https://doi.org/10.7251/SSH2602277G **UDC:** 338.486.1.02:796.093
Original scientific paper ***Originalni naučni rad***

Impact of Sporting Events on Destination Tourism Offer: Case study of Pannonian Challenge and DOBRO World Cup

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Abstract: *This paper analyses the impact of sporting events on a destination's tourism offer, with a particular focus on the city of Osijek and two international events: the Pannonian Challenge and the DOBRO World Cup. The study is grounded in the theoretical framework of sport and event tourism, which highlights the role of events in generating tourism demand, strengthening destination image, and extending the tourism season. The empirical part of the research is based on the analysis of secondary data on tourist overnight stays generated by events held in Osijek during 2023, as well as on tourism statistics on arrivals and overnight stays recorded during the week of the international gymnastics competition DOBRO World Cup in April 2025. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were applied to examine the relationship between domestic and international tourism demand and to assess the tourism effects of sporting events. The results indicate that sporting events generate a significant level of tourism demand, with the analysed events producing a total of 28,214 overnight stays in 2023. The structure of tourism demand shows a relatively balanced relationship between domestic and foreign tourists, suggesting an increasing internationalisation of tourism associated with events. A strong positive relationship between domestic and foreign overnight stays was also identified, indicating that event attractiveness simultaneously influences both tourism markets. Furthermore, the analysis of the DOBRO World Cup shows that foreign tourists record a longer average length of stay compared with domestic visitors. The findings highlight the importance of sporting events as strategic tourism products and underline the need to integrate them into destination tourism development and management strategies.*

Key words: *sport tourism; event tourism; sporting events; destination development; tourism demand*

Introduction

Sports tourism is one of the more dynamic segments of contemporary tourism, and major sporting events are increasingly used as instruments for destination branding, season extension, and demand generation. In the literature, event tourism is described as a field that encompasses both professional practice and scientific research on the impacts of events on the economy and society, with sporting events occupying a particularly important position due to their wide media visibility and their ability to attract visitors (Getz, 2008). In the context of sports tourism, travel may be motivated either by active participation in sport or by spectating, with expenditure directed toward accommodation, hospitality services, transport, and related activities (Gibson, 1998).

Although mega-events such as the Olympic Games or world championships are the most visible, regional events can also have an important impact on the tourism offer, particularly in destinations outside the main tourism flows. In recent years, Osijek has been developing a profile as a centre for sports and sport-cultural events. Events such as the Pannonian Challenge (action sports) and the DOBRO World Cup (artistic gymnastics) attract participants and visitors from both domestic and international markets, creating measurable effects on tourist traffic and potentially strengthening the city's image.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the impact of sporting events on the tourism offer of Osijek through a literature review and an empirical analysis of secondary data on overnight stays by event in 2023, as well as reports for the week during which the DOBRO World Cup was held in 2025.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Sports tourism represents one of the most significant areas of contemporary tourism, and its development is closely linked to the globalization of sport, increased mobility of populations, and growing demand for experiential forms of travel. According to Gibson (1998), sports tourism includes travel motivated by active participation in sport,

spectating at sporting events, or visiting sport-related attractions, with sporting events representing one of the most important segments of this form of tourism. Weed and Bull (2004) further emphasize that sports tourism is not only a form of physical movement of visitors but also a complex social and economic phenomenon involving the interaction between sport, tourism, and destination development. Research in this field highlights that sport tourism activities may include both active participation and spectator experiences, creating various forms of tourism demand that contribute to destination development (Ritchie & Adair, 2004). Within event tourism, sporting events occupy a special position due to their ability to generate significant tourism demand and create long-term development effects. Getz (2008) defines event tourism as the systematic planning, development, and management of events with the aim of generating tourism and economic benefits for a destination. In this context, sporting events act as catalysts for tourism development by attracting visitors, increasing tourism expenditure, and contributing to the international promotion of destinations. Getz and Page (2016) highlight that contemporary research on sporting events has evolved from simple measurements of economic impacts toward analysing their broader influence on destination image, competitiveness, and sustainable development.

One of the key theoretical concepts in the study of sporting events is the concept of event tourism impacts, which includes economic, social, and infrastructural dimensions. Economic impacts relate to increased tourism expenditure, employment, and revenue in the tourism sector (Gratton & Taylor, 2000). Daniels and Norman (2003) emphasize that sporting events generate additional demand for accommodation, hospitality services, and transportation, thereby directly contributing to the local economy. In addition to direct economic impacts, sporting events also generate indirect effects through destination promotion and increased international recognition (Hall, 1992). Early research on hallmark events highlighted their ability to strengthen the identity and image of host destinations and to attract visitors over a longer period of time (Ritchie, 1984). Hall (1992) further developed this concept by emphasizing that hallmark events become strongly associated with a particular destination and play an important role in its tourism development. A particularly important concept in the literature is the legacy of sporting events, referring to the long-term effects of events on a destination. Preuss (2007) defines event legacy as all planned and unplanned, positive and negative, tangible and intangible effects that remain after the event has concluded. These effects include infrastructure development, increased tourism demand, and the strengthening of the destination's image. Thomson, Schlenker, and Schulenkorf (2013) further conceptualize sport event legacy as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes economic, social, environmental, and institutional outcomes that persist after the event. Smith (2012) also points out that sporting events can contribute to urban development and city revitalization, particularly when they are integrated into broader destination development strategies.

Depending on their size and significance, sporting events can be classified into several categories, including mega-events, hallmark events, and local events. Mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, have global reach and significant economic impacts (Matheson, 2006). Horne (2007) notes that mega-events are characterized by their large scale, global media coverage, and significant economic and social impacts on host destinations. Zimbalist (2006) also highlights that major sporting events can generate substantial tourism demand, although their long-term benefits depend on effective management and strategic planning. While mega-events have received the greatest scholarly attention, research increasingly indicates that smaller and medium-scale events can also generate meaningful tourism impacts, particularly in smaller or medium-sized destinations (Higham & Hinch, 2009). An important aspect of sporting events is their role in destination marketing. Chalip (2004) emphasizes that sporting events represent an effective tool for destination promotion because they enable the creation of positive emotions and experiences associated with the destination. This process, known as leverage, involves using sporting events to achieve long-term tourism and economic benefits. Fourie and Santana-Gallego (2011) empirically demonstrated that sporting events have a statistically significant positive impact on tourist arrivals, particularly when accompanied by effective promotional strategies.

Despite the many positive effects, the literature also highlights methodological challenges in assessing the impacts of sporting events. Crompton (1995) argues that economic impact estimates are often overestimated due to methodological limitations, while Preuss (2007) emphasizes the need to use objective and long-term tourism indicators. In their meta-analysis, Li and Jago (2013) conclude that sporting events generally have a positive but variable impact on tourism, depending on factors such as event size, location, and the level of international participation. In addition to economic effects, sporting events may also influence residents' perceptions and social attitudes toward tourism development. Kim and Petrick (2005) found that local residents often perceive major sporting events as opportunities

for improving destination reputation, infrastructure development, and community pride, although potential negative impacts such as congestion or increased costs may also occur. In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the sustainability of sports tourism. UN Tourism (2025) emphasizes that sporting events should be integrated into destination sustainable development strategies in order to maximize benefits and minimize negative impacts. Sustainable management of sporting events involves cooperation between event organizers, tourism organizations, and local communities in order to create long-term tourism benefits. In the context of continental destinations, sporting events have particular importance because they contribute to reducing the seasonality of tourism demand and diversifying the tourism offer. Higham and Hinch (2009) point out that sporting events can play a key role in tourism development in destinations that lack traditional tourism resources such as coastal or mountain attractions. In such destinations, sporting events become a key tourism product and an important element of the competitive strategy.

Based on the theoretical and empirical insights presented above, it can be concluded that sporting events represent an important instrument of tourism development, influencing increased tourism demand, strengthening destination image, and enhancing the tourism offer. However, their actual impact depends on a number of factors, including event size, the level of international participation, and the quality of destination management. The theoretical foundations of sports tourism point to the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon: sport may represent the primary motivation for travel, but it may also serve as an additional element within a broader tourism experience (Weed & Bull, 2004). In research, events are often viewed both as drivers of tourism demand and as platforms for generating intangible values such as destination image, emotions, and social capital (Chalip, 2004). Consequently, sporting events represent an increasingly important strategic instrument for tourism development and destination competitiveness.

Research Problem, Objectives, Hypotheses and Conceptual Research Model

Despite the extensive body of literature on the impact of sporting events on tourism, most existing studies focus primarily on large international and mega-events such as the Olympic Games and world championships (Preuss, 2007; Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2011). In contrast, significantly fewer studies analyse the effects of smaller but regularly held international sporting events on tourism demand in medium-sized continental destinations. In particular, their influence on the structure of tourism demand—such as the relationship between domestic and international tourists and differences in their behaviour and length of stay—remains insufficiently explored.

Furthermore, many previous studies rely on estimates of the overall economic impact of events, while fewer focus on analysing specific tourism performance indicators such as the number of arrivals and overnight stays, which represent more objective and reliable measures of tourism impact (Li & Jago, 2013). In the context of medium-sized continental destinations such as Osijek, empirical studies examining the role of sporting events in the development of the tourism offer and the internationalisation of tourism demand are particularly limited. Accordingly, a research gap can be identified in the lack of empirical studies examining the impact of international sporting events on tourism demand in medium-sized continental destinations, with particular emphasis on the structure of tourism demand and the differences between domestic and foreign tourists.

In line with this gap, the main objective of this paper is to empirically analyse the impact of sporting events on tourism demand in the city of Osijek, with a particular focus on the events **Pannonian Challenge** and **DOBRO World Cup,** and to determine their contribution to overall tourism performance and the internationalisation of tourism demand.

Based on the theoretical framework and the identified research gap, the following research questions are formulated:

RQ1: To what extent do sporting events contribute to an increase in tourism demand in the destination?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between domestic and foreign tourist overnight stays during sporting events?

RQ3: Are there differences in the tourism behaviour of domestic and foreign tourists during international sporting events?

Based on these research questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Sporting events have a statistically significant positive impact on tourism demand in the destination.

H2: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between the number of domestic and foreign tourist overnight stays during sporting events.

H3: Foreign tourists achieve a longer average length of stay in the destination during international sporting events compared to domestic tourists.

Based on theoretical insights and the defined hypotheses, the conceptual framework of this study assumes that sporting events represent a key independent factor influencing tourism demand in the destination. Within the model, sporting events are expected to contribute to an increase in the total number of overnight stays, an increase in the number of international tourists, a longer average length of stay, and the internationalisation of tourism demand. At the same time, a positive relationship is assumed between domestic and international tourism demand, reflecting the overall attractiveness and market reach of sporting events. Finally, increased tourism demand contributes to strengthening the destination's tourism offer and competitiveness.

Research Methodology

The empirical part of this study is based on the analysis of secondary data on tourism demand related to sporting events in the city of Osijek. Tourism data used in this research were obtained from official tourism statistics and reports of the City of Osijek Tourism Board. The data were collected from official statistical sources and consist of two datasets. The first dataset refers to tourist overnight stays recorded during 18 events held in Osijek in 2023. The data include the number of overnight stays by domestic and foreign tourists for each individual event, as well as the total number of overnight stays. This dataset enables the analysis of the tourism impact of individual events and a comparison of the structure of tourism demand. The second dataset relates to tourist arrivals and overnight stays recorded during the period from 7 to 13 April 2025, which coincides with the organization of the international gymnastics competition DOBRO World Cup. These data allow for a more detailed analysis of the structure of tourism demand during the period of a major international sporting event, including differences between domestic and foreign tourists and their average length of stay.

For the purposes of analysis, methods of descriptive and inferential statistics and correlation analysis were applied. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate basic statistical indicators, including the total number of overnight stays, arithmetic mean, median, standard deviation, and the shares of domestic and foreign overnight stays. These indicators provide insight into the scope and structure of tourism demand related to sporting events. To analyse the relationship between domestic and foreign overnight stays, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was used. This method enables the assessment of the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables and is frequently used in tourism research (Field, 2018). Statistical significance was tested at a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Additionally, in order to further examine the relationship between domestic and foreign overnight stays, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted, in which the number of foreign overnight stays represents the dependent variable and the number of domestic overnight stays the independent variable. Regression analysis allows for an assessment of the extent to which domestic overnight stays can explain variation in foreign overnight stays and provides additional insight into the structure of tourism demand associated with sporting events. To further examine differences between domestic and foreign overnight stays by event, a paired samples t-test was applied. This method enables the assessment of whether a statistically significant difference exists between two related groups of data (Field, 2018). Since the sample includes a relatively small number of events, the results were additionally verified using the non-parametric Wilcoxon test, which does not require the assumption of normal data distribution.

The variables included in the research are:

- total number of overnight stays per event
- number of overnight stays by domestic tourists
- number of overnight stays by foreign tourists
- share of foreign overnight stays
- number of tourist arrivals
- average length of stay

Data analysis was performed using Statistica statistical software, and the results are presented in tables and graphs to facilitate interpretation.

Despite its analytical value, the study has certain limitations. First, the analysis is based on secondary data that do not include information about tourists' travel motivations, expenditure, or socio-demographic characteristics. In addition, the research is limited to a single destination, which may restrict the generalizability of the results to other

destinations. However, despite these limitations, the data used represent a reliable and objective indicator of the tourism impact of sporting events, as they are based on actually recorded tourist arrivals and overnight stays.

Results

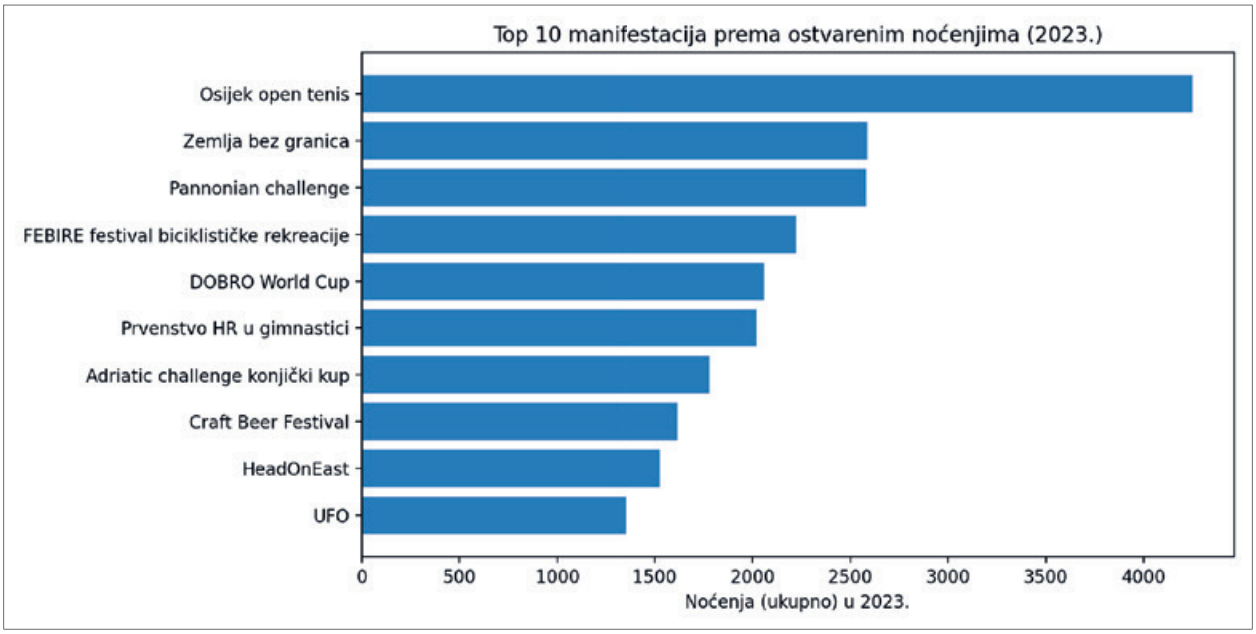


Figure 1: *Top 10 Events by Number of Overnight Stays (2023)*

Source: *Authors' research*

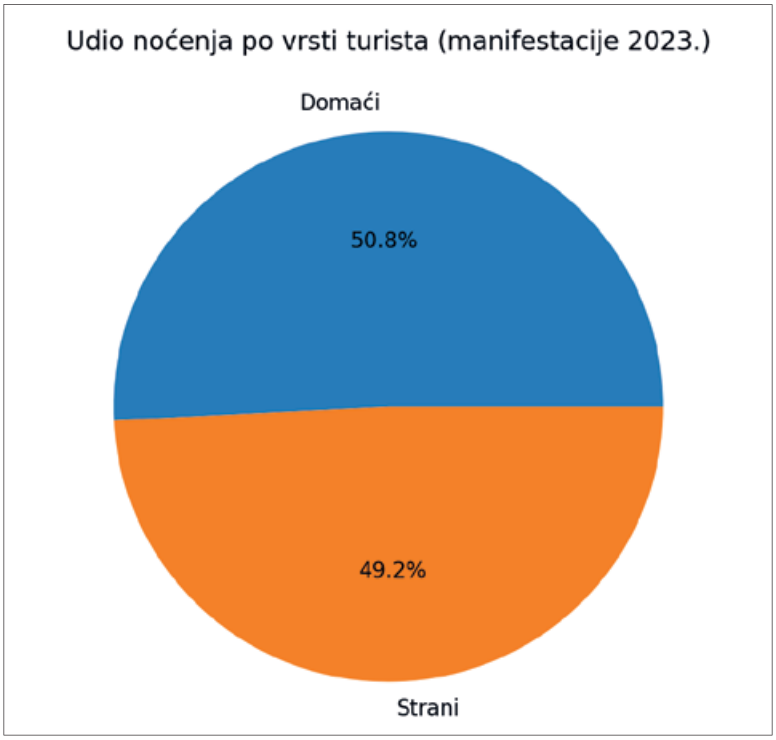


Figure 2: *Share of Overnight Stays by Tourist Type (Events 2023)*

Source: *Authors' research*

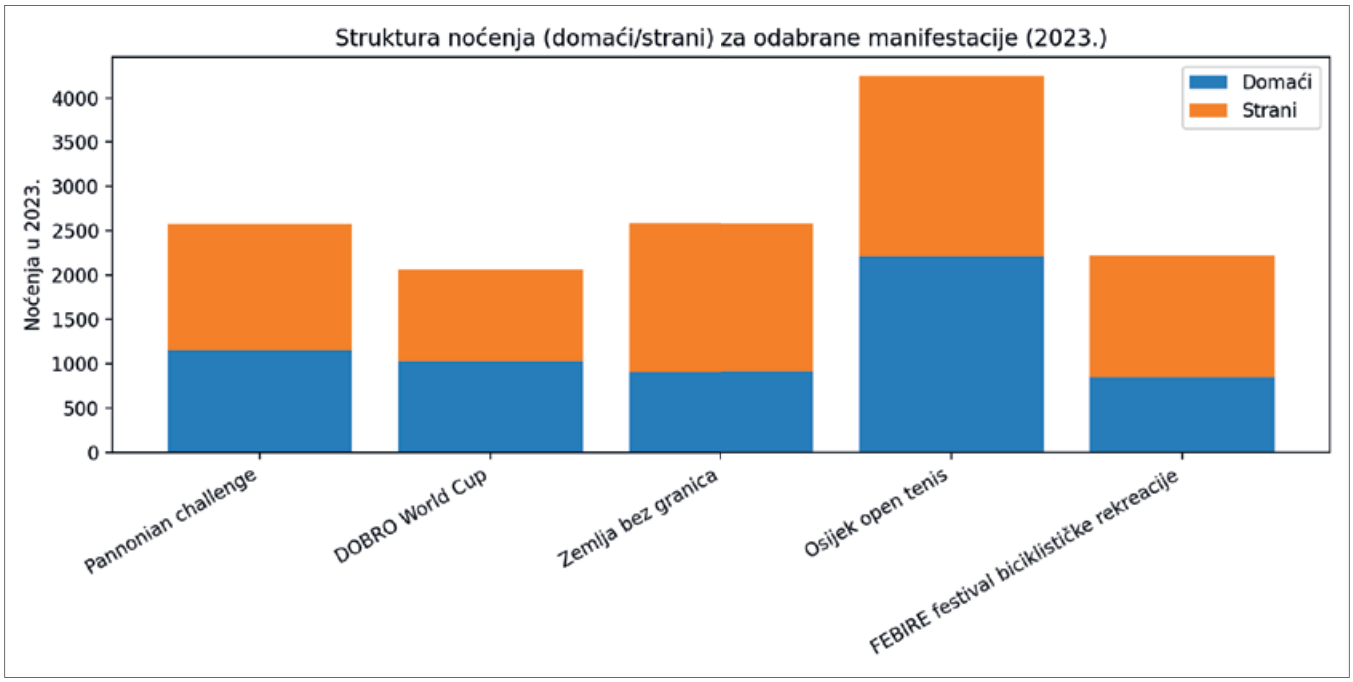


Figure 3: *Structure of Overnight Stays (Domestic vs. Foreign Tourists) for Selected Events (2023)*

Source: *Authors' research*

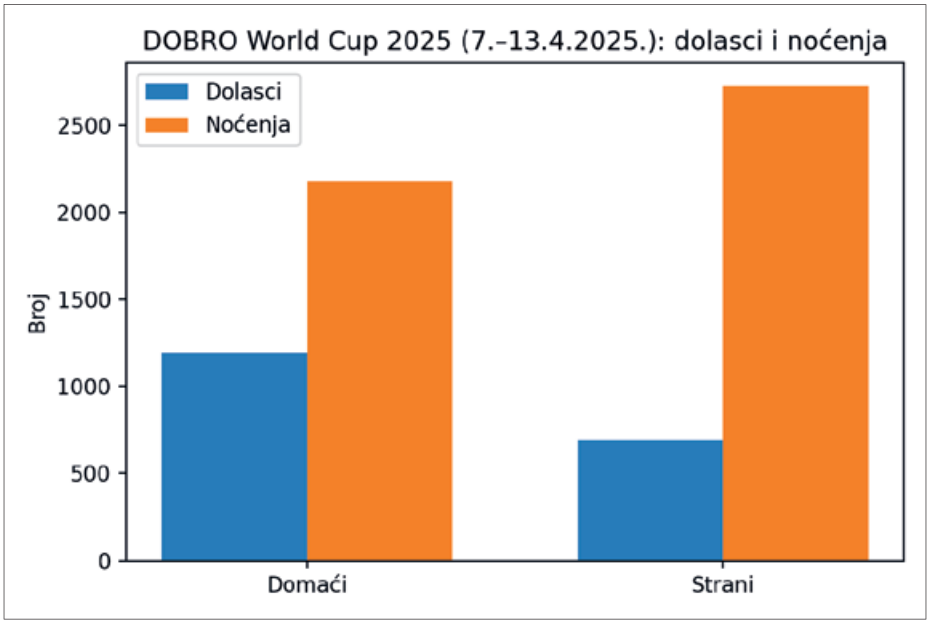


Figure 4: *DOBRO World Cup 2025 (7–13 April 2025): Comparison of Tourist Arrivals and Overnight Stays by Tourist Type*

Source: *Authors' research*

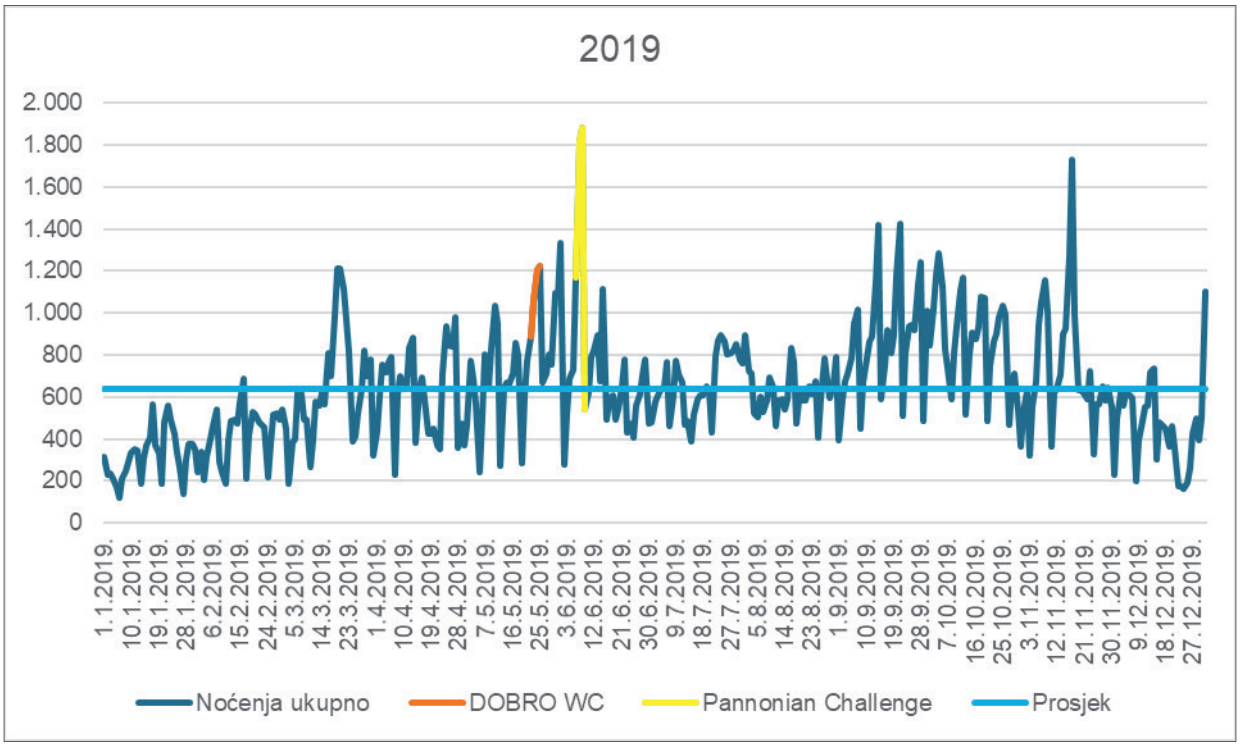


Figure 5: *Impact of Pannonian Challenge and DOBRO World Cup on Overnight Stays in 2019*

Source: *Authors' research*

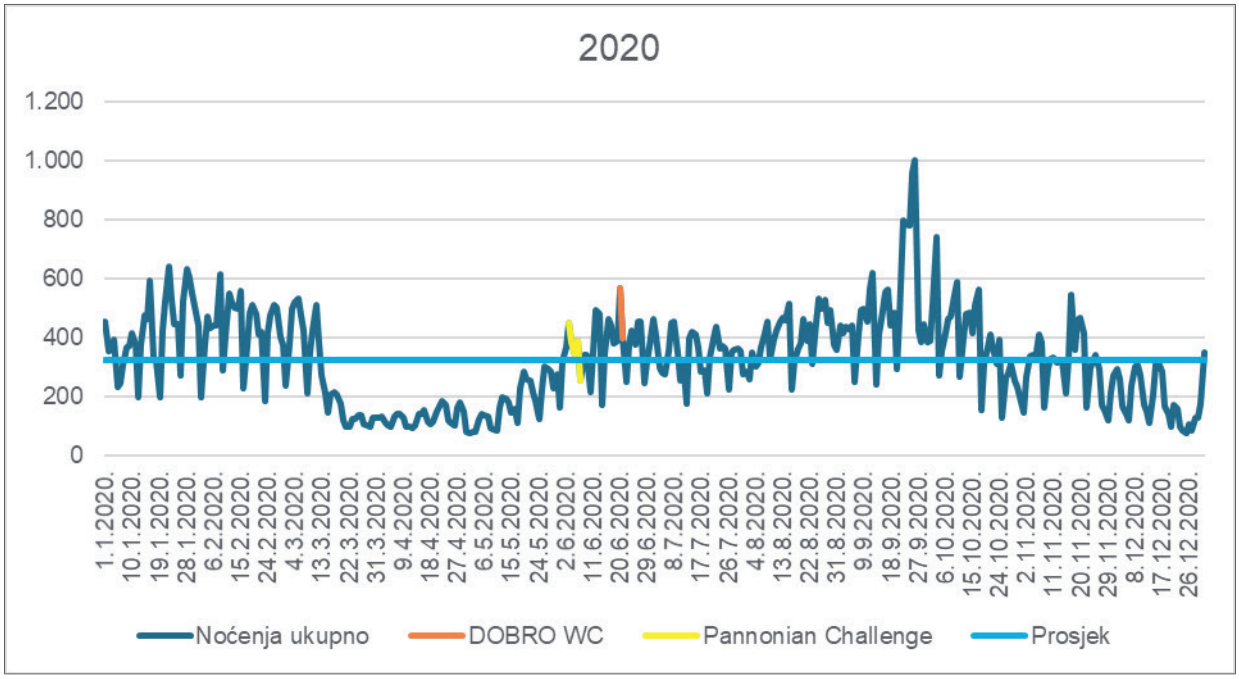


Figure 6: *Impact of Pannonian Challenge and DOBRO World Cup on Overnight Stays in 2020*

Source: *Authors' research*

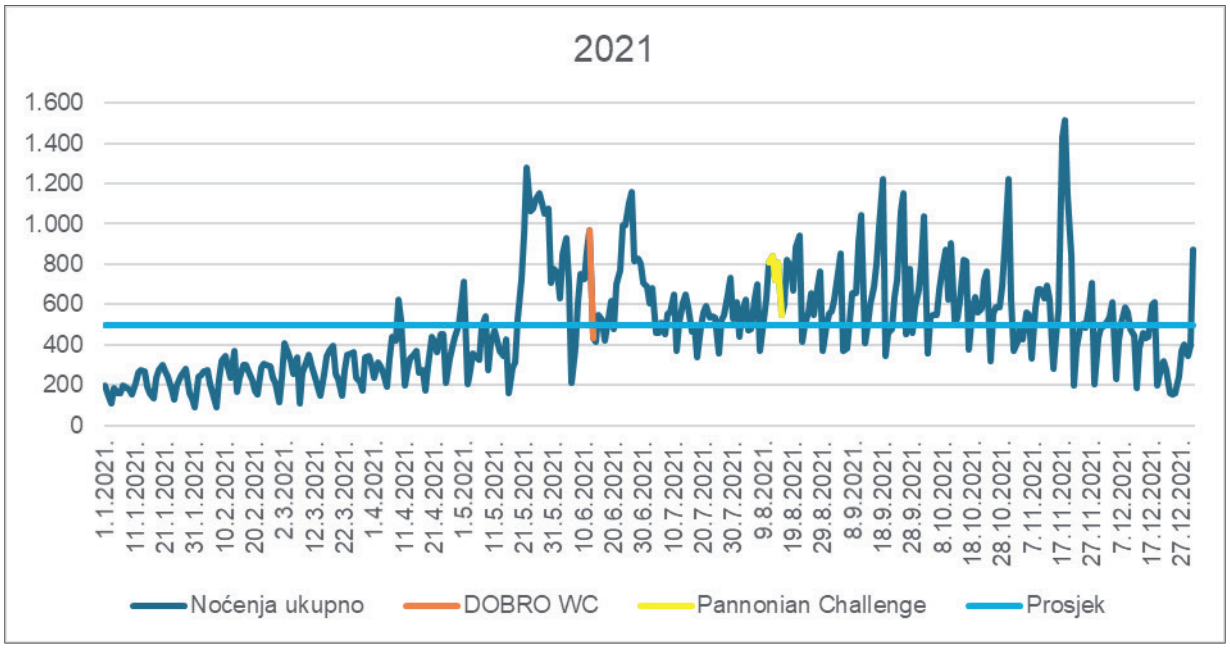


Figure 7: *Impact of Pannonian Challenge and DOBRO World Cup on Overnight Stays in 2021*

Source: *Authors' research*

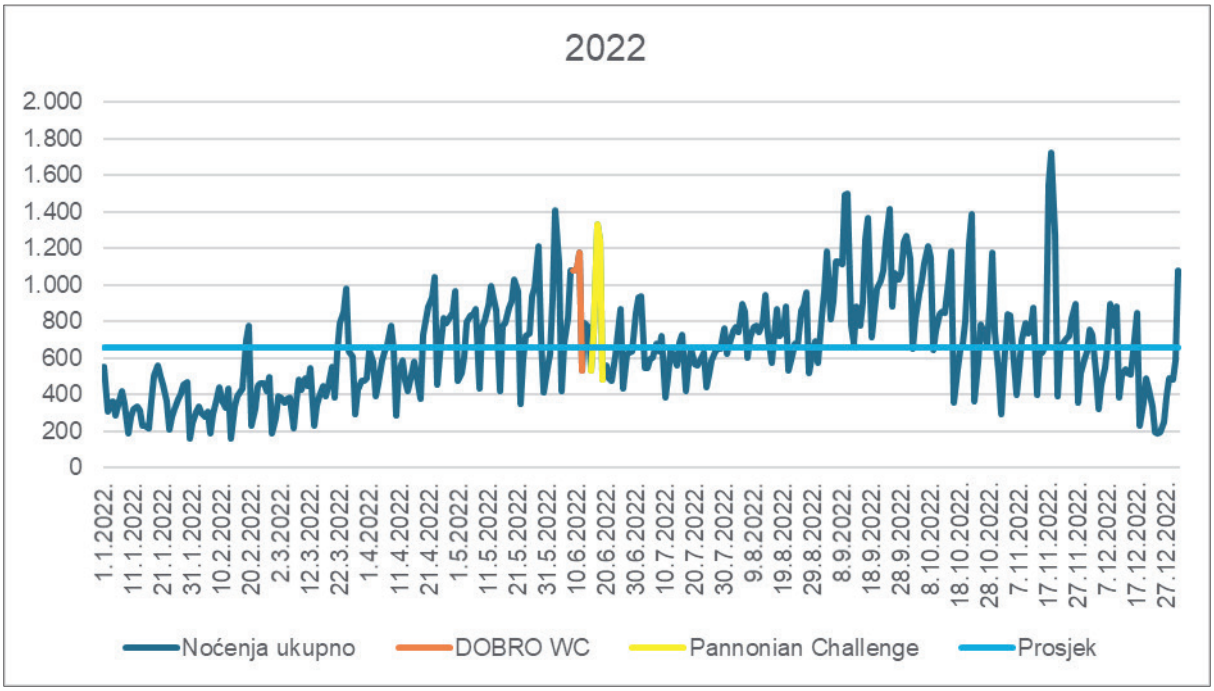


Figure 8: *Impact of Pannonian Challenge and DOBRO World Cup on Overnight Stays in 2022*

Source: *Authors' research*

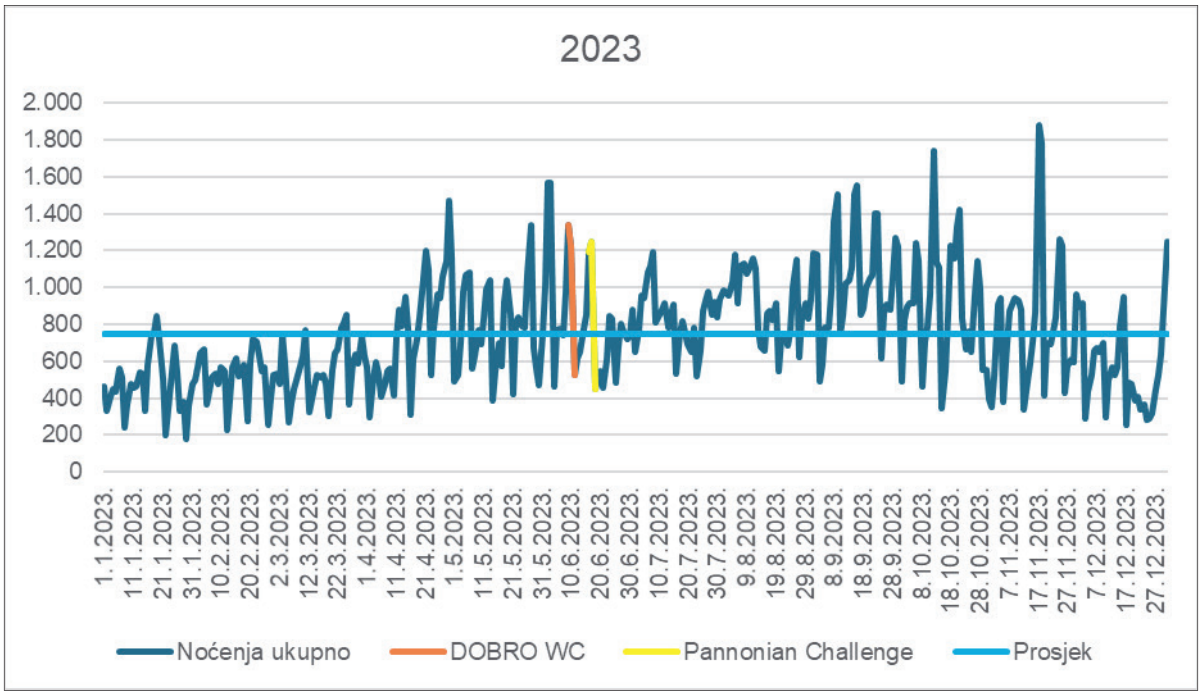


Figure 9: *Impact of Pannonian Challenge and DOBRO World Cup on Overnight Stays in 2023*

Source: *Authors' research*

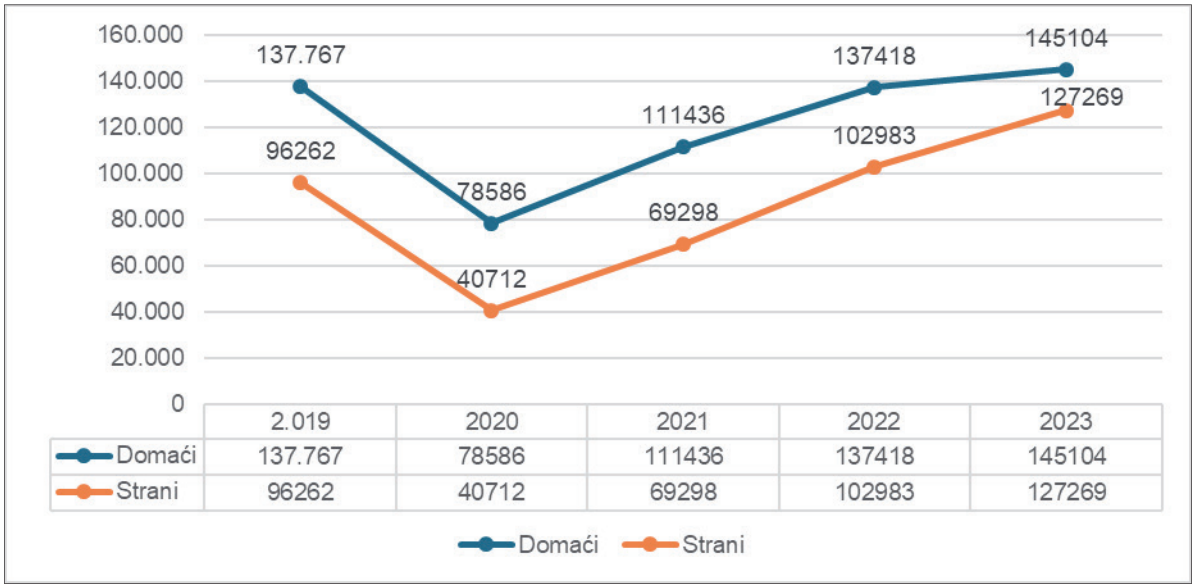


Figure 10: *Comparison of Domestic and Foreign Tourist Overnight Stays*

Source: *Authors' research*

Table 1: *Tourist Arrivals and Overnight Stays in Osijek During the DOBRO World Cup Week (7–13 April 2025)*

Tourist Type	Arrivals	Overnight Stays	Average Length of Stay (days)	Share of Arrivals (%)	Share of Overnight Stays (%)
Domestic	1191	2175	1.83	63.3	44.4
Foreign	691	2721	3.94	36.7	55.6
Total	1882	4896	2.60	100.0	100.0

Source: *Authors' research*

Table 2: *Top 10 Events by Number of Overnight Stays in Osijek (2023)*

Event	Event Date	Domestic Overnight Stays	Foreign Overnight Stays	Total Overnight Stays	Share of Foreign Overnight Stays (%)
Osijek Open Tennis	24–30 Apr	2212	2038	4250	48.0
Zemlja bez granica (Land Without Borders Festival)	21–24 Sep	912	1676	2588	64.8
Pannonian Challenge	15–19 Jun	1152	1428	2580	55.3
FEBIRE Cycling Recreation Festival	21–23 Sep	850	1373	2223	61.8
DOBRO World Cup	9–12 Jun	1032	1027	2059	49.9
Croatian Gymnastics Championship	2–4 Jun	1441	580	2021	28.7
Adriatic Challenge Equestrian Cup	29 Jun–2 Jul	864	915	1779	51.4
Craft Beer Festival	15–16 Sep	651	966	1617	59.7
HeadOnEast	6–8 Oct	865	662	1527	43.4
UFO Festival	8–9 Sep	550	801	1351	59.3

Source: *Authors' research*

Table 3: *Test of Differences Between Domestic and Foreign Overnight Stays by Event (2023)*

Test	Statistic	p-value	Interpretation
Paired t-test	t = −0.134	p = 0.897	No statistically significant difference between domestic and foreign overnight stays across events
Wilcoxon signed-rank test	W = 25.0	p = 0.846	Non-parametric confirmation of the same result

Source: *Authors' research*

Table 4: *OLS Regression Model: Foreign Overnight Stays = a + b × Domestic Overnight Stays (2023)*

Parameter	Coefficient	SE	p	R^2
Intercept (a)	240.58	-	-	
Domestic overnight stays (b)	0.765	-	0.018	0.52

Source: *Authors' research*

Discussion

The study's findings provide strong empirical support for the assumption that sporting events exert a positive influence on tourism demand and contribute to the development of the destination's tourism offer. The analysis presented in Figure 1 (Top 10 Events by Number of Overnight Stays, 2023) shows that the largest tourism effect was generated by the Osijek Open tennis tournament, with 4,250 overnight stays, followed by Zemlja bez granica and the Pannonian Challenge, each with approximately 2,600 overnight stays. The observed gap between the leading events and the remainder indicates a concentration of event-generated tourism demand in a relatively small number of "anchor" events, which is typical of event tourism and corresponds to the role of flagship or hallmark events in destination development (Getz, 2008; Hall, 1992). At the same time, the presence of both sporting and socio-cultural events among the top-performing manifestations suggests a diversified event portfolio, which may contribute to a more stable distribution of tourism demand throughout the year.

The structure of tourism demand shown in Figure 2 (Share of Overnight Stays by Tourist Type, Events 2023) reveals an almost balanced relationship between domestic and foreign tourists (50.8% vs. 49.2%), which represents an important indicator of the internationalisation of tourism demand associated with events in Osijek. This ratio is particularly relevant for medium-sized continental destinations that traditionally rely more heavily on the domestic market, as it indicates the ability of events to attract international audiences while maintaining a strong national visitor base. The strong presence of domestic tourists simultaneously confirms the role of sporting events in the development of the national market and regional travel flows, which is consistent with theoretical approaches to sports tourism that highlight participants, accompanying persons, and spectators as key demand segments (Gibson, 1998; Weed & Bull, 2004). Furthermore, Figure 3 (Structure of Overnight Stays – Domestic vs. Foreign Tourists for Selected Events, 2023) indicates pronounced heterogeneity in the demand structure across events. Certain events, such as Zemlja bez

granica (64.8% foreign overnight stays) and the FEBIRE Cycling Recreation Festival (61.8%), demonstrate a high level of international attractiveness, whereas nationally oriented events, such as the Croatian Gymnastics Championship, record a substantially lower share of foreign overnight stays (28.7%). This pattern confirms that the degree of internationalisation, event reach, and visibility are important determinants of the structure of tourism demand, with international competitions generally producing stronger tourism effects than nationally oriented events (Getz, 2008; Higham & Hinch, 2009). The correlation analysis further supports these findings, showing a statistically significant positive relationship between domestic and foreign overnight stays ($r = 0.724$, $p = 0.018$). This result suggests that both segments of tourism demand respond to similar factors related to event attractiveness, organisation quality, and destination appeal. In practical terms, events that successfully attract domestic visitors also tend to attract foreign tourists, indicating that the attractiveness of sporting events simultaneously influences both tourism markets. Such a pattern supports the theoretical assumption that successful sporting events generate multiplicative effects on tourism demand rather than targeting a single market segment (Getz & Page, 2016).

A particularly clear insight into demand structure during an international event is provided by Table 1 (Tourist Arrivals and Overnight Stays in Osijek During the DOBRO World Cup Week, 7–13 April 2025). During the observed week, 1,882 arrivals and 4,896 overnight stays were recorded, with an average length of stay of 2.60 days. Although foreign tourists represent a minority of arrivals (36.7%), they account for the majority of overnight stays (55.6%) due to a substantially longer average stay (3.94 days) compared with domestic tourists (1.83 days). The visual comparison in Figure 4 (DOBRO World Cup 2025: Comparison of Tourist Arrivals and Overnight Stays by Tourist Type) further confirms this pattern. This finding points to the higher economic value of foreign visitors during international sporting events, as longer stays are typically associated with higher tourism expenditure. Consequently, international sporting events may generate disproportionately large economic impacts even when the number of foreign arrivals is not dominant (Preuss, 2007). The long-term impact of key sporting events is illustrated in Figures 5–9 (Impact of Pannonian Challenge and DOBRO World Cup on Overnight Stays, 2019–2023). Both events demonstrate continuity in generating tourism demand, with the exception of 2020, which was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the pandemic, a relatively rapid recovery is evident, indicating the resilience of event tourism. This continuity confirms that the Pannonian Challenge and the DOBRO World Cup have become recognisable elements of the city's tourism identity and can be considered hallmark events with long-term value for the destination (Hall, 1992; Getz, 2008). The comparison of total domestic and foreign overnight stays in Figure 10 (Comparison of Domestic and Foreign Tourist Overnight Stays) further confirms a generally balanced demand structure, with a slight predominance of domestic overnight stays, which contributes to tourism stability by reducing dependence on a single tourism market.

The empirical framework is further summarised in Table 2 (Top 10 Events by Number of Overnight Stays in Osijek, 2023), according to which the analysed events generated a total of 28,214 overnight stays. The mean per event is 1,567, the median is 1,439, and the standard deviation of 975 overnight stays indicates substantial variability in the tourism impact of events. This suggests that a relatively small number of events generate the largest share of tourism demand, confirming the importance of flagship events in the structure of event tourism demand. The difference tests presented in Table 3 (Test of Differences Between Domestic and Foreign Overnight Stays by Event, 2023) provide additional insight into the structure of tourism demand. The results of the paired samples t-test ($t = -0.134$, $p = 0.897$) indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between domestic and foreign overnight stays across events. This finding is further confirmed by the Wilcoxon signed-rank test ($W = 25.0$, $p = 0.846$), which also shows no statistically significant differences. These results reinforce the conclusion that sporting events in Osijek generate a relatively balanced demand structure across domestic and international markets. Finally, the regression analysis presented in Table 4 (OLS Regression Model: Foreign Overnight Stays = a + b × Domestic Overnight Stays) indicates that the coefficient of domestic overnight stays is statistically significant ($p = 0.018$), while the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.52$) shows that domestic overnight stays explain approximately 52% of the variation in foreign overnight stays. This result further confirms the strong relationship between domestic and international tourism demand and suggests that the overall attractiveness of events represents a common driver influencing both segments of tourism markets.

Overall, the results confirm the multiplicative effect of sporting events on tourism demand and their role in the internationalisation of destination tourism demand. It is particularly relevant that international events, such as the DOBRO World Cup, generate a longer average length of stay among foreign tourists, suggesting a potentially higher

economic contribution per visitor and implying that event impacts should not be assessed exclusively through arrivals but also through the structure and duration of tourism demand. At the same time, the fact that a large share of events takes place outside the peak summer season points to their important role in reducing tourism seasonality in continental urban destinations. In the broader context of destination management, the results suggest that continuous investment in the organisation and promotion of international sporting events can be an effective instrument for strengthening competitiveness, extending the tourism season, and diversifying the destination tourism offer (Preuss, 2007; Getz & Page, 2016). In this sense, highly professional events can become strategic tourism products that differentiate Osijek from competing cities of similar size, while generating not only direct effects on arrivals and overnight stays but also indirect effects through media visibility, image enhancement, and destination branding.

Conclusion

The results of this study confirm that sporting events represent an important factor influencing tourism demand and the development of a destination's tourism offer. The results contribute to the growing body of literature on sport event tourism by providing empirical evidence from a medium-sized continental destination, a context that remains relatively underrepresented in previous research. The analysis shows that sporting events held in Osijek in 2023 generated a total of 28,214 overnight stays, with an almost balanced structure of domestic and foreign tourists. Such a distribution indicates that sporting events contribute simultaneously to both domestic and international tourism markets and highlights their role in the internationalisation of tourism demand in the destination.

A particularly relevant finding relates to the structure of tourism demand during the international sporting event DOBRO World Cup 2025. Although foreign tourists represented a smaller share of total arrivals, they accounted for the majority of overnight stays and recorded a significantly longer average length of stay compared with domestic tourists. This result suggests that international sporting events may generate disproportionately large tourism impacts not only through the number of visitors but also through increased tourism expenditure associated with longer stays. The study also confirms a statistically significant positive relationship between domestic and foreign overnight stays during sporting events. This finding indicates that the overall attractiveness and organisational quality of events influence tourism demand across both market segments. Consequently, sporting events should not be viewed solely as instruments for attracting international visitors but also as catalysts for broader tourism demand that simultaneously stimulates domestic and international tourism flows.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the tourism impacts of sporting events in medium-sized continental destinations, which remain relatively underexplored compared with mega-event host destinations. The results confirm that even smaller-scale but regularly organised international sporting events can generate measurable tourism effects and contribute to the international visibility and competitiveness of destinations. From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the importance of strategically integrating sporting events into destination management and tourism development policies. In continental urban destinations such as Osijek, sporting events can function as key tourism products that support demand generation, increase international visibility, and contribute to the extension of the tourism season. Effective coordination between event organisers, tourism organisations, and local service providers may further enhance the economic benefits of events through integrated tourism products that combine sporting events with accommodation, cultural attractions, and other tourism experiences.

Despite the valuable insights provided, the study has certain limitations. The analysis is based on secondary statistical data that do not include information on tourist expenditure, travel motivations, or socio-demographic characteristics. In addition, the research focuses on a single destination, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Future research should therefore include comparative analyses across multiple destinations, incorporate visitor survey data, and use longitudinal datasets in order to more precisely assess the long-term tourism impacts of sporting events. Overall, the findings confirm that sporting events represent an important instrument for strengthening destination competitiveness, diversifying tourism products, and stimulating tourism development in continental urban destinations.

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Primljen: 10. maj / Received: May 10, 2026
Prihvaćen: 10. septembar 2026 / Accepted: September 10, 2026

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