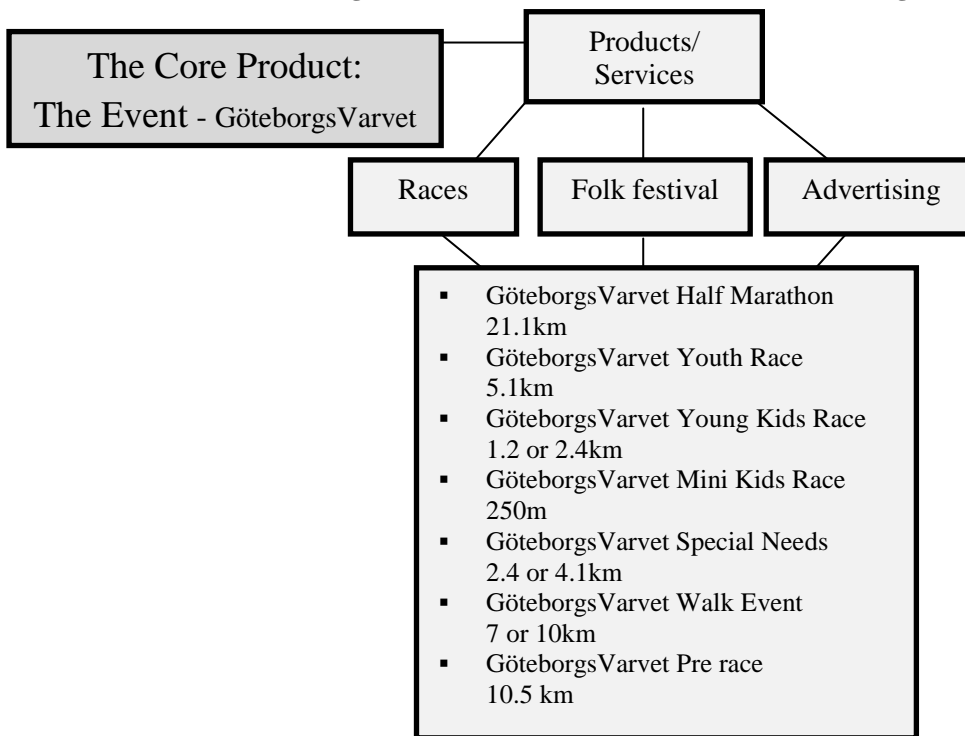
³ A more comprehensive reading of each of the interviews can be found in the Appendix.

5.1.1. The Core Product: The Event

The event’s most important attribute is according to Organizer 1 that it is a large folk festival. She explains this statement by describing how many people there are circulating in Gothenburg the days of the event. Thousands of people are participating in the different races and together with all the people who are cheering and various entertainments provided along the track, they shape the positive atmosphere. Organizer 1 further pinpoints the two remaining core values of the event; health and the competition.

Furthermore, advertising is a highly visible element during the days of the event. The exhibition 2010, held at the Athletic Center, provided the 80 000 visitors with exhibitors from different types of businesses related to running and health. In addition, different companies are highly visible both at the start and finish as well as along the whole track.

Figure 6. The Core Product: The Event – GöteborgsVarvet



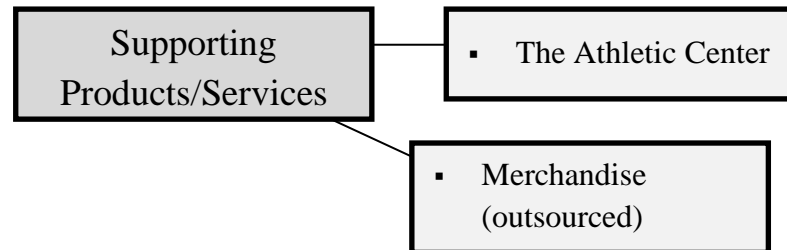
5.1.2. Supporting Products/Services

Organizer 1 reveals that when it comes to products and services beside those offered at the event, the Athletic Center is the only facility actually owned by the Gothenburg Athletic Association. The Athletic Center is at the time of the event the place where the runners get their start numbers but also where the exhibition takes place. Furthermore, the profit from the event goes first and foremost to the maintenance of the Athletic Center.

Additionally, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet also outsources the merchandise connected with the event. Previously, the organization took care of it themselves, but since the work

with it and interest among the general public of it has lessened throughout the years, they have instead chosen to outsource and transfer the responsibility of the merchandise to an outside party.

Figure 7. The Supporting Products/Services



5.1.3. Organizational Drivers of Internationalizing GöteborgsVarvet

The organization of GöteborgsVarvet does not have any special motives that drive them to internationalize according to Organizer 1. From the organizational point of view internationalization implies more work and extra costs when trying to attract more foreign participants. Organizer 1 further reveals that their desire is that 50% of the participants should come from West Sweden⁴, as these runners are the ones making the event a folk festival. Where the remaining 50% come from does not matter. She further argues that it is more difficult for a half marathon to grow internationally. Runners travel around the world to gather marathons, while it is not the same for half marathons. Thus, the question of internationalization is indifferent from the organization’s point of view.

Nevertheless, it should be clear that even though Organizer 1 is unsure whether more international runners would increase GöteborgsVarvet’s status abroad, she would still desire that the brand of GöteborgsVarvet would become more internationally well-known. It is of special importance that the international group of elite runners recognizes the event and has the desire to come back, since it is this group which attracts most media attention. Furthermore, if international runners become more aware of the event, the word-of-mouth will spread abroad and hopefully attract more participants to GöteborgsVarvet.

5.2. The Event of GöteborgsVarvet’s Stakeholders

Figure 8 (p. 33) illustrates that the event of GöteborgsVarvet has various stakeholders that both affect and are affected by the running event. However, when discussing stakeholders with Organizer 1, there are two main groups that are stressed; the customers and the city of Gothenburg.

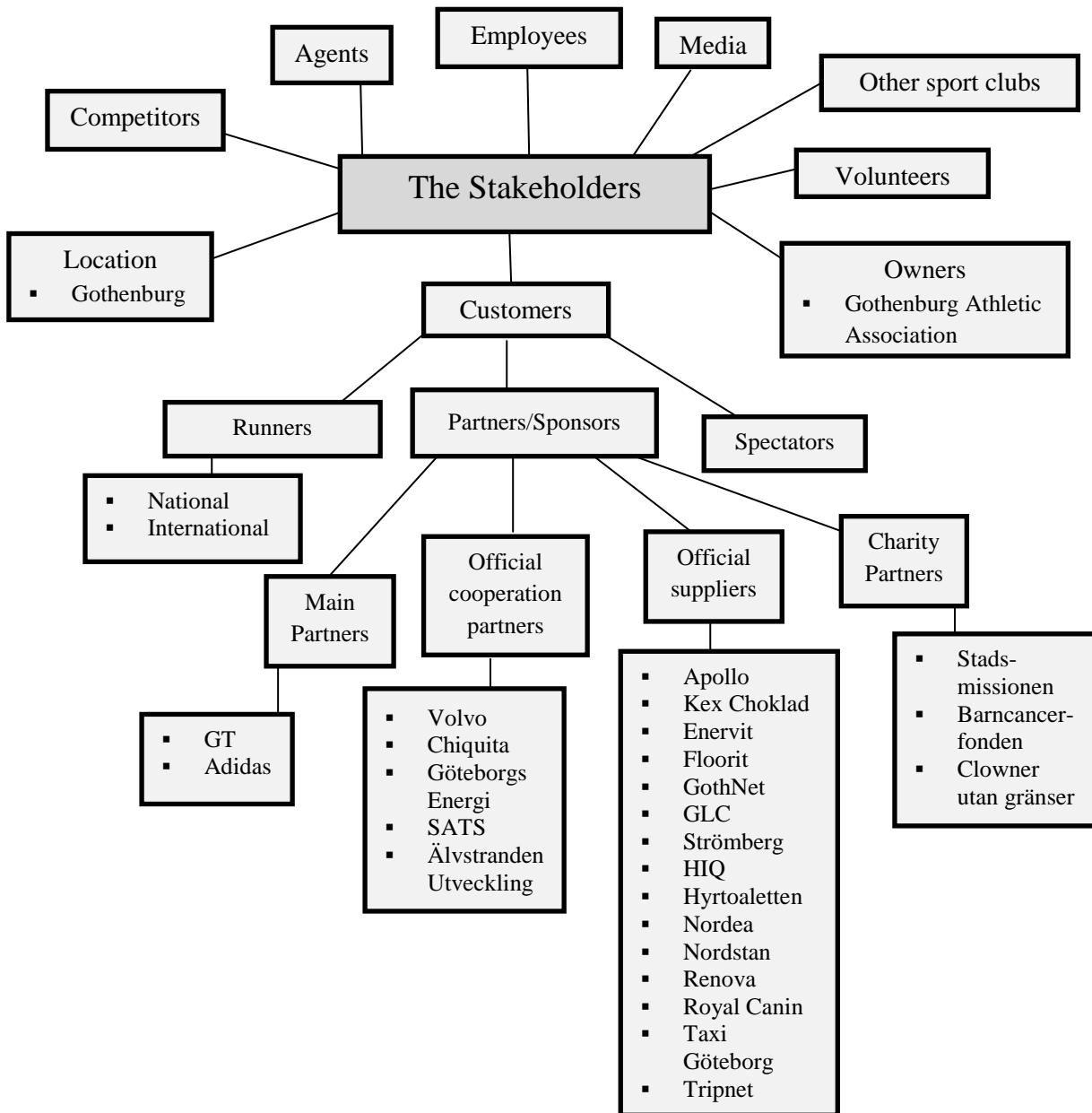
⁴ ‘West Sweden’ is a geographical term which consists of the Swedish counties of Västra Götalands län and Hallands län.

5.2.1. The Customers, the Destination and the Agents

Firstly, GöteborgsVarvet's different customers are seen as central stakeholders according to Organizer 1. This statement is in special consideration to the runners and other representatives from West Sweden, who are of exceptional importance. They are the ones who make GöteborgsVarvet to what it is; a folk festival. Furthermore, Organizer 1 anticipates that people partly take part in a running event based on the characteristics of the destination it is held in. Therefore she also argues that the city of Gothenburg is a significant stakeholder of GöteborgsVarvet. The city contributes inter alia with the logistical aspects, such as closing of the streets where the runners are running. However, the relationship between the organization of GöteborgsVarvet and the city of Gothenburg could be improved according to Organizer 1. One example that is given is that the city of Gothenburg has scheduled other events in the city the same weekend as GöteborgsVarvet takes place. As there is a limited amount of hotels, hostels and other forms of housing in the city, GöteborgsVarvet then has difficulties to offer all the runners accommodation. On the other hand, Stakeholder 1 speaks very positively of GöteborgsVarvet and claim that they are "very proud over hosting the world's biggest half marathon". Stakeholder 2 further says that "GöteborgsVarvet is seen as an incredibly successful and professional organization". However, she also states that the cooperation with the organization of GöteborgsVarvet mainly has regarded marketing and visibility in the past.

In addition to these two stakeholders, Organizer 1 further highlights the uncertainty about a third group, namely the agents located in Norway, Denmark and Germany. In the case of Norway and Denmark the sales agents have proven to work in an acceptable manner, but in Germany the results are questioned since the goals of the independent sales agent and the organization of GöteborgsVarvet are clashing. While the latter wants to attract as many runners as possible, the agent's priority has instead been to make a clear selection and get to know the runners first, and thereafter offer specialized packages. This has thus led to a decrease in number of German runners that could have participated in the race.

Figure 8. The Event of GöteborgsVarvet's Stakeholders



5.2.2. The Stakeholder's Drivers of Internationalization

The expressed desire to attract more foreign runners comes initially from the city of Gothenburg. Organizer 1 is together with Stakeholder 1 and Stakeholder 2 arguing that if people from foreign countries participate in the event, they will presumably bring companions, stay longer in the city and spend more money in the area than the national participants will do. Stakeholder 2 takes this belief further and explains that international runners often belong to a group with great purchasing power who preferably stay in hotels with high standards. In other words, the internationalization of GöteborgsVarvet is for the city of Gothenburg a question of consumption and generated profits.

In addition, Stakeholder 2 claims that more international runners would further imply opportunities for both the event and the city of Gothenburg in terms of promotion to other countries. Thereby there is also a chance to attract “regular” tourists to Gothenburg. People from foreign countries will become more aware of the culture of GöteborgsVarvet, the city of Gothenburg and what West Sweden stands for.

5.3. The Runners

After have presented the views of internationalization from an organizational and stakeholder perspective, we will now demonstrate the runners’ background. Thereafter we will reveal the interviewees’ and the questionnaire runners’ main motives of competing in running events abroad.

5.3.1. The Interviewed Runners’ Background

Table 3, which summarizes the interviewed runners’ background, demonstrates that the runners are very different when it come to their running experiences. As Elite Runner 2 has been traveling around the world in order to compete for more than 30 years, Hobby Runner 4 is about to take part in his first ever running event abroad this year. Furthermore, Elite Runner 1 and 2 have together with Hobby Runner 3 competed in a considerably more amount of running competitions abroad than the rest of the interviewed runners. When it comes to the number of running competitions abroad per year it is Elite Runner 1 and Hobby Runner 3 who distinguish themselves by running 15 or more competitions.

Moreover, although Elite Runner 3 and Hobby Runner 1 have run GöteborgsVarvet several times before, and Hobby Runner 2 has participated in numerous other half marathons, the table illustrates that many of the runners have a focus on and prefer to travel abroad in order to participate in marathons. Furthermore, the majority of the runners either travel together with friends or go by themselves to the running events. Table 3 further reveals that although the interviewees sometimes go abroad in order to participate in half marathons, most of them prefer marathons.

Table 3. The Backgrounds of the Interviewed Runners

	Country of origin	Years of competing experience abroad	No. of competitions abroad	No. of competitions abroad/year	Types of running events	Participated in Göteborgs-Varvet	How do you travel to the running events abroad?
Elite Runner 1	USA	14	Ca. 105	17 (less now)	Marathons, Ultra-marathons	No	By herself and with running friends
Elite Runner 2	UK	At least 30	85	2-3 marathons + shorter distance races	Focus marathons	No	Usually by himself, occasionally with companions
Elite Runner 3	Kenya/ Sweden	3	10	Ca 3	Focus on marathons	Yes, 5 times	With her coach
Hobby Runner 1	Sweden	6	4	1	Preferable marathons	Yes, 2 times	Family members and friends
Hobby Runner 2	Germany	11	20	1-2	Preferable marathons	No	For marathons with friends, for half marathons alone
Hobby Runner 3	UK	33	Ca 150	15-20	Preferable marathons	No	Friends
Hobby Runner 4	Belgium	First year 2011	0 (first in May 2011)	0	Half marathons	No	By himself

5.3.2. The Runners Motives of Competing

The results of the interviews we have conducted have shown that the main reason why runners choose to compete is because they want to keep being healthy and also challenge themselves. For most of them the latter also includes the training and the preparation that has to be done before competing, to prove to themselves that they can do it. This is especially so when it comes to running longer distances such as full marathons.

The Interviewed Runners

All the interviewed runners have and see running as an excellent way of training and exercising. The majority of the interviewees also prefer to compete in longer distances, and therefore sometimes consider the shorter races as a training for the full marathons.

For the three elite runners we have interviewed, all of them have responded that they take running very seriously. Elite Runner 1 answered that for her competing in races abroad means an opportunity to not only represent herself but also her home country. Furthermore, the elite runners reveal that they sometimes participate in certain competitions because they are being

sponsored and/or paid to do it, or it could be because it is a very important race, such as the World Championship. For this type of runners prize money and appearance fee is also important. As Elite Runner 2 explains, professional runners tend to go where the money is and offering a decent amount can certainly attract a few international athletes to a specific race. Elite runners also look at the competition they are facing in a race, and therefore try to stratify themselves across the events. Based on the different factors just mentioned, they usually go to the ones they feel are the best for them.

Hobby runners in comparison, who pay for themselves, tend to go wherever they want to go. For them it is more about the experience and chasing locations around the world. Furthermore, while elite runners have more pressure, a hobby runner lives more for the moment. Hobby Runner 1 mentions that for her participating in running competitions abroad is mainly because it feels like a bigger adventure than running domestic races. She further explains that she feels unique when she is running amongst the domestic participants in a foreign country. In the case of the characteristics of the race, another motivation for Hobby Runner 1 is also that she feels it is more fun to participate in races where they give the runners presents for running their race.

For several of the athletes interviewed a motivation is also the socialization that can be done and how they can meet people from all around the world with similar interests as them. In addition, the attraction of doing something out of the ordinary when visiting another country has also been brought up many times. Hobby Runner 2 for instance mentions that he gets a better understanding and feeling of the foreign country and its people after have participated in a running event there.

With the exception of Hobby Runner 1, the rest of the runners' primary job have given them a lot of opportunities to travel to different places in the world, and on these trips they have taken advantage of the time by also participating in the running events that have taken place at the destination. In other words, a motivation for them is that running is a form of training they can do in combination with doing business in a foreign country.

Elite Runner 1 and Hobby Runner 2 also mention the running track as a determinant and motive for where they choose to go. While the former emphasizes that the race should start and end in the same place, the latter puts more importance on the fact that the running track should allow the participants to see more of the city, especially parts one would normally not see. For Hobby Runner 4, who has only run shorter distances in his own country, a motivation to travel abroad and participate in foreign races is that the events are bigger and therefore have different starting blocks which allow the runners to start at separate times depending on how fast they run.

Something every runner we have interviewed, regardless elite or hobby, have in common is that they all mention the destination as a motive for participating in an international race. In other words, they all usually choose to participate in races which are located in places which

are attractive to them or somewhere they have wanted to visit. This goes hand-in-hand with achievements as a motivation. For instance Hobby Runner 2 tells that there is a special feeling of being able to say that one for example has run the world's most organized marathon (Tokyo Marathon), or Beijing Marathon which is on the Great Wall – a monument and one of the 'Wonders of the World'. For Hobby Runner 3 participating in different international races has been about "ticking the box", which means that he has a list of races he collects or wants to participate in and whenever he has done them, he ticks the box.

While most of the interviewees responded that their own performance has a big impact on whether they consider an event good or not, Hobby Runner 3 disagrees. This is because he is of the opinion that a runner can enjoy a race without have done a good race. Another motive that was brought up by several runners was the overall race atmosphere. This includes characteristics of the audience; such as them being excited, supportive and cheering on the runners, and also characteristics of the organization; the event being well organized so the runners will not grow impatient or get confused. Elite Runner 2 mentions that the organization of an event is very important and that there has to be a certain minimum level of competence to prevent it from becoming too disorganized. Hobby Runner 1 mentions that organization is important when it comes to how they handle the practical issues, since it has a big impact on her choice of where to go. Elite Runner 1 means that "the destination gets you there but the organization is what helps you enjoy your experience".

How the runners came to the international race will also determine the motivations and expectations of the event. For instance, runners that came and planned the trip themselves tend to have lower expectations than those who came with a traveling agency. The latter group is inclined to demand more of the side activities outside the race, while the former are just open to whatever the race offers them.

GöteborgsVarvet's Participants

For Hobby Runner 1 the motivation to run GöteborgsVarvet did not appear until she moved to Gothenburg. It was then the hype created by the residents of Gothenburg and her work and school friends that made her decide to participate. The motivation for her to now continue running the race is the well planned organization of the event, where she especially highlighted the runner service, the running track that takes one all around Gothenburg, and also the entertainment available around the track. For Hobby Runner 4 the attraction to run GöteborgsVarvet lies in the fact that it used to be a tradition within his company, which is highly associated with Gothenburg. In addition he also has a lot of friends and colleagues in the city.

Furthermore, the questionnaire results were presented in a scale from 1-7, with 7 meaning that the factor is highly important. The outcome illustrates that for the foreign runners participating in GöteborgsVarvet 2008, factors such as 'keeping my overall cost low' (4,2), 'my friends are also going' (4,6), 'special travel and accommodation on packages are provided' (4,0), 'the course is fast' (3.5), 'the expected weather conditions are attractive' (5,3)

and ‘everything I need to know is on a user-friendly website’ (4,1) are more important compared to their domestic counterpart, measured by mean-value. The foreign runners were of the opinion that factors such as ‘the event is really well organized’ (5,8) and ‘it’s a very scenic and interesting route’ (5,5) were the most important. In contrast, aspects such as ‘involvement of a major corporate sponsor’ (2,7) and ‘timing every third minute and the results sent as a text message’ (2,9) are more important for domestic runners. The factor that got the highest mean value for them were ‘the event is really well organized’ (5,2) and ‘celebrities are involved’ (5,3). However, the data showed that looking at it from a 1% significance level the results also show that factors such as ‘a lot of prize money is awarded’, ‘the event is really well organized’, ‘competitors receive great gifts’, ‘it’s exclusive (difficult to qualify for)’, ‘a recommendation to attend the event from someone I trust’, ‘it’s a very scenic, interesting route’, ‘small and intimate (few competitors)’ and ‘in a world-class city or destination’ are also affecting features that differ between the domestic and international runners, with the latter putting more importance to it.

Looking at the motives why the runners choose to participate in foreign running events, GöteborgsVarvet’s foreign runners put more emphasis on ‘be with my friends’ (4,1), ‘participate in a famous event’ (4,3), ‘be in a famous city or area’ (4,4), ‘travel to interesting places’ (5,0), ‘do something unusual’ (5,0), as well as ‘prepare for more important events’ (3,5). On the contrary domestic runners find motives such as ‘improve my athletic ability’ (5,8) and ‘for the thrill of it’ (5,8) more important. However, the most important motives for both groups are ‘have fun’ and ‘to challenge myself’.

5.4. GöteborgsVarvet and Foreign Market Entry Modes

In this section the organization of GöteborgsVarvet’s current international strategy will together with their views on internationalization be discussed. Thereafter the data of how runners obtain information of different kinds of running events will be presented.

5.4.1. The Organization of GöteborgsVarvet’s Current International Strategy

At the moment the organization of GöteborgsVarvet does not have a properly defined internationalization strategy. This is according to Organizer 1 mainly because the focus has always been on attracting participants from West Sweden and thus there has not been a need to set up one. Furthermore, the increase of participants each year for GöteborgsVarvet has constantly been the case of organic growth, so little effort has been required of the organizers to attract more runners, since the matter has been ‘handled by itself’.

Currently, one of the tools the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has that is also targeted towards the international runners is GöteborgsVarvet’s website, which is available in four different languages (Swedish, English, Danish and German). However, the Swedish version of the website contains considerably more information than in the other languages. In addition, the word-of-mouth method, meaning that previous international runners of

GöteborgsVarvet go back to their home country and talk about and recommend the event to their friends, is relied on heavily.

According to Organizer 1, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet at present cooperates with three sales agents in Denmark, Norway and Germany. It is also these three countries that most of the international runners come from. There have been considerations about increasing the number of agents to cooperate with, but the organization of GöteborgsVarvet is still not sure about the effectiveness of having them and therefore chooses to await the results from the existing three before taking this question further. Having an outside party represent GöteborgsVarvet is a hard and important job due to the fact that they will have to be properly informed and properly inform others about the work of GöteborgsVarvet. In addition, the level of control the organization has of the agents is not something they are concerned about. Currently none of the agents are allowed to use or say anything during the marketing campaign of GöteborgsVarvet that has not been approved or provided by the organization originally. This is because they want to know for certain that everything that is associated with GöteborgsVarvet is of high quality. As the organization of GöteborgsVarvet also has a restricted budget, Organizer 1 further argues that it is good that the agents, who already are located in the foreign countries, can handle some promotion. This is because traveling around to different exhibitions or races, in order to be visible for an international crowd, is costly.

At the moment, having foreign agents have not increased the number of international runners significantly. The use of agents is mainly due to the belief that international runners might find it more convenient to register through an entity in their own home country. These agents also do some marketing for the event at other races and exhibitions, which results in the fact that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet does not have to put effort into doing it themselves. Organizer 1 mentions though that the organization has not really seen the results from advertising at exhibitions, and therefore do not believe in this method. Other than above mentioned methods, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has not been very aggressive in trying to promote themselves internationally. When it comes to advertising, it is only through the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS), which they are a member of, and a few international running magazines.

5.4.2. Potential Future Foreign Market Entry Modes

The organization of GöteborgsVarvet has discussed other methods to enter a new market. This year they have three qualification races, with only one occurring outside of Sweden; Playitas, Spain. This has raised questions of franchising these races in the future, as long as the organization of GöteborgsVarvet still has control over them. However, this is not something the organization is actively seeking to further establish.

Furthermore, another method that Organizer 1 mentions is that establishment of contacts with other races in order to form some sort of collaboration. San Sebastian in Spain has shown

interest in doing so with the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, which could also be a good way to exchange runners.

5.4.3. The Runners' Main Source of Information

All of the runners interviewed have answered that they use Internet as their main source of information for an event. This includes the foreign running competition's website, marathon calendars, the Marathon Guide, running clubs' website, etc. Elite Runner 1 mentions that Internet is a great source of finding information about how good races were the previous year and also find information about smaller events. With the help of this a runner can thereafter do well-informed decisions. Elite Runner 2 and Hobby Runner 1 further highlights how important it is that an event has a good website with all the necessary information for the runners. Also the language is of utmost importance. For some events' websites the English has been very poor, or the information provided in the different languages has been unequal. This has in some cases made the process of registration and obtaining valuable information harder for the foreign runners. Furthermore, many of the runners also rely on their personal network and circle of friends to make suggestions and recommendations for events they should take part of in the future. Word-of-mouth is very common, but Elite Runner 1 mentions that the risk with this method is that people usually do not recommend an event to their friends if they live too far away from where the event takes place. It is more common that people discuss events located nearby, which they can travel to quickly.

According to the runners interviewed, most people tend to be very open for suggestion and information about potential running competitions to participate in. Another method of finding information has been through exhibitions. This is attained either through talking to people or through distributed literature on the stands. Hobby Runner 1 means that she considers that a part of the event is to stroll around the exhibition before the actual race, since it is at this time she is the most open for getting hold of information about new running events. Elite Runner 2 further points out that even though exhibitions might seem like an old-fashioned method to reach out to runners, it does work since people tend to pass the exhibition booth on their way to for example picking up their start number. The runners will then flip through the literature and look for suggestions of which races they can run next.

Moreover, when the runners search for information about foreign running events they can participate in, it is often day-driven. This means that the runner knows a time period he/she is going to be in a certain area or country and therefore consciously search for which running events are going to take place at that specific destination within that certain time period. This reduces the number of races he/she can choose between, and often also makes the decision easier to make. It is also very important that it fits with their schedule, since most runners have other professions than being a runner.

Looking at data from the questionnaire of the participants of GöteborgsVarvet, it proves that there is not a big difference between domestic and foreign runners when it comes to how they



receive information about an event. Surfing the Internet (foreign 6,2; domestic 5,7) and looking at the website of the specific event (foreign 6,3; domestic 6,0) are common ways for both domestic and international participants. However, what is different is that the results show that on average foreign runners tend to make use of running magazines (5,6), Internet blogs (5,9), running clubs (5,9), travel agents (5,9), as well as destination brochures (5,8) more than the domestic runners of GöteborgsVarvet. These latter mentioned information gathering methods have an interval of 1% significance, which means that there is a very clear difference in the results between domestic and international participants, and that there is a very little chance that the results are affected by random deviation.

6. Analysis

This chapter provides the reader with a detailed analysis of our understanding of how the organization of GöteborgsVarvet should develop its internationalization strategy. Thereby, the assumptions made in the conceptual framework is examined and tested. Hence, this chapter aims to answer this thesis' research questions.

6.1. The Internationalization Drivers of GöteborgsVarvet

Assumption A: *There are four different aspects which drive the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to internationalize; economic, marketing, social and cultural.*

Based on our survey we can conclude that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has no direct motive to internationalize. The Swedish running community seems to be large enough to satisfy GöteborgsVarvet's starting field capacity as the number of participants increase almost every year. From an organizational point of view, GöteborgsVarvet is also soon expected to reach the maximum number of participants that can be offered a starting position in the race. This means that the event is not in need of international runners to fill out any empty spots. Furthermore, as it is the Swedish participants, and especially the people coming from West Sweden, which are the most important customers for GöteborgsVarvet, the organization cannot see how they would benefit from more international runners. The organizers of GöteborgsVarvet see no incentive or advantage in further internationalization, but rather only see increased costs. Nevertheless, the fact that they want to promote the event of GöteborgsVarvet's three core values and make it more well-known abroad indicates that the cultural aspect driver is important. This signifies that from an organizational point of view, the theory building up **Assumption A** is not supported by our empirical findings.

On the other hand, the city of Gothenburg, one of GöteborgsVarvet's most affected stakeholders if the number of international participants would increase, has clear motives of internationalizing GöteborgsVarvet. Gothenburg sees the opportunity to first and foremost generate a significant economic upswing for the city, but also the possibility of promoting the regional area and present the culture to a new international audience. Hence, we can ascertain that from one stakeholder's point of view, **Assumption A** is partly supported by our empirical findings. Our interviews show that the stakeholders have three drivers of internationalizing; economic, marketing, and cultural. However, the economic aspect is the city of Gothenburg's number one driver.

6.2. The Network Linkages

Assumption B: *There are four interrelated forces (the organization, the core product, the stakeholders, the supporting products/services) which are influencing the brand of the event of GöteborgsVarvet.*

As perceived in both theory and our empirical findings, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet is linked to the core product, which is the event, with the stakeholders and the supporting products/services in a complex network. Together they shape the brand image of the event of GöteborgsVarvet. Therefore we can conclude that *Assumption B* is supported by our empirical findings. These different aspects affect and/or are affected by the brand of the event of GöteborgsVarvet. However, the strength of the impact varies. For example, the organization is along with the city of Gothenburg, two strong forces in the network and both contribute to the runners' perception and awareness of the event. In order to be able to analyze these linkages further, the different aspects will first be treated separately.

6.2.1. The Organization

As our empirical findings outline, the execution of the event is of great importance for both the organization of GöteborgsVarvet and the runners. The organization wants to present a well-organized event that is associated with high quality. According to the empirical findings the runners also perceive GöteborgsVarvet as well-organized, which is considered to be one of the main reasons for choosing to participate in the event.

6.2.2. The Core Product: The Event - GöteborgsVarvet

When it comes to the core product, theory suggests that GöteborgsVarvet can be seen as a cultural celebration, a sports competition, and a social event. The organization of GöteborgsVarvet also presents the folk festival aspect of the event as one of their core values. When analyzing our empirical findings it is clear that the atmosphere around the event is of great value. Several of the interviewed runners pinpointed the importance of the characteristics of the audience; such as being excited, supportive, and cheering on the runners. Hobby Runner 1 further states that the folk festival is one of the main motives why she wants to run GöteborgsVarvet. This implies that the core product and the folk festival are highly connected to each other.

6.2.3. The Stakeholders

Assumption C: The location and GöteborgsVarvet has the strongest connection among the different stakeholders.

As discussed in the theory, the location is highly associated with a running event. This is in line with both the interviews and the questionnaire in our empirical findings; both the elite and hobby runners choose a particular event due to its destination. The data from the questionnaire further demonstrates that GöteborgsVarvet's foreign runners put emphasize of running events held 'in a famous city or area'. In addition, the fact that Gothenburg is included in the event name further links the destination and GöteborgsVarvet with each other. Furthermore, both the representatives from the organization of GöteborgsVarvet and the representatives from the city of Gothenburg agree that Gothenburg is central for the event. Still, the same representatives conclude that there could be improvements in their cooperation.

Therefore the interpretation is that the relationship should be intensified in order to maximize the advantages when internationalizing.

Furthermore, as indicated in our empirical findings, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet's German agent has been questioned as they have divergent goals. The organization of GöteborgsVarvet wants the agent to attract as many German runners as possible, while the German agent is more selective and instead places priority on creating a small close-knit group of runners. Our findings further suggest that there is relational friction between the organization of GöteborgsVarvet and the German agent. There is a principal-agent problem which acts to impede a higher ratio of German runners from participating in GöteborgsVarvet. If this situation continues and the agent is not fulfilling its purpose, it defies the reason for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to continue having this agent. However, one conclusion is that the agents' importance, in the way they can affect GöteborgsVarvet, is smaller than what we initially believed. Even though they have divergent goals, and the organization of GöteborgsVarvet believes that the agent could attract more German runners, the difference would not be significantly bigger in terms of the number of German participants, as our empirical findings show that the runners usually prefer to make their own travel arrangements.

Our empirical findings further reveal that the atmosphere of the folk festival is of huge importance for GöteborgsVarvet and strengthens the event's brand. This fact is emphasized by both the runners and the organizers of GöteborgsVarvet. Hence, we can conclude that *Assumption C* is partly supported by our empirical findings. However, the customers, or more specifically the runners and the audience from West Sweden, who, according to Organizer 1, create the folk festival and positive atmosphere, are at least as important as the city of Gothenburg.

6.2.4. The Supporting Products/Services

The aspect of the products'/services' impact on the brand of GöteborgsVarvet as an event is not as clear as for the other forces, although the Athletic Center is a central gathering point during the event. However, what can be confirmed is that the facility is highly affected by the event. The profits go first and foremost to the maintenance of the Athletic Center and thereby the region can continue to foster the athletic and running community.

As the merchandise activities have been outsourced for many years, this aspect is not highly connected with GöteborgsVarvet. Our findings suggest that currently there is generally little motivation for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to internationalize as there are no distinctive advantages of initiating such a big process. However, merchandise is an aspect that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet should take into consideration when developing an internationalization strategy. Both the theory and our empirical findings suggest that the foreign participants spend more money during the event than their domestic counterparts. That is, the foreign runners form a new group of potential customers that could generate

additional profits for GöteborgsVarvet. With this, we suggest that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet should explore the opportunities of increasing their involvement with merchandise. However, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet must be careful when choosing who to work with in this area and be clear when explaining the brand image of GöteborgsVarvet so misunderstandings will not occur that could eventually lead to relational friction and a principal-agent problem. For example, it is highly important which products the brand of GöteborgsVarvet is connected to.

6.2.5. The Event of GöteborgsVarvet's Network Linkages

Assumption D: There exist possibilities for co-branding between the organization of GöteborgsVarvet and various forces in the network.

According to our empirical findings *Assumption D* is supported. Without the sponsors that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet cooperates with, it would be difficult to survive. They do not only financially contribute to the event, but also provide the customers with associations to the event. As both the interviewees and the data from the questionnaire further show that the destination together with the running events are highly related, we also anticipate that the city of Gothenburg would strategically be a good partner for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet in order to make the brand better known. Both Gothenburg and GöteborgsVarvet would benefit by a closer cooperation; Gothenburg would experience an economic upswing if more foreign runners participate in GöteborgsVarvet, and the organization of GöteborgsVarvet could with the help of the city's attractiveness be able to attract more foreign participants. However, although there are possibilities for co-branding, it is not utilized. They need to work closer together for example in the question of accommodation in order to ensure housing for the international participants. In other words, we might assume that the commitment to initiate this deeper relation is currently not strong enough.

As the theory suggested, building and maintaining a strong brand image requires for the four forces of the organization to be interrelated with each other. Our findings have shown that although some relationships and parts of the network linkages of GöteborgsVarvet could be improved, the brand image of GöteborgsVarvet can still be considered to be strong and well-known, at least in West Sweden. The challenge that lies ahead would therefore be to attain the same success outside the country borders of Sweden. In our opinion, GöteborgsVarvet's success in creating a strong brand image in Sweden is because they have managed to differentiate their brand in comparison with other running events' brands, at the same time as the four forces are all individually strong. However, we cannot be certain that foreign runners will come back to GöteborgsVarvet because of loyalty to one of the forces in the network. In fact, it is difficult to say whether loyalty is an influencing factor of runners coming back to the event since several of the interviewees have an eagerness to investigate new locations and run different kinds of running events.

6.3. The Customers' Motives to be Involved with GöteborgsVarvet

When comparing the theory with our empirical findings we can establish that it is possible to divide GöteborgsVarvet's customers into different segments. A grouping is in fact currently applied and used by the organization of GöteborgsVarvet since it helps in the job of knowing how to reach and target the different customer groups successfully. Since spectators and their motives were not mentioned extensively in the empirical findings, we will not discuss them in-depth here. However, what we can state is that the reason why they choose a certain event destination over another is usually because of social or historical aspects of the destination. In contrast, runners are affected more by factors such as characteristics of the running event. However, during the interviews conducted it has not only been mentioned by several interviewees but also several times that without spectators an event, with GöteborgsVarvet included, cannot take place at all. Attracting spectators and making them satisfied is important in order for GöteborgsVarvet to keep the image of a folk festival, but also to motivate runners to complete the race.

6.3.1. The Partners/Sponsors Motives to be Involved with GöteborgsVarvet

The segmentation of partners/sponsors is currently done by the organization of GöteborgsVarvet based on the level of partnership; main partners, official cooperation partners, official suppliers, and charity partners. According to the interview conducted with one of the organizers of GöteborgsVarvet the main reason why sponsors want to be involved and associated with GöteborgsVarvet is because the event can offer them extensive coverage on the days of the event, the big advertising space available but also because of the media attention. The sponsors that are usually interested in cooperating with the event are also those who feel that they can identify themselves with the event of GöteborgsVarvet's three core values. This goes well in line with the conclusions that previous research has had in this field, which means that the motives of the sponsors/partners of GöteborgsVarvet are quite common and general.

6.3.2. The Runners Motives to Compete in GöteborgsVarvet

Assumption E: International runners participate in GöteborgsVarvet for different reasons.

Even though further segmentation can be done for all customer groups, the focus applied and currently used by GöteborgsVarvet has been in the division of their main customers: runners. These can be divided into the sub-groups of elite runners and hobby runners, a division based on the fact that they contribute to complete different things for GöteborgsVarvet. While elite runners attracts media, creates the competition and makes it exciting for the spectators, the hobby runners are the reason why GöteborgsVarvet has been able to reach the position and status it has obtained as the world's largest half marathon. In addition we can see that the latter also contribute a lot to the folk festival image that is associated with GöteborgsVarvet. Furthermore, consistent with theory our empirical findings show that these two different runner groups are different when it comes to attitudes, motivation patterns, and preferences in

terms of which channels the event should use in order to reach them. Because of this, elite runners and hobby runners of GöteborgsVarvet are also to a certain degree treated differently. The elite runners are more visible as individuals in association with GöteborgsVarvet and in media, whereas hobby runners are more connected to the folk festival of GöteborgsVarvet.

The Interviewed Runners

As both theory and our empirical findings have established that the connection between the event and the destination is very important. It enables the creation of images for the runners of the event and its surrounding. Previous research has showed that the destination has been an important reason for participating in a specific event, and so is also the case for all of the runners interviewed in this study. However, consistent with what was written in the conceptual framework our empirics show that the perception and the level of importance of the destination vary depending whether it is elite or hobby runners. For most of them though they choose to participate in running events abroad in combination with going on a business trip to the specific country. Thus, running has become a form of training they can do in combination with doing business in a foreign country.

The fact that runners can have other motives than running itself, the host destination, or the enthusiasm for traveling, have through our interviews been manifested to be a correct statement. For instance, culture does have an impact since people are becoming more and more mobile and thereafter in consequence have become increasingly interested in cultural learning. It has been said that there are specifically three motivations that are common for long distance runners: physical motivation, interpersonal motivation, and status and prestige. Our results have indicated that the first and second motivation factor is something both elite and hobby runner have in common, but in complete different ways. When it comes to physical motivation the hobby runners often see the running event as the main goal that they train for and an opportunity to challenge themselves, while for elite runners a shorter distance race competition can instead be considered a warm-up or training for a bigger and longer distance race. Furthermore, the people that an elite runner chooses to socialize with during an event are different from a hobby runner's. For the latter our sampling shows that socialization is more associated with getting to know the local people, the destination culture and do something out of the ordinary, while for elite runners socialization means finding people associated with running events or someone that is also serious about the sport.

Status and prestige is something that is mentioned more by our interviewed elite runners, which also goes hand in hand with the opportunity to represent one's own home country. This is not surprising since they have a more competitive approach to the different races and choose which one to participate in carefully. However, achievements as a motivation are common for both elite and hobby runners; the ability to be allowed to say that one has run a very unique race. Prize and appearance money is also a common motivational factor for elite runners, which most likely is because they are the only ones that are qualified or have a chance to receive these.

Organizational factors, such as the design of the running track, the logistics during the event, existence of different start blocks, race atmosphere, etc., are important for both elite and hobby runners. So is also their own performance. However, something that is a more common motivational factor for some hobby runners is the package deals. This is usually so because they want to experience the unique side activities aside from the race, while elite runners put the race as their main focus and reason for going to a country. This is however provided that the package deal does not cost too much and the hobby runners feel like they would get good value for their money.

Table 4. Main Motivational Differences between Elite and Hobby Runners

Elite Runners	Hobby Runners
Status and prestige	Doing something out of the ordinary
Represent home country	Cultural learning
Price and appearance money	Package deals
Competition	

GöteborgsVarvet's Participants

The main motive for the previous hobby runners of GöteborgsVarvet has been the well planned organization of the event; the runner service, the running track and the entertainment around the track. Some have also been affected by the fact that GöteborgsVarvet is very famous in West Sweden and there is a lot of hype around it. After have been running it once, runners usually run it again and with time it becomes a tradition, which is also a motivational factor.

The other motives mentioned by the runners of GöteborgsVarvet to participate in an event do not differentiate much from the general motives. However, from the questionnaire we can see some differences between the foreign and domestic runners. While good organization, the attractiveness of the destination, availability and access to good information, and that it is easy to travel to Gothenburg are important factors for foreign runners, domestic runners put more emphasize on the sponsors associated with the event as well as the possibility to easily get information about one's own performance.

With this analysis we can see that our sampling is supporting *Assumption E*, international runners participate in running events for different reasons. This is with most probability because the different customer groups get involved with and enter GöteborgsVarvet with varying mindsets. However, even though there are distinct differences, there are also a lot of motivational factors in common.

6.4. Barriers for GöteborgsVarvet to Internationalize

Assumption F: *The organization of GöteborgsVarvet has identified their threats and obstacles in beforehand for precautious reasons in able to minimize the risks and costs of internationalizing.*

Assumption G: *If the organization of GöteborgsVarvet does not have a close collaboration with Gothenburg its activities will face the risk of not reaching its full potential, as well as this will pose as a hindrance to further international growth.*

Assumption H: *If the organization of GöteborgsVarvet does not have a certain language quality in the information that is shared on their website, this will pose as a hindrance to further international growth.*

The organization of GöteborgsVarvet has, as **Assumption F** proposes an event should do, started to identify the threats and obstacles of internationalizing. The main obstacle discussed in the conceptual framework regarded the interaction between the event and the destination. Our empirical findings show that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has in line with the theory identified the city of Gothenburg as a barrier to the event's internationalization process. The organization is aware of the fact that without collaboration with the city in for example securing accommodation on the weekend of the event, it is not possible for GöteborgsVarvet to accept more foreign participants. This fact further implies that **Assumption G** is supported by our empirical findings. However, even though the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has noticed this obstacle, we find it difficult to see what attempts there have been to overcome the problem. Neither the organization of GöteborgsVarvet nor the city of Gothenburg has shown commitment to change the collaboration.

Furthermore, another obstacle that has not been given as much considerations from an organizational point of view is the language barrier. According to the theory poor language skills can disturb the information flow. Our empirical findings go in line with this statement. The questionnaire concludes that "everything I need to know is on a user-friendly website" is more important for the foreign runners compared to their domestic counterpart. Furthermore, several of the interviewees use especially poor language or missing information at running events' websites as a hindrance of registration. The organization of GöteborgsVarvet provides the website in four languages (Swedish, English, German, Danish) however the websites in the foreign languages contain less information compared to the Swedish version. As our empirical findings demonstrate that the Internet, and in particular the running events' own websites, is the most common tool for the foreign runners to obtain information about a running event, it is of great importance that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet provides international runners with a satisfying amount of information. Hence, here the language obstacle lies more in terms of quantity than quality. This implies that **Assumption H** is supported by our empirical findings; however, the quality of the language should be complemented with quantity.

Furthermore, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet's lack of resources is also an obstacle for internationalizing. The organization cannot afford nor has a sufficient amount of employees to realize the foreign market entry mode arrangements that require a lot of resource commitment. Furthermore, as the organization prefers to have control over the situation to ensure quality, there is a resistance of involving too many partners from the outside. The interpretation we make here is that if the organization of GöteborgsVarvet should collaborate with any kind of stakeholders, the partner in question needs to represent quality as well. However, currently it is hard since the organization's definition of quality usually requires very good knowledge about GöteborgsVarvet, as well as the partner having significant resources of their own.

Lastly, our empirical findings have showed that it is a lot harder for half-marathons to promote themselves in comparison to full marathons. This is not to say that it is a serious obstacle for internationalization, but can nevertheless be considered a barrier of reaching success. With this we mean that half marathons will always face the disadvantage of the fact that in many runners' opinions participating in a half marathon will seldom, or never, reach as high prestige as a marathon. This is a barrier that we think will be hard for the organization of GöteborgVarvet to work on. A possibility is for the organization to continue working their best in trying to improve the brand image of GöteborgsVarvet, which in result will hopefully affect the image that people generally have of half marathons. GöteborgsVarvet would then function as a representative of half marathons around the world.

6.5. Foreign Market Entry Modes of GöteborgsVarvet

As a final part of this analysis the question about GöteborgsVarvet's foreign market entry modes will be examined. The whole current international strategy will firstly be analyzed together with the organization's attitude of the future. This will be followed by the runners' perspective and how they prefer to be approached by running events. In the end we will propose a foreign market entry mode strategy.

6.5.1. GöteborgsVarvet's Current International Strategy

***Assumption I:** The organization of GöteborgsVarvet is, in accordance with other service firms, following the customers in their internationalization process.*

***Assumption J:** The final choice of foreign market entry mode depend on the organization of GöteborgsVarvet's level of resources, how much control they want to keep and how willing they are to cooperate with partners.*

The theory has drawn parallels between running events and service firms. ***Assumption I*** therefore suggests that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet is, like other service firms, following their customers in the internationalization process. Although the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has no clear established internationalization strategy we can see signs of this approach. The largest foreign markets for GöteborgsVarvet are Norway, Denmark and

Germany. It is also in these countries the organization has put focus in the form of local agents. Furthermore, the website of GöteborgsVarvet is translated into both German and Danish. In other words, our empirical findings support this assumption.

When it comes to the characteristics of foreign market entry modes the organizers have the philosophy of wanting to control most of the work by themselves in order to guarantee a certain level of quality. Control is also the determinant which the theory states to be most important when choosing a foreign market entry mode. According to the theory summarized in Table 2, control is best obtained by entry modes that are wholly owned. Our findings show that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has two arrangements in this category; the qualification race at Playitas, Spain, and the website. However, the qualification race comes with more costs of resource commitments than the website. According to our empirical findings the website is the arrangement that is most effective when trying to reach foreign runners. Both the questionnaire and all the interviewees point out that it is to the website they turn when they have the intention to obtain knowledge about a certain event.

The agents the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has are placed in the contractual arrangement category. This implies that the control is shared between the organization and the agents. Furthermore, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet relies heavily on the word-of-mouth method, a cooperative foreign market entry mode arrangement with no control.

Moreover, it is noticeable that even though the organization of GöteborgsVarvet prefers entry modes that are characterized with high control, the organization is willing to loosen their reign in some cases where it could be beneficial. Hence, *Assumption J* is supported by our findings.

6.5.2. The Runners' Main Source of Information

According to our empirical findings foreign runners want to be approached by running events to get some inspiration when deciding where to compete next race. How they are approached differs, it could be through word-of-mouth, an article in a running magazine, information at exhibitions at other running events, or by the most common way; a satisfying amount of information on the Internet. In the end it all comes down to the fact that GöteborgsVarvet need to be noticed by foreign runners. Although the organization of GöteborgsVarvet is aware of Internet and the website being vastly important, the organization does not believe that visiting different exhibitions would have an impact. This is an assumption that is not supported by our empirical findings.

Furthermore, the belief the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has that foreign runners are more confident of registering through a domestic agent is not supported by our empirical findings either. Instead it has been indicated that international runners are positively inclined to search for information by themselves as the main opinion is that there is enough information on the Internet.

6.5.3. Proposal of Foreign Market Entry Modes

Assumption K: The organization of GöteborgsVarvet's current international strategy with agents and the Internet is the best alternative in terms of attracting foreign runners to the event.

A discussion will now be presented of the three different groups of foreign market entry modes, with taking the prerequisites, requirements and preferences of the organization of GöteborgsVarvet into consideration. At the same time the preferences of the customers, mainly the runners, will be taken into concern, as their opinion determines the consequences and the level of success of the chosen foreign market entry modes. The main thing we have taken into consideration while carrying the discussion, with the goal to reach a conclusion of which foreign market entry modes could fit the organization of GöteborgsVarvet the best, is that the organization has little resources; in the form of time, staff, but also a restricted budget. The organization is working self-sufficiently, meaning that all their earned income goes to covering the cost of setting up the races, the maintenance of the Athletic Center, and also to the different athletic clubs belonging to Gothenburg Athletic Association. They have other sources of income such as sponsors and member fees, but the biggest source is GöteborgsVarvet as an event. Thus they have a restricted amount of funds that has to cover a wide range of things.

Contractual Arrangements

Even though the use of agents is very common when trying to internationalize sports events, and has also been utilized by the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, we think that the number of them should currently not be extended. This is because the use of agents only targets a specific group of people, a very clear niche market; people who desire side activities other than the race. Our empirical findings have also proved that the attractiveness and use of agents is not very common among the runners. People are more mobile due to the fact that it has become easier to travel to other parts of the world, and also arrive there much faster than before. Therefore runners tend to prefer to do their own travel arrangements since it is relative easy and is usually much cheaper. The organizers of GöteborgsVarvet have also mentioned that they have not noticed a significant increase in number of international runners after have used agents, so therefore they should wait with finding new agents to work with until there is proof of efficiency. Since the runners who prefer going via an agent and have set travel arrangement also usually expect the existence of arranged side activities for them to do before and after running the race, our empirical findings indicate that a focus on using agents should not be done until the organization of GöteborgsVarvet is willing to put resources and money into creating these activities. However, if network theory would be applied it would mean that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet should continue developing their relationship with the existing agents. This would be because having these contacts in Norway, Denmark and Germany would make it easier for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to expand in these markets. Nevertheless, the conclusion is still to not expand the number of agents to work with,

but GöteborgsVarvet should instead focus on the ones they already have and continue to develop the relationships with them.

Moving on, franchising is not an option for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, mainly because it is location bound, it is called 'GöteborgsVarvet' because it is taken place in the city of Gothenburg. Furthermore, as this event occurs only once every year, for the reason that it takes the whole year to plan and arrange everything, it naturally becomes very hard to franchise the whole concept to some other part and make sure that they can do it properly. The organization of GöteborgsVarvet has gotten several inquiries about borrowing the name of 'Varvet' but has rejected them since they want to keep the uniqueness of the brand, which is also their competitive advantage. Since the organization wants everything that is done and associated with the name 'GöteborgsVarvet' to be of high quality, franchising become hard since a big part of the level of control over what is done is lost. Moreover, the organization is also careful with not letting people use their brand name too much in fear of wearing it out.

On the other hand, we consider qualification races as something that the organization could reflect on since it is something that leads up to the big event and creates an awareness of it. This year three qualification races have taken place; two national (one in Östergötland and one in Gothenburg) and the third being international in Playitas, Spain. Even though the latter was targeting Swedish people and was initially considered as a runners' training-trip, the organizers of GöteborgsVarvet allowed international runners to also sign up for GöteborgsVarvet on the day of the qualification race. The reason why qualification races are most probably a better foreign market entry mode option than franchising is because it does not require the partner to have quite as much knowledge of GöteborgsVarvet, as well as it is not as big and resource demanding. However, obviously the partner needs to know the basic most important things about GöteborgsVarvet; otherwise the cooperation will not work out but instead create relational frictions.

Exhibitions are also an option that we, based on our findings, feel could work out for GöteborgsVarvet even though the organization does not feel so secure about this foreign market entry mode. Our empirical findings have shown that there is a big demand among runners to find information about international running events while visiting other running events' exhibition. These results should in some way answer the organizers' question whether being involved with exhibitions is effective or not. Our interviewees have stated that it is during this time they are most open and receptive of suggestions and new information. Therefore, for the organizers of an event to be there in person to promote their event, or even just be represented in the form of information pamphlets, is a great way to create a curiosity and gradual awareness of a specific event. However, the problem of the organization of GöteborgsVarvet's restricted resources appears again as it does require time, money and manpower to be present at the exhibition. An option would be to be present in the form of information pamphlets, but then much work has to be put into making sure that these are visible to the visiting runners. Another option for the organization is to use their agents or

other people as help to promote the event on exhibitions, instead of themselves being present. This method is in some ways already used by the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, but not to the fullest extent. Instead the agents they currently have sometimes participate in exhibitions and then promote different running events they are involved with, one being GöteborgsVarvet. AIMS, which GöteborgsVarvet is a member of, also usually take part in different exhibitions around the world and have them in their handout flyers. Furthermore, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet should be present at the exhibitions in strategically chosen countries where the likelihood of attracting foreign participants are the greatest, that is in their largest markets.

Lastly, appearing in running magazines in the form of advertisements is something that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet does not have to use frequently. Instead we recommend that an advertisement in some popular international running or sport magazines could be put up about one month before the registration to the event closes. We feel that using running magazines is not the most effective or important method if the goal is to increase the rate of international runners significantly.

Cooperative Arrangements

According to the theory, cooperation between stakeholders is necessary to further develop and raise awareness of running. In addition, the network theory argues that a firm can develop its operation in a foreign market through developing business relationships in a particular country. The organization of GöteborgsVarvet is aware of this fact although they, as already stated, prefer to handle everything by themselves. There has already been a discussion of creating some sort of strategic alliance with other running competitions around Europe. For example, San Sebastian, Spain, has initiated a contact with the organization of GöteborgsVarvet. Furthermore, the world's largest marathons have already gotten together and created 'World Marathon Majors', and our view on this matter is that creating something similar with half marathons would put some extra value to the involved events. This option also provides the opportunity of co-marketing. However, it should also be mentioned that a cooperative arrangement like this takes time to develop; it is a common project where the involved parts need be compatible and invest a lot of commitment and resources into. Our empirical findings further put focus on the cooperation between the destination and the event, and the theory proves that this cooperation is essential. However, we believe that if the city of Gothenburg is serious in their desire of increasing the number of foreign runners, they need to present more commitment. The same goes with the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, who also has showed little commitment of actually integrating with other stakeholders; whether it is with the city of Gothenburg or other running events.

A joint venture is on the other hand not believed to be a good option for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet. To create something new with a partner is analyzed as a too big of a project, both in terms of costs and time commitment. In contrast, the cooperative form of qualification races is a possible foreign market entry mode for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet. The reasons behind this are similar to the contractual form.

Word-of-mouth, one of the entry modes the organization already now rely the most on, is, based on our empirical findings predicted to continue as one of the most important channels for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet. A large share of the interviewees state that advice and positive criticism about an event has a large impact of their decision where to compete. However, this is an arrangement which is difficult for the organization to control and will exist whether they try to affect it or not. Therefore it is vital for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to continue to deliver a well-organized event characterized by the core values of being a folk festival, competition and health.

Furthermore, marathon calendars on the Internet are many times one of the first places where runners search for different events, and therefore it is important that GöteborgsVarvet continues to be visible there. We further think that the organization should emphasize that the event is the world's largest half marathon to make it stand out from other half marathons. The same strategy applies to when appearing in running magazines. Although there should not be a focus on cooperating with magazines, people do occasionally read them through. Hence, to invite different international running magazine to write an article about the world's largest half marathon will reach out to the international crowd.

Wholly Owned Arrangements

As already established, wholly owned modes have the advantage of full control and can therewith avoid relational frictions and confrontations. However this comes with the cost of higher resource commitment in terms of money, time and employees. The organizers of GöteborgsVarvet have mentioned that they prefer to have as much control as possible of every aspect of the event, which correspond well with the theory about how companies, if they could choose, generally would pick the mode with the highest level of control.

Opening up an own subsidiary or sales outlets is in our opinion currently neither up-to-date nor possible for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet since it would require far too much resources and money. Then the use of agents (a contractual mode) would be a better solution as the current control level the organizers of GöteborgsVarvet have of what their agents are allowed and not allowed to do is high. The use of qualification races arranged by the organization itself could however be a possibility, since they have already organized three this year, and they all turned out well and received good responses. In our opinion these qualification races should be arranged as long as they attract runners and create a bigger awareness of the event. However, the number of them should still be limited to prevent the risk of it being overused. A way to start slow is to focus on first organizing qualification races at their biggest international markets where most of their international runners come from; Norway, Denmark and Germany.

Finally, the website is the main foreign market entry mode we recommend. This is not only because communication technology is rapidly advancing but also because all the runners we have interviewed and the questionnaire named the Internet as their main source of information. The interviewees also recommended and expressed a desire for the organizers of



running events to post all the vital information about the event there since it is usually the first place a runner looks when searching for information. Our recommendation, based on our empirical findings, would therefore be for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to put more energy into improving and adding information about the event on their website, most importantly in English but also in the languages of the most important international markets. Even though they have restricted resources we feel that improving the website is a relatively cheap mode compared to the others, as well as it does not take up much of other resources. In addition the organization can reach a much wider area and bigger range of people. The work on the website can take place on location in Gothenburg at the same times as the organization still has full control over what is posted on the website.

In summary, based on our analysis and recommendations this means that *Assumption K*, stating that GöteborgsVarvet's current international strategy with agents and the Internet is the best alternative in terms of attracting foreign runners to the event, is not supported by our empirical findings.



7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This concluding chapter provides the reader with a final discussion of our findings. This is mainly achieved by providing the answer to our main research question, as well as answers to the sub-questions. A recommendation for the future strategic work with the internationalization of GöteborgsVarvet is also presented.

After having analyzed the characteristics of GöteborgsVarvet, the important network linkages, and the different entry modes that can be used, we have established that there are several forces and barriers that have an influence on GöteborgsVarvet that were originally not visible. First and foremost, in order for the internationalization of GöteborgsVarvet to succeed, it requires for the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to truly find or develop motives for internationalization. This is especially true, since our findings indicate that it is more difficult for a half marathon to attract foreign runners than it is for a full marathon. Thus, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet needs to decide whether they wish to pursue an internationalization strategy of the event, and if it is worth making the resource and effort commitments required for it to be successful, considering their already limited budget and time restraints. If they decide to pursue an internationalization strategy, there is a need for internal change, or else problems will most likely occur in the initial implementation stages of the chosen foreign market entry modes.

Although addressing the issue regarding the event of GöteborgsVarvet's network was not one of our main aims in this thesis, we can conclude that the relationship between the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, the core product (the event), the supporting products/services and the stakeholders are important (Assumption B). In particular, the forces of the city of Gothenburg (Assumption C and G) together with the runners and spectators are vital for the existence of the event. The latter two create one of GöteborgsVarvet's trademarks, the folk festival. The important linkage to the city of Gothenburg on the other hand was emphasized by Elite Runner 1, "the destination gets you there but the organization is what helps you enjoy your experience". This example is indicative of what our research has proven; a running event organization never stands alone. Hence, developing an internationalization strategy is a large commitment and the organization needs to keep the remaining forces of the network in mind in order to see the whole picture. Moreover, there is no single procedure all running events can follow when structuring an internationalization strategy.

Another finding is that there is a significant difference in the preferences and motives of elite runners compared to hobby runners when competing in running events abroad (Assumption E). These preferences and motives are important to acknowledge since it should determine the way an event organization chooses to market their brand. However, what the two groups do have in common is their motive of competing in running events due to characteristics of a destination.



Moreover, we suggest that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet should first and foremost continue developing and improving their website. This is because our findings have established that all runners turn to the Internet first when searching for information about running competitions. As of right now, quality of the website is not a big problem. Instead, the quantity of information in non-Swedish languages is lacking and requires augmentation. This would be an appropriate first step considering it does not require as much of a resource investment compared to the other foreign market entry mode alternatives. At the same time, an improved website is very effective in that it has a much wider reach.

Furthermore, instead of continuing to find new agents (as our research has already established their drawbacks), a good alternative could be looking into the possibilities of further developing the qualification races. The organization of GöteborgsVarvet can then themselves choose the level of control they want to have, and thus also choose the amount of resources they are willing to commit (Assumption J). Another way of targeting international runners is to be visible at other running events' exhibitions. In addition, we believe that cooperating with both the city of Gothenburg and other international running events would facilitate the internationalization of GöteborgsVarvet. A closer relation with Gothenburg is necessary when it comes to ensuring accommodation for foreign participants. As the findings further prove that the location and the running event are highly linked to one another, collaboration in terms of international marketing would be beneficial for both parts. When it comes to cooperation with other international running events, we believe that a similar structure as the World Marathons Majors is a natural way of developing the attractiveness of half marathons. Our expectation is that such a formation would not only boost the appeal for both runners and media, but it would also create a symbiotic relationship in terms of marketing one another's running event (Assumption D). However this strategy implies a very strong commitment, and requires the organization of GöteborgsVarvet to be aware of the risks and also have a desire to want to change.

Contribution to Research

According to our research, the internationalization strategy of running events as well as identifying possible entry modes designed for this type of sports events have been subject to little academic attention. Therefore, this research has contributed to an understanding of the possibilities as well as the challenges a running event organization has to face and cope with when attempting to internationalize.

This thesis has contributed to the development of the existing models and theories that can specifically be applied to running events. For instance, our network linkages model suggests that the organization of a running event is highly connected to the core product, the stakeholders, and the supporting products/services. The network shapes the brand image of the running event. Furthermore, we have created a matrix of the foreign market entry modes, especially adapted to running events, which organizations can use and choose between when developing an internationalization strategy.



Finally, as the interest in sport and health is increasing, the topic of running events is most likely to undergo fundamental changes. Therefore there is a need for continued research so that these changes can be identified, and hopefully create new opportunities for running event organizations in the future.

8. Interview List

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Hobby Runner 1 (2011) Interview (Face-to-face). Gothenburg, Sweden. March 21st 2011.

Hobby Runner 2 (2011) Interview (Phone). Gothenburg, Sweden. March 28th 2011.

Hobby Runner 3 (2011) Interview (Phone). Gothenburg, Sweden. March 31st 2011.

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10. Appendix

10.1. The Running Track of GöteborgsVarvet



Source: GöteborgsVarvet (2010)



10.2. Interview Guide - Organizer 1

The Organization of GöteborgsVarvet

1. As an introduction, could you please describe your role in GöteborgsVarvet?
2. How does the organizational work of GöteborgsVarvet look like?
3. Which stakeholder do you consider are the most important for GöteborgsVarvet?
4. How do you think the connection is between the different stakeholders?
5. How does the relationship between the city of Gothenburg and the organization of GöteborgsVarvet look like today?
6. What do you think of a closer collaboration with the city of Gothenburg?

Internationalization

7. How big share of international runners does the organization of GöteborgsVarvet want to have? By when?
8. Why does the organization of GöteborgsVarvet want to internationalize?
9. How does the organization of GöteborgsVarvet want the international runners to perceive the event in comparison with other events?

Foreign Market Entry Mode Strategy

10. What form of internationalization strategy does the organization of GöteborgsVarvet have currently?
11. In what countries are you active?
12. How does the collaboration with the different agents look like today?
13. How does the organization of GöteborgsVarvet view the fact of handing over the responsibility to attract foreign runners to someone else and therewith losing some control?
14. What is most important; resource commitment, control or minimize misconceptions?
15. How does GöteborgsVarvet's international network look like? Are there any possibilities to cooperate with other events?
16. Which marketing channels does the organization of GöteborgsVarvet rely on the most currently?



10.3. Interview Guide - Stakeholder 1

1. What perceptions does the city of Gothenburg have of GöteborgsVarvet and the ambition to attract more international participants?
2. What is the city of Gothenburg's aim with increasing international participants?
3. How does the role look like for the city of Gothenburg in terms of attracting foreign participants?
4. How does the collaboration between the city of Gothenburg and the organization of GöteborgsVarvet look like currently?

10.4. Interview Guide - Stakeholder 2

1. What is the city of Gothenburg's aim with attracting more foreign runners to GöteborgsVarvet?
2. How does the collaboration between the city of Gothenburg and the organization of GöteborgsVarvet look like currently?
3. Are there any plans of further developing the collaboration?



10.5. Interview Guide - Runners

Who Are You?

1. Could you please describe a brief background about yourself and your engagement to running?
2. How many years have you been running as a training form?
3. Do you consider yourself as a hobby runner or a professional runner?

Running Competitions Abroad

4. For how many years have you been traveling around the world in order to compete in running events?
5. How many running competitions abroad have you participated in in total?
6. Approximately, how many running competitions abroad are you running per year?
7. What kind of running events do you participate in?
8. Is the feeling towards running a half marathon compared to a marathon any different?
9. Have you ever run the GöteborgsVarvet? If yes, how many times and how did you achieve information about it?
10. Are you traveling alone or with company to the different running events abroad?

Motives of Competing in Running Events Abroad

11. Why are you traveling internationally to compete in running events?
12. How do you decide where to go?
13. Is the destination itself important?
14. Does the prize money make a running event more attractive?
15. Could you please describe the running achievement you are the most proud of?
16. What is your worst competitive running experience?
17. What do you consider to be the most important aspects deciding whether the running event is a “good” event?

Information about Running Events Abroad

18. Where do you get the information about the events?
19. Do you think it is enough information accessible?
20. When you are searching for a running event, are you looking for specific events, or are you randomly looking around for interesting running events?
21. Would it make you feel more comfortable to travel with one specific group, where the guide/tour leader handles the practical details, such as accommodation, registration, flights etc., or do you prefer to handle everything by yourself?

10.6. Interview 1 - Summary of Interview with Organizer 1 (2011-03-09)

The Organization of GöteborgsVarvet

The organization of GöteborgsVarvet has recently undergone a large reorganization. The major explanation behind this is that the event has grown heavily. Today there are 7 full-time employees and additional staff is employed in intense periods. Furthermore, in 2011 3 400 functionaries are hired to help out at the event. The organization of GöteborgsVarvet is extremely important according to Organizer 1. A good arrangement should be well-organized; the runners should go home with the feeling of being well taken care of and with an eagerness to return.

The organization of GöteborgsVarvet has expressed a desire of handling the work by themselves as far as possible. There is sense of safety to handle everything from inside the organization. However, Organizer 1 also emphasizes that as GöteborgsVarvet is the largest half marathon in the world, they cannot do everything. Furthermore, the city of Gothenburg is important for the event in the sense of runners choosing the half marathons that are situated in attractive cities. Although the organizers considers that they are able to fend themselves, cooperation with the city could be beneficial when it comes to package-bookings, etc. However, at the moment the organizers think that the cooperation with Gothenburg can be improved.

Internationalization

Today GöteborgsVarvet has a ratio of 4.5% foreign runners and an ambition to reach 10% by 2014. However, as it is uncertain how much GöteborgsVarvet will grow, there is a plan to revise this number and have a fix amount instead. According to Organizer 1, it is the city of Gothenburg that explicitly has expressed a desire for more international participants. The city of Gothenburg likes to see that people who stay longer, spend more money and bring family and friends along, come to the city. From the organizer's point of view it implies more work and extra costs when trying to attract more international participants and thus makes the question indifferent. In addition, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has a desire to keep 50% of the participants from West Sweden, since it is they who make the event a folk festival. Where the rest of the runners come from does not matter. Although, Organizer 1 further points out that it would add some value of making GöteborgsVarvet well-known internationally. It is also important that the international elite wants to come back. Today there are around 200 elite runners competing in GöteborgsVarvet, and it is this group that attracts more media attention. However, it is tricky for a half marathon to grow internationally. Runners travel around the world to gather marathons; while it is not the same for half marathons. Furthermore, Organizer 1 is unsure whether more international runners would increase the status abroad or not, since the brand value of GöteborgsVarvet is not in the race itself but in the folk festival.



Foreign Market Entry Mode Strategies

For the moment the organization of GöteborgsVarvet does not have any defined internationalization strategy. It is the Internet that is considered to be the most important tool in order to attract the international participants. The organization has also leaned strongly on the word-of-mouth method. Furthermore, sale agents are located in Denmark, Norway and Germany. The belief is that the runners find it more convenient to register through someone in their home country. As the agents also do some advertising for GöteborgsVarvet on different exhibitions and races, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet does not have to send representatives from Sweden around the world, a path that the organization of GöteborgsVarvet not really believe in. There have been plans of increasing the number of agents in other countries. However, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet is not sure that agents are the right way to go and therefore await the results from the three existing agents. Up until now the agents have not increased the number of international runners distinctively. When it comes to the control factor of their agents, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet is confident. The agents cannot do any commercial that does not come from GöteborgsVarvet originally. Representing GöteborgsVarvet at exhibitions or races is an important job. However, the agents need to be properly informed about the work of GöteborgsVarvet, and that is difficult to learn. Organizer 1 further points out that if they shall do something in the name of GöteborgsVarvet, it needs to have quality.

Another path to go in order to reach international participants could be through the contact with other races. GöteborgsVarvet is a member of AIMS where one has the possibility to send out folders to different exhibitions. San Sebastian in Spain has also showed an interest to cooperate with GöteborgsVarvet. To collaborate with a couple of other races would be a way of exchanging runners.

Furthermore, this year there are three different qualification races; one in Östergötland, one in Gothenburg and one at Playitas. Thus, the question regarding franchising has grown. Many races want to use the name “Varvet”, however if GöteborgsVarvet would allow them all to use that name, then there is a risk that the brand will be worn out. Hence, this alternative is not considered to be an option from the organization’s point of view. Qualification races on the other hand are considered to be a good option as the organization of GöteborgsVarvet can stay in control of them. Although, this is nothing they actively seek to establish.

When it comes to international advertising activities the organization of GöteborgsVarvet has not been so aggressive. The only promotion besides the work of the agents and the folders by AIMS is that GöteborgsVarvet has its name in a few international running magazines.

10.7. Interview 2 – Summary of Interview with Stakeholder 1 (2011-03-28)

The Connection between the Destination and GöteborgsVarvet

Stakeholder 1 is a representative of the city of Gothenburg. He has a very positive notion of GöteborgsVarvet. The fact that Gothenburg hosts the world's largest football cup (Gothia Cup), handball cup (Partille Cup) and half marathon is something that Stakeholder 1 is very proud of. He further states that Gothenburg is brilliant when it comes to the amount and frequency of these kinds of events. Furthermore, from a tourism point of view it is important with international participants as they stay longer and spend more money, which of course is positive.

Stakeholder 1 believes that there is collaboration between Gothenburg and the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, especially in the question regarding concept development. For example, Gothenburg was highly involved when the organization of GöteborgsVarvet developed from being just one race (the half marathon) to include six different races. He says that Gothenburg has helped GöteborgsVarvet to become a wider event.

Internationalization and Motives of Increasing International Participants

Stakeholder 1 has not himself been involved in establishing the goals of increasing the ratio of international runners. Therefore he cannot for certain reveal how they look like. However, in general the city of Gothenburg has encouraged the development of international participation for GöteborgsVarvet. This is connected with the level of consumption; the international participants spend more money in the city. Yet, Stakeholder 1 pinpoints that he wants to keep the national hallmark of the event.

Stakeholder 1 further makes a comparison between GöteborgsVarvet and other large international running events such as London and New York. He argues that there are three factors that are extremely important. First is the accessibility and easiness to travel to the destination. The second factor is the brand perception of both Gothenburg and GöteborgsVarvet. The third and final factor is the product, and Stakeholder 1 asks himself how GöteborgsVarvet distinguishes themselves from other running events. That is, Stakeholder 1 says that there is an interaction between the destination and GöteborgsVarvet. However, he further says that if the running event itself is extremely unique the connection with the destination is not as essential and this is something that can be developed. For example, the track of GöteborgsVarvet has been rearranged and the runners are now running closer to the water. This development has made the race more attractive.

Furthermore, the experience around the event also has a significant impact. The runners often bring their family and it is necessary that there are more to see and do in the city than the event itself. Stakeholder 1 thinks that in the case of Gothenburg, shopping, the closeness to the water and foremost Liseberg (the amusement park) are the factors that attract most people.



10.8. Interview 3 – Summary of Interview with Stakeholder 2 (2011-03-31)

Motives and Aims of Attracting International Participants

Stakeholder 2 is interviewed in order to complement the answers provided by Stakeholder 1. She is of the same opinion as Stakeholder 1 when it comes to the aim of attracting more international participants to GöteborgsVarvet; namely, the people coming far away from Gothenburg have a tendency to stay longer in the city. She further states that the international runners often want to stay in a hotel with high standard and that they often belong to a group with great purchasing power. Furthermore, to enable to attract more international runners are also a way of spreading the knowledge about the event and Gothenburg to more countries and thereby attract “regular” tourists to Gothenburg.

The Cooperation with the Organization of GöteborgsVarvet

In the question regarding the cooperation with the organization of GöteborgsVarvet, Stakeholder 2 states that the city does not have an active role in the event. Nevertheless, the organization of GöteborgsVarvet and Gothenburg has cooperated since many years and GöteborgsVarvet is seen as an incredible successful and professional organization. Their cooperation has in the past mostly regarded marketing and visibility. However, Stakeholder 2 has a positive view of developing the collaboration with all kinds of events, so also with GöteborgsVarvet. It could also be for separate issues that are handled before the event every year, for instance, the specific planning that is required when the event coincides with other events or large conferences.



10.9. Interview 4 - Summary of Interview with Elite Runner 1 (2011-03-16)

Elite Runner 1 can, be put in the category of elite runners. Her interest for running started as a little girl but it was not until she started college that she really started to take it seriously. She participated in her first ever marathon in Copenhagen and after that she instantly became hooked. While pursuing her master's degree education in Norway she joined the school's running club and started to participate in big running competitions in the country. She has been running marathons since 1997 and at an international level since 2003.

Even though she is considered to be an elite runner, she points out that running is not everything for her. However, she does take running seriously and especially so when given the chance to represent her country. Even though she ran a lot of 5km and 10km races during her younger years she decided early to concentrate on longer distances. The reason for this is that you have to think about strategy and making choices, and she also considers herself a much better long distance runner. The attraction of ultra-marathons lies in the fact that it is a more collegial and about the experience more than the competition. While she does participate in the shorter races occasionally, she points out that she does not enjoy them as much, as they are over so quickly.

Running Competitions Abroad

Elite Runner 1 has run at least 105 international running competition. She thinks that she was probably most active during her PhD period, when should would run about 17 races a year. Elite Runner 1 has run in many countries and considers herself lucky enough to have participated in national championships in Wales, England and Australia. Overall she has taken part in the 100k World Championship 2 times and the 50k World Championship once. Depending on where she lived she has represented different countries on each of these World Championships, which is considered pretty unusual. She points out that she could have probably run for the US, her home country, all of those times but loved the different cultures and the very diverse types of teams that there are in different countries.

Depending on what kind of event she would either travel together with others or by herself. When she lived in the UK and was a member of the 100k club, they would travel together to different events. During World Championships it is only a small group of people that would go together. Sometimes she would also travel by herself. Furthermore, she also thinks that running is a very social sport, both during the race and after. Elite Runner 1 points out that there is a lot of time to kill while waiting and that is when very good bonding occurs, since the runners all have been through the same and collecting experiences.

The only half-marathon she has participated outside her own home country was in Australia, as a part of a triathlon. She is of the opinion that even though half-marathons can be fun, longer distances such as marathons have more prestige and can therefore more easily attract international runners. Furthermore, it can also be hard for half-marathon races to compete with marathons since the latter are also trying to internationalize.



Motives of Competing in Running Events Abroad

Due to her primary job, she has gotten many opportunities to travel abroad and has therefore chosen to take advantage of that. Because she has been running for so many years she has also established a good social network around the world. Elite Runner 1 points out that sometimes you have to go because it is the World Championship, while other times you go for other opportunities. Furthermore, when she is representing a country she has people that pay her to fly to different parts of the world to race. Sometimes there are races which location is very attractive, so called destination marathons. Depending on preferences, another motive could be the running track. Some races will make the participants run from point-to-point, from A to B. Elite Runner 1 instead prefers when the start and finish is at the same place. Prize money could also be important for some athletes. If a running event had a decent amount of prize money they probably could get more international athletes to come. Some marathons will also sponsor athletes to come, for instance they might provide tickets to two or three Kenyan athletes and visas to come and run. Many athletes can also get appearance fees, but these are usually only limited for those that hold Olympic game standards. Furthermore, London Marathon as an example is considered as the UK Marathon Championships. The top three British runners who finish there under a certain time guarantee them a place in the Olympics. Therefore it is very common for British people to participate in this race. Elite athletes probably also look who else is going, the competition, and thereafter make sure to stratify themselves across the events.

The factors that Elite Runner 1 feels determine if it is a good event or not is not only her own performance, but most importantly the race atmosphere. With this she gave examples such as a lot of people being excited, and that things are organized enough so people will not grow impatient. She means that the destination gets you there but the organization is what helps you enjoy your experience.

Information about Running Events Abroad

Elite Runner 1 is of the opinion that the Internet and the personal networks she has have been so great that it has allowed her to get a lot of good information. With Internet people can get really great information about how good races were last year, so they can do a pretty well-informed decision. Marathon Guides and the individual countries' websites are also great ways to get information, especially about smaller events. Word-of-mouth is another very good way to inform, but the risk with this method could be that people who live far away from the destination usually do not recommend it to their friends. If they do have friends that live closer to that place though, it is more common to recommend it. When she looks for events, it is sometimes day driven though. With this Elite Runner 1 means that if she knows she is going to be at a particular country during a certain period, she then have perhaps 12 races instead of the usual 50 marathons to choose between. She points out that for her small races or small towns could be good fun also because it's smaller group of people, and thus a more intimate setting. She therefore feels like she enjoys those often as much as big marathons.

10.10. Interview 5 - Summary of Interview with Elite Runner 2 (2011-03-23)

Elite Runner 2 was a professional marathon runner during the 90's. In 1996, he got a job at AIMS, an organization which main function is to assist members to attract international runners. The organization is a non-profit one which publishes a magazine quarterly and is distributed for free. The magazine can also be read digitally on the website. On the AIMS website runners can also find information about various running events all around the world. Elite Runner 2 is secretary of the organization, and the only paid employee. He is also the editor of the magazine. Elite Runner 2 mentions that he certainly has seen a progress with the work of AIMS in the way that membership numbers have increased. Furthermore, various races are now not only meeting their quotas each year, but they are also filling it up earlier and earlier. He argues that this shows that running has definitely become increasingly popular.

Running Competitions Abroad

Elite Runner 2 has participated in about 85 marathon races, international as well as local. He would run maximum 2-3 marathons a year at full effort but has also run a lot of non-marathons using them as training for the bigger races. Elite Runner 2 has among others won both London Marathon and Stockholm Marathon. He further argues that it is easier to organize a half marathon compared to a full marathon. But in terms of how to promote it depends on which group the events are targeting since it is generally accepted wisdom that people will not travel as often and far for a half marathon as for a marathon. However, there are still a lot of people that do travel for half marathons, mainly because they are not really prepared to do all the training that is required to run a full marathon. Additionally, a lot of small marathons also promote and have half marathons on the same day as their event. This is because the people traveling together with someone who are running a marathon shall have an alternative to a full marathon. In other words, people will travel to shorter races but it is just a question of how far, in what numbers and whether it has to be a marathon alongside.

When Elite Runner 2 used to travel abroad to participate in events he would usually do it on his own. On some occasions he brought his wife, travelled in group or met up with his competitor.

Motives of Competing in Running Events Abroad

Elite Runner 2 says there are various factors that have to be considered when talking about motives. Many races have a very strong local market and they instinctively know their market, so it is not necessary for them to attract foreign runners. Whereas for races in countries that have a very small running community, might have to try to attract foreign runners to make up what they do not have in their home market. Another factor is that there is a very big difference between elite and hobby runners. Elite runners mainly go where the money is, unless they see a race they can run fairly easily without extending themselves. They will usually go for the ones they feel is the best, whether that would in terms of appearance money, prize money, etc. Hobby runners in comparison, who are paying for themselves, tend

to go wherever they want to go. For them it is also about the experience and chasing different locations around the world.

Elite Runner 2's running career followed the same pattern. As an elite runner he ran wherever the money was, while later on he started to pick places after where he would like to go. His job at AIMS also resulted in him participating in events wherever the organization had business to be done. He further mentions that while he did enjoy running even as a professional, there was a lot depending on it. After, when he participated just for fun he did not have to worry about any sort of external expectations, like money. This takes a lot of pressure off and one can live for the moment more than an elite can do. For hobby runners the destination is very important, and the race therefore really has to work hard to sell the destination. People have to be able to picture themselves there and the organizers job is to make the runners be able to identify the destination and event with somewhere they would like to go to. Furthermore, Elite Runner 2 also points out that he is of the opinion that a lot of people want to go somewhere where they can feel more connected to the destination than as an ordinary tourist.

Elite Runner 2 considers that the determinants of a good versus bad event have a lot to do with his own achievements. For instance, bad experiences for him have been the races where he dropped out. The organization of an event is also important. He means that there has to be a certain minimum level of competence, people cannot go to the race and it would be so disorganized that the runners cannot do what they came to do. But in terms if one race is better organized than another, Elite Runner 2 thinks it only becomes relevant on a higher level. He has personal experience where races not were that well organized but he explains that it was the same for everybody, so he did not think about it too much. Furthermore, Elite Runner 2 points out that there probably is a whole other sector at the market that goes through tour agencies, who expect a much higher level of provision. This does not only include the race but also the side activities. These people are paying for something different. Spotter racers on the other hand, buy their tickets cheaper, find a cheap hotel and just enter the race. These runners are open to whatever the race offers to them and it is not a question about bringing huge expectations to it.

Information about Running Events Abroad

AIMS tries to be the central reference point so that anybody looking for a race in a particular month, country or particular kind of race can go to the AIMS website and see what is on, and then click through to the website of the race event. Elite Runner 2 further points out how important a website is. In terms of getting access to runners, the other channels AIMS offer is distribution of literature at exhibition stands. Although it might sound like an old fashioned way, a lot of runners do pass by the booth on their way to pick up their number, flip through the literature and look for other events they might be interested in to run. Furthermore, most of the events target specific exhibitions or where they think they might be getting greater numbers. For instance, it is obvious that people who run in Berlin in September might be



interested in running a marathon 9 months later in Prague. It is important that there is enough time for an advance warning so the runners can pick to go from one race to another. Also it is important that it is in a place that is not too difficult to get to.

Elite Runner 2 also thinks that runners are willing to be influenced in terms of where to go. They will look through a list and find a location they think might be inviting and then find a dozen of races on that basis. Thereafter they would look more seriously and consider. Often it will also depend on the actual race date and if it will fit with their schedule.

10.11. Interview 6 - Summary of Interview with Elite Runner 3 (2011-04-11)

Elite Runner 3's passion for running arose 10 years ago as she met some friends who practiced running. She immediately got a feeling inside her telling her to start to run. A year later Elite Runner 3 was introduced to a couple of cross country runners and this contact provided her with the opportunity to visit Sweden for one of the largest cross country competitions in the world. The interest for this sport took off and she was soon back in Sweden to learn more. This time Elite Runner 3 met her current husband and running coach, and for the past 5 years she has been running on a more professional level.

Running Competitions Abroad

Elite Runner 3 has until now been traveling around the world in order to compete for 3 years. However, most of the competitions she participates in are located in her home country. Up until the time of the interview Elite Runner 3 has taken part in 10 running events abroad and 3 of them were finalized last year (2010). She has also run GöteborgsVarvet 5 times. Although Elite Runner 3 runs all kinds of distances from 10km and longer, she stresses that her focus is on marathons. She further points out that there is a certain distinction between a half marathon and a full marathon. She has to plan the race differently as marathons are much longer and thereby the tempo is slower. Elite Runner 3 also explains that when she is traveling around the world in order to compete, she is doing it with the company of her coach.

Motives of Competing in Running Events Abroad

The main reason why Elite Runner 3 travels internationally is to compete against tougher competitors. In fact, what distinguishes a good running event from a bad running event is the competition according to Elite Runner 3. It should be a sufficient share of competitors so she can focus on her own race. Furthermore, the decision where to go is made in consultation with her coach, and is also dependent on when the different championships take place.

She further states that the destination of the running event is not of importance. She is not traveling to get a vacation, but to compete. On the other side she explains that prize money do make a running competition more attractive. Her job is to run so of course it is of importance. When it comes to the running experience she is the most proud of, Elite Runner 3 explains that Dubai Marathon earlier this year (2011), was great. She got a perfect set-up of the race, started carefully at a position among the top 20. However, already after 10km she started to pass her competitors, and finished in a third place with a new personal best of 2.23.41. The worst running experience Elite Runner 3 has is GöteborgsVarvet 2007. She started the race too fast and got lactic acid, and was after that in pain for almost the entire race.

Information about Running Events Abroad

In most of the cases Elite Runner 3 gets a personal invitation to the different running events, and therefore she does not need to search for events by herself. However, when she is looking for information about running events she thinks there is enough that can be accessed.

10.12. Interview 7 – Summary of Interview with Hobby Runner 1 (2011-03-21)

Hobby Runner 1 states that running has always been a natural part of her life. She grew up with a father that was very interested in running and cross-country running. As a little girl she traveled along on weekends in order to participate in different practices and running competitions. However, it was not until she turned 12 that she really started to get serious. By this time she started to work out harder and began to see a goal; she wanted to win the competitions she participated in. She ran different running competitions until she was 17 years old, then other interests came in the way. Instead running took another direction for Hobby Runner 1. It became more of a hobby, but it was still important to find the challenges and it was specifically the longer races that started to become more attractive.

Running Competitions Abroad

Hobby Runner 1 ran her first marathon in Stockholm when she was 17. Instantly the feeling of wanting more was born. When she was 18 she ran her second marathon, this time in Dublin. Since then she has traveled together with either family members or friends to participate in Edinburgh Marathon, Berlin Marathon, Regensburg Marathon and is by the time of the interview about to run Paris Marathon. Beside these competitions, Hobby Runner 1 has taken part in different international multisport and cross-country running competitions. The goal is to at least run one competition abroad per year. However, as she just graduated from the university and now has an income, she has the ambition to increase this figure.

Hobby Runner 1 has run GöteborgsVarvet 2 times. When she moved to Gothenburg she noticed what a hype GöteborgsVarvet was, everybody at work and school talked about it. Therefore it became natural that she would run as well. When comparing a marathon with a half marathon she argues that half marathons are tougher in the sense that she feels more pressure to run fast. When it comes to marathons she does not have the same performance anxiety, she is satisfied as long as she makes it. Although, Hobby Runner 1 pinpoints that she always wants to run under a certain time. Furthermore, to run a marathon is another feeling, it is a bigger challenge and one has to be much better prepared for a marathon.

Motives of Competing in Running Events Abroad

The main reasons why Hobby Runner 1 hungers to travel abroad to participate in running events is first and foremost that it becomes more of an adventure. When running in the domestic country she only goes to the competition in order to compete and then travel back home as soon as possible. Furthermore, it is a “cool feeling” of competing abroad, she feels like a professional and among all the domestic runners she is unique. In addition Hobby Runner 1 states that she gets the opportunity to meet and socialize with people from the entire world with the same interest.

The destination in question is also important. To a certain extent Hobby Runner 1 has chosen running events abroad based on where they are located. But, the practical aspects also have a great impact. It needs to be easy to get there. She further declares that a high-class event is

more fun to take part in. One easy example can be if the contestants get a t-shirt afterwards. This usually happens in the bigger running events.

The international running achievement that Hobby Runner 1 is the most proud of is her first marathon. Edinburgh was also a special moment as she for the first time ran under 4 hours, meaning a dream coming true. But all events have been special achievements in their own ways. The worst running achievement was in Regensburg. The day of the event was extremely hot and made the competition very tough. When comparing a so called “good” event from a “bad” event Hobby Runner 1 replies fast that it lies in the organization. For example, there should be many toilets at the start as well as along the track, and it should be easy to understand where to go. A good arrangement is when she as a runner does not need to think about practical issues and only can focus on her own performance. The experience she has from GöteborgsVarvet regarding the organization is positive. It is especially the service, the entertainment around the track and the track that twists around the whole city that she highlights.

Information about Running Events Abroad

Hobby Runner 1 declares that she firstly reads different marathon calendars to investigate when different running events take place. She then visits the running events’ websites which are the most optimal in terms of time and place. She strikes that the website of the events are extremely important. For some events the English on the website has been poor. This has made the process of register and obtaining valuable information more difficult.

The exhibitions before the events are another method that Hobby Runner 1 uses to obtain information about different running competitions. She argues that a part of the event is to stroll around the exhibition. At this time she is really into the thinking of running and open to get hold of new information. She further declares that she for the first time this year has registered to participate in a running competition abroad through a sales agent. This is an exception though. Her opinion is that agents charges overprize that is not compatible to what is included in the price. However, the fact that someone else takes care of the practical aspects and that she gets the opportunity to travel together with a group of resembling people is a plus. To travel with an agent is especially preferable if the running event takes place in a destination where it is difficult to make oneself understandable in English.

10.13. Interview 8 – Summary of Interview with Hobby Runner 2 (2011-03-28)

Hobby Runner 2 has been running for roughly 14 years, but did not start competing until about 2 years later. He met some friends when he moved to Asia that were very dedicated runners and decided to join them. With time he also became a very enthusiastic runner. He further mentions that he enjoys running because during his normal job he is sitting by a desk all day long. The job also requires a lot of traveling. Running has then become the perfect thing for him to do everywhere. It does not require big preparations beforehand and is something he can combine with doing business in another country.

Running Competitions Abroad

Normally Hobby Runner 2 participates in 1 or 2 marathons per year, and estimates that he by now has run about 20 races in total. He ran his first competition abroad in 2000 when he did Iron Man in New Zealand. It is not only marathons he participates in, but also other various small races. He tries his best to fit these running events with his working and traveling schedule, so while he travels to a country to do businesses he can also participate in a race. Hobby Runner 2 further states that he prefers to run marathons before the short-distance races, since it poses a bigger challenge for him. He explains that most marathons have a half marathon included in the race, but if he stops after half the distance he will feel frustrated. Hobby Runner 2 also means that after he runs a marathon he feels like he has achieved something. Even though he prefers marathons, however, the problem of age is sometimes getting in the way; the time he needs for recovery is getting longer. In addition, when traveling abroad to participate in marathons he has to consider the time he needs for training, the jet-lag, etc. Therefore he believes it is much easier to log in for half marathons, since it does not require major preparations and he does not have to force his body to a lot of harm. He means that if he would prepare for running a marathon he would need 8-10 weeks of scheduled training, while for a half marathon he would probably only need half of that time.

For the marathon events abroad Hobby Runner 2 has participated in he has always traveled with friends. They train together in a group and also log in at the event location together. For half marathons he usually travels by himself, since it does not require big preparations.

For him, a good running experience is very much depended on his own performance but also on the design of the running course. As a bad experience he gives the example of Hong Kong, where the running course is mostly on the highway, which means that not much is seen of the city. Hobby Runner 2 is clear with explaining that an event can be perceived completely differently for each runner. Thus, a lot has to do with each person's capabilities and performance, as well as how good of a runner he/she is.

Motives of Competing in Running Events Abroad

The reason why Hobby Runner 2 travels abroad to participate in running events is because he finds it nice to do something a little bit out of the ordinary when visiting a foreign country. He explains that he gets a better feeling for the country and its people. Hobby Runner 2 mentions Tokyo marathon in Japan as an example. Although it was raining heavily and the weather was very cold ten thousands of people were standing on the streets cheering the runners on. This made him feel like he captured something from the country. Another example is when he ran in Beijing, China on the Great Wall, which he now can tell other people that he has run on a monument.

For him the destination is very important, the fact that the city itself has something to offer, as well as the race course is arranged so that the runners can see something of the city. The motivation for him is to see certain parts of a city which he normally would not see or just drive by. Furthermore, the organization is also important. If an event has good organization and it is easy to get to the destination, it makes it more attractive for a foreigner. The vital part is that there is no hassle with hotels, transportation, it is easy to get to the starting point of the race, as well as it takes fast to collect your bag. Hobby Runner 2 once again mentions Tokyo Marathon as a good example. The atmosphere and the audience are also significant factors that distinguish a good event from a bad one. If there is no one looking, cheering and pushing the runners on, there exists very little motivation for them to run the race.

Information about Running Events Abroad

The races abroad Hobby Runner 2 have participated in he has found through either somebody recommending it, or it was a place he had never been to before and therefore he wanted to go there. Now he is more selective when choosing the races he wants to run and therefore actively searches mainly for location specific events.

There are mainly from two sources he finds his information. First it is the online International Marathon Calendars where runners can find all the international marathons. Then there is a magazine called "Runner's world". In this there are reviews where people tell their opinion on different running events. Some countries also have a very active running community and the people within the community often share where they have been, done and whether they liked it. Hobby Runner 2 further believes that if someone looks hard and long enough for information, it is all out there.

Lastly, he mentions that he would not like to travel in group with a tour guide to certain events. Instead he prefers to do all the planning and solve the practical issues by himself or together with friends. Hobby Runner 2 explains that it is mainly because he is not too keen on being linked with some kind of set arrangement. He means that especially if someone would like to go to a new place and discover something new, most people would probably like to be more by themselves to do it in their own pace. He also considers all the preparation a part of the fun of the whole race; the research of the place and what you do in advance, what you do afterwards, where to go, etc.

10.14. Interview 9 – Summary of Interview with Hobby Runner 3 (2011-03-31)

Hobby Runner 3 has been running for quite some time. He is also one of the founders of the first ever 100 Marathon Club in the UK, and has had a leading position there ever since 2005. The club is to support the true marathon distance of 42.195km, but at the same time Hobby Runner 3 points out that they do not discourage ultra-marathons or half-marathons. It is more to uphold the true definition of a marathon, since running competitions are getting more popular and people are coming up with private races that they also call marathon. At the moment the club has 350 members that have actually succeeded to run 100 marathons, but then there are also additional members that have only run 50 races.

Running Competitions Abroad

Hobby Runner 3 considers himself a very committed recreational runner because he has not received a single penny of sponsorship. The only time he has been sponsored has been during charity races. He ran his first marathon in 1984, but had run a few shorter distance races before. In the beginning it was more for fitness training. He has a memory of watching London Marathon and seeing a 77 old lady run it, and then he told himself that “can she do it, so can I”. He therefore started to run marathons.

The first foreign place he ever traveled to in order to compete in an international race was the Berlin Marathon in 1988. Thereafter he started to compete in marathons abroad 1-2 times a year. At one point he got the American bug and while competing there he met a man who was a member of the 50 States Club. Hobby Runner 3 immediately got interested and thought that running marathons in 20 different states, which was the minimum requirement in order to be allowed to join the club, would be a good life target. After that it just took off for Hobby Runner 3. In the end of 2007, he became the first ever British man to have run in every state in the US. As of now he has run in 46 countries around the whole world, and in total more than 150 marathons. He also estimated that he participates in about 15-20 international running competitions each year.

For him the difference between running a half-marathon and marathon is that the former will give a lot of pain, but for less time. Other than that they are the same. However, since Hobby Runner 3 has mainly been concentrating on running marathons, he has not participated in half-marathons for quite some time. He says that generally his rule is that you should only do the one or the other, but if you are going to mix them you have to make sure to be careful.

Although he has not participated in GöteborgsVarvet, he has run other races like 5kms and 10kms that are connected with other marathons. He means that he is so competitive that he will run these races as long as it is a perfectly fine course. The main event, the marathon, he chooses to worry about on the day of the race. Furthermore, when he travels abroad to compete he generally does it together with friends, and usually it is Hobby Runner 3 that takes care of the planning. Since the people he arranges everything with would be in the 100 Marathon Club, it is also usually these people that are in his group of friends he travels with.

Motives of Competing in Running Events Abroad

Hobby Runner 3 has something he refers to as a “tick in the box”, which means that he ticks the box when he has done something he has always wanted to do. For instance, he has always wanted to run over the Sydney Harbor Bridge. He further mentions that once he ran 6 marathons during 6 days in Ireland, and has also participated in Antarctica Marathon. The places are important he usually has a personal interest of locations he has visited. However, he also points out that if someone recommends a place he will consider it. Sometimes the choice the participation in a certain event also depends on the date. Hobby Runner 3 looks ahead and sees which ones he would like to go to. He likes to “collect” states or counties and has done that in the US, Ireland, UK, Italy, Germany and Spain. This is therefore another motive and reason for him to travel abroad since he might look into a place and think “Oh, I have not been to that state before!”.

When being asked about the running achievement he is the most proud of he explains that usually he will only remember the most recent ones. For him those events where the ones that were a bit unusual, for instance he managed to run a 6 hour race without resting.

He further states that while he thinks that running a marathon every week is too many, it does lead to the fact that the runner does not have to train or just run 4-5 miles a couple of times. This is because he is always physically fit and, more importantly, mentally used to running a marathon.

Hobby Runner 3 is of the opinion that performance is not of great importance for determining if an event is good or not. As an example he mentions a friend that came back from an event and complained about the organization; however he thought the destination was fantastic. The exchange rate also has an impact, especially for determining if it is cheap and worth to go to a certain place.

Information about Running Events Abroad

Hobby Runner 3 usually finds information from the Internet and the event websites, even though he thinks some are better than others. The big city marathons however, which are what the great majority of the people want to go to, he considers are good. The language barriers are usually the most common concern, for example no proper information on English on the websites. Furthermore he mentions that if a runner goes into the 100 Marathon website, he has listed quite a few races there that he thinks are interesting.

Lastly, Hobby Runner 3 mentions that it would not bother him to be in a set arrangement following a tour company since it is usually just is a matter of a few days, but it depends a lot on the price. He says that he sees the advantages of these methods, especially the handling of practical issues.

10.15. Interview 10 – Summary of Interview with Hobby Runner 4 (2011-04-04)

Hobby runner 4 has been running since his youth. The last couple of years he has been training 3-4 times per week and mostly participated in road-races in his home country. Hobby Runner 4 runs because it is recreational and it keeps him fit and healthy.

Running Competitions Abroad

GöteborgsVarvet 2011 will be the first running competition abroad that Hobby Runner 4 takes part in. However, he says that he would be interested to do other races in Europe and America, but, as it is costly to travel around the world in order to compete he has not got the opportunity before.

In his home country Hobby Runner 4 run mostly shorter distances, 10 to 15km races. However, he says that in terms of participants these events cannot be compared to GöteborgsVarvet. Furthermore, Hobby Runner 4 states that he run about 2-3 half marathons per year but he has never run a marathon. The largest difference between these kinds of events lays in the preparations. According to Hobby Runner 4 you cannot run as fast in a half marathon as you do in shorter races. He further argues that marathons are tougher in the sense that you have to prepare your body with both a lot more training and food and drinks before a race.

Hobby Runner 4 is traveling by himself to Gothenburg, but he will meet up with Swedish friends and colleagues once there. He also explains that for some decades ago it was a tradition at his company that a group of people would travel together to Gothenburg in order to compete in GöteborgsVarvet, but this is not the fact anymore.

Motives of Competing in Running Events Abroad

There are a lot of motives why Hobby Runner 4 wants to participate in GöteborgsVarvet. He wants to enjoy all the thousands of participants, the large audience that are cheering, see the city and further mention the different starting blocks as a reason. In his homeland they usually start at the same time, so the competitors in the back of the group sometimes have to stand still at the start for 10 minutes before it is possible to start to run.

Moreover, this time it was a coincidence that Hobby Runner 4 registered for GöteborgsVarvet. The same week as the event takes place Hobby Runner 4 is sent to Gothenburg by his company in order to do businesses. The destination is important for Hobby Runner 4. His company is highly associated with Gothenburg and he has a lot of friends there. Furthermore, the differences between Gothenburg and his own home country also makes the destination interesting.

Hobby Runner 4 thinks that the aspects deciding if an event is good or bad is a combination between the track and the organization. If he would hear that an organization is really bad, he



would not go there. However, if the organization is not completely perfect, but the track is amazingly beautiful, then Hobby Runner 4 says he definitely would want to go.

Information about Running Events Abroad

Hobby Runner 4 got most of the information about GöteborgsVarvet on the website. He also says that since he was a little kid he has heard about the event from one of his older training friends. So, he already had a lot of information about the race. Hobby Runner 4 further argues that there is enough information to be obtained in the Internet. The only concern he has had is regarding the payment so it was correctly done.

As a final point Hobby Runner 4 states that he feels comfortable to handle all the practical issues by himself and is not in the need of traveling with an organized group.