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ŁÓDŹ AS AN ARENA OF GRAND SPORTS EVENTS: SELECTED EXAMPLES

Abstract: The paper presents Łódź as a city where major sports events are held. Several sports facilities are featured which make it possible to organize various kinds of events, including international ones. In recent years, based on the existing infrastructure, several such events, for instance European or world championships, have been held in Łódź. The city is also perceived as a leading centre for volleyball competitions (league matches, Champions League, World League, European Championship, World Championship).

Keywords: Łódź, sport, tourism, sports infrastructure, sports events, sports tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is not mere recreation or visiting architecturally or historically attractive destinations. It also involves travel related to participation in events, including sports events. Recently, in the academic and specialist literature, concepts, such as 'sports tourism' and 'event tourism' or 'tourism product-event' have been encountered. However, none of them appropriately or fully defines the fast growing phenomenon of fan tourism. Due to its ideal transport location, relatively good accommodation infrastructure, and continually developing sports facilities, Łódź has become a place where national, European and other international sports events are being organized increasingly frequently.

The author's aim is to present Łódź as an important national centre of sports tourism. Research on tourism conducted in 2010-12 shows that sports events are the main purpose of travelling to Łódź for 2-10% of tourists, and one of the purposes for 5-12% of respondents. Sports events held in Łódź are rated as good and very good by 25-27% of tourists (where 60% gave 'I have no opinion' responses). About 7-10% of visitors define sports events as one of the main attractions of the city (LISZEWSKI, ed. 2010, WŁODARCZYK, ed. 2011, 2012). These figures make it justifiable to undertake a detailed study on Łódź as a city where sports events and tourism play an important role.

In addition to some theoretical-terminological issues, the paper presents the infrastructural potential of the city related to sports development, as well as the most important sports events which been organized there in the last 10 years. Particular attention is paid to FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship 2014, presented as a case study. The research results presented here partly come from an article by SOBIERAJSKA (2015), as well as from materials which sum up and the organizational efforts of the local authorities.

2. THE DESCRIPTION OF SPORTS TOURISM

Sports tourism is an interesting subject for researchers, both as regards describing its essence by trying to define it (e.g. GIBSON 1998, WEED & BULL 2005, KOZAK 2010. HINCH & HIGHAM 2011, KAZIMIERCZAK & MALCHROWICZ-MOŚKO 2013, STASIAK & WŁODARCZYK 2015), and placing it in numerous classifications of tourism (e.g. HINCH & HIGHAM 2011), BOŃCZAK 2013a, 2013b, MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA 2015, STASIAK & WŁODARCZYK 2015). In an analysis of sports tourism as an original tourist activity, a theme devoted to sports events as a significant factor stimulating such activity can clearly be identified (e.g. OTTEVANGER 2007, ROSE

& SPIEGEL 2011, BUDNER 2014, HADZIK, TOMIK & RYŚNIK 2015, KOZAK 2015, PIECHOTA 2015). It is also covered by numerous empirical studies mostly focusing on the influence of large-scale sports events on various aspects of their location (e.g. TUREK 2007, KOZAK 2010, ŚNIADEK 2013, BOSIACKI 2015).

Sports tourism is defined as taking short trips away from one's home environment, oriented towards participating in sport, during which such a sport is characterized by specific rules. Usually competition involves raising fitness levels and having fun (HINCH & HIGHAM 2011). The concept of sports tourism is defined in a slightly broader way by KOZAK (2010) who believes that it is a set of tourist behaviours which express their authentic interest in sport (facilities, venues of major events, etc.), as well as participation in general. Another approach, referring more to the cultural aspects of the phenomenon, is presented by the authors of a coursebook entitled *Turystyka*. They believe that sports tourism involves attending as a spectator or fan and is thus a part of cognitive tourism. This, in turn, concerns the cultural development of humankind (KUREK, ed. 2007), a part of cultural tourism, which means travelling in order to take part in cultural events which are also sports.

The concept of 'sports tourism' appeared in the literature fairly recently and perhaps this is the cause of some uncertainties in its definition. To the majority of researchers, sports tourism includes all forms of tourism activity related to sport; this is a generalization and it refers to at least several different phenomena. As this follows from earlier discussions, definitions usually specify sports tourism as travel in order to watch a sporting event or to participate in it personally, or as travel which involves visiting sport-related sites and facilities, even if no sports events are currently held there (e.g. WEED & BULL 2005). Sports tourism defined in such different ways can be divided into a number of categories which include the following:

- active sports tourism - trips involving personal participation in sports events as a competitor;
- cognitive sports tourism - visiting sports facilities, often historical, e.g. olympic stadiums, football grounds, motor racing courses, tennis courts, etc.
- sports-event tourism (fan tourism) - attending sports events as a spectator (supporter).

Another term used alongside 'sports tourism' is 'fan tourism' and defines tourist trips made in order to watch sporting events. The main motivation for this is the wish to support one's favourite team on their way to victory during a competition. Fan tourism is connected with international events, Olympic Games or World Championships, but also includes lower

ranking events organized regionally or locally (BRUMM 2012).

Fan tourism may be divided into *groundhopping* (supporting sports teams, i.e. actively attending sporting events) and *groundspotting* (visiting facilities used for sporting events). Both terms were created in the early 1990s and have been present in the specialist terminology ever since (STASIAK & WŁODARCZYK 2015).

In Poland, the term 'fan tourism' appears occasionally and is used with regard to journeys made to support a national team, sports clubs or individual athletes, but in the academic literature it has not been sufficiently explored. The fundamental difference between sports tourism and fan tourism lies in the fact that, in the first case, we are dealing with the willingness to play sport and be involved in active recreation, while in the other, it is about watching sports competitions (KUREK, ed. 2007).

Sports events tourism may certainly be treated as the starting point for organizing a tourism product of the event type. It is a product which is planned and organized, integrating individual services and tourism assets. The most important elements of this integration are organization, management and a specific location. The characteristic features of an event product include considerable thematic and organizational coherence, specific location and time, exceptionality and regularity (KACZMAREK, STASIAK & WŁODARCZYK 2010).

There are an increasing number of tourist packages tailored to the potential needs of attendees at such events. The most popular are 'mega-events' such as the Olympic Games, football or athletics World Championships, or Formula One grand prix. Smaller-scale events are usually chosen by supporters of teams and the individual sportsmen and women participating in them, or by those involved in a particular sports discipline. Most packages offer tickets for sports events, transport, accommodation, board, visits to the city or other sites en route, the event venue, as well as meetings with competitors and visiting sports facilities and other attractions dedicated to this special market segment.

Sports event tourism can be also divided into hard sport event tourism and soft sport event tourism (RITCHIE & ADAIR 2004). The former includes those travelling above all because they want to take part in a sports event, and all other elements of the trip (e.g. sightseeing) are only additional. The latter type includes trips in which the basic functions are recreation, cognition, etc., and the tourist decides to attend a sporting event 'by the way'. As a rule, the higher the prestige of the event, and the greater the popularity of the sports discipline, the larger the share of hard-sport-event type tourism becomes, while at lower ranking events, it is more often accidental.

When a sports event is being transformed into a tourism product, the rank of a given event is very important as it makes it possible to evaluate its scale and, through that, the number of potential tourists (supporters), interested in coming to a given city. J. KACZMAREK, A. STASIAK & B. WŁODARCZYK (2010) classify events (after BOWDIN *et al.* 2003) into four categories with regard to rank and scope:

- 1) 'mega-events': events which have an influence on the economy of a sizeable area, broadly covered in the national and international media (e.g. the Olympic Games, world championships);
- 2) 'distinguished' events: events recognizable and associated with a city or country which are an interesting tourism product due to their uniqueness and rank (e.g. national marathons, club championships);
- 3) major events: events of a lower rank, but well promoted, as a result of which the scale of the event and the media's interest are reflected in the organizer's and city's incomes (e.g. national leagues, city football derby);
- 4) local events: small events; low expenditure on organization and promotion resulting in little recognition, media coverage and low tourist attendance (e.g. local club matches).

Each of the listed groups represents events of a different rank and scale, so, consequently, the target group is formed by different recipients. For instance, in the case of the Olympic Games (a mega-event), the recipient will be the mass tourist, who expects the atmosphere of a grand sports festivity, while with local events, most attention should be paid to promotion at the event venue, focusing mainly on the local supporters of a given team or competitor.

W. ALEJZIAK (2008) believes that sports events occupy a particular position among the factors attracting tourists to a given destination. This is connected, among other things, with the uniqueness of each event, emotions evoked by sport, the continuously changing location of events and, consequently, cultural diversity. The 'spectacularity' of sport and its unpredictability ideally match the expectations of the contemporary tourist. An additional attraction for a spectator of such an event is its media profile. The contemporary tourist-supporter wants to personally take part in the event which is watched by millions instead of using the media. The tourist feels privileged because the event can be watched from the stands. All these factors make sport-event tourism increase in importance, and countries and cities usually compete to organize events of the highest rank. This happens because the advantage of huge sports events is that they last for a short time but have long-term consequences. These opinions are shared by A. HADZIK

(2014) who connects these issues to grand international sports events.

B. FAULKNER (1993) enumerated the effects of organizing sports events. In his opinion, they have an influence on the economy, tourism and the environment of the host areas. He classifies them in the following way:

- 1) economic effects, including:
 - visitors' expenditure,
 - authorities' expenditure on infrastructure,
 - event organizers' expenditure;
- 2) tourism-related effects, including:
 - changes in tourist motivations
 - the significance of the media in the promotion of events;
- 3) environmental-social effects, including:
 - influence on the natural environment,
 - access to services, goods, etc.,
 - socio-cultural and psychological influence.

M. KOZAK (2010) also lists four aspects of sports tourism which are directly connected with the organization of sports events:

- 1) the economic aspect – concerning the cost of organizing international sports events,
- 2) the social aspect – where sports events enhance the feeling of national pride,
- 3) the promotional aspect – which involves promoting the place where the event is held,
- 4) the planning aspect – which defines the influence of organizing events on the development of the reception area.

The profits from organizing sports events mostly come from the income generated by those who attend.

According to J. BORZYSZKOWSKI (2011), there are also other income sources from a sports event including:

- 1) spectators – money for tickets and other expenses,
- 2) players – entry fees, expenses connected with taking part in the event (e.g. equipment), other expenses (e.g. accommodation, board),
- 3) volunteers – the value of volunteers' work, other,
- 4) media, officials and others involved; hosts and sponsors,
- 5) exhibitors and providers of services and goods.

The discussion so far has shown how important and multifaceted an activity organizing a large sports event is.

2. SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE IN A CITY

The first sports facilities in Łódź were created in the early 20th c. (related to football clubs and associations) were often supported by the city which gave urban land for the first investments. Currently, Łódź, as the third most populated city in Poland, has a well

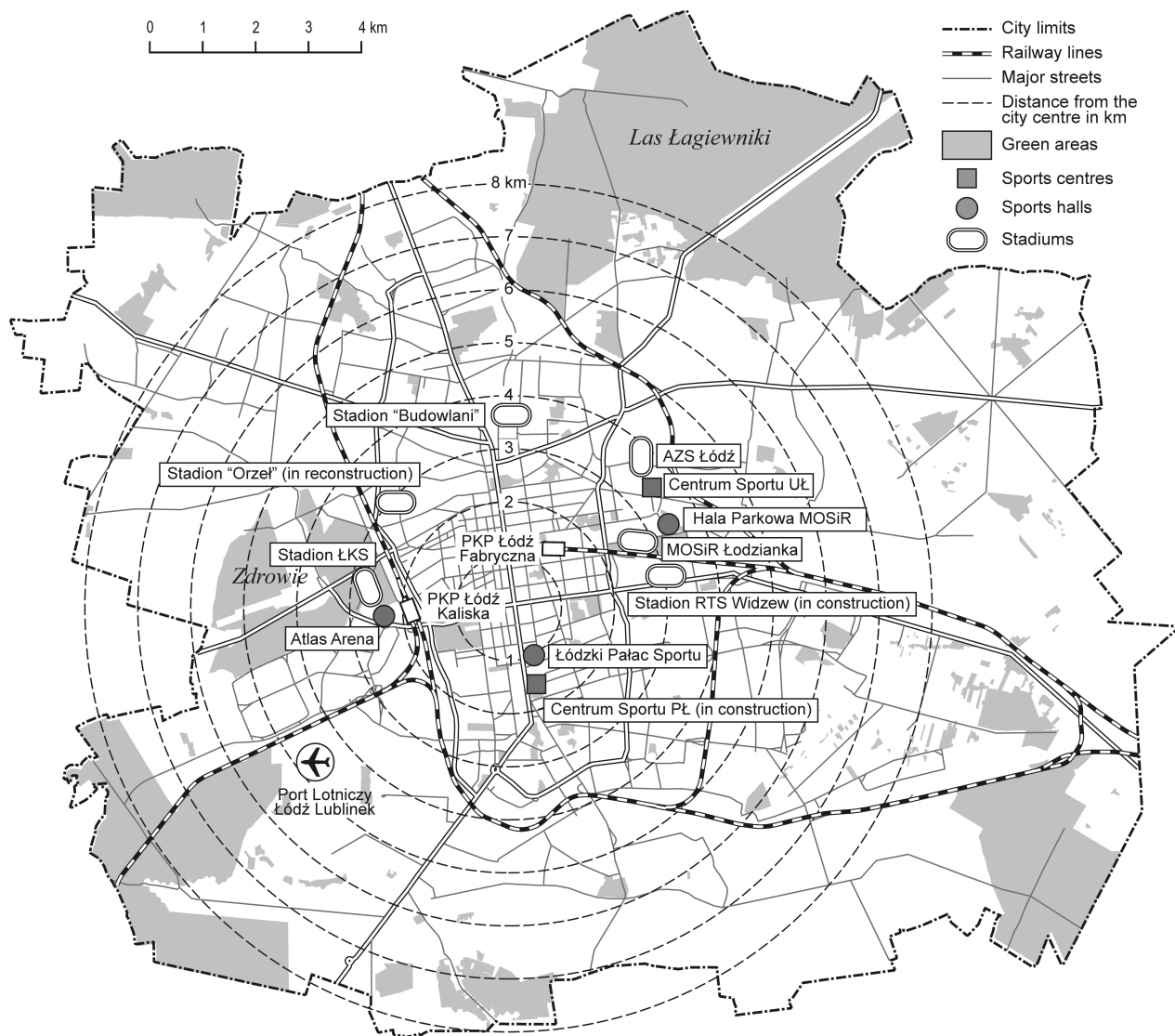


Fig. 1. Distribution of major sports facilities within the urban space of Łódź
Source: author

developed sports infrastructure due to which it is possible to organize national and international events. Naturally, it does not offer a full standard for everything, but the new investments and initiatives in the city are very positive.

A characteristic feature of the distribution of major facilities where sports events are held is their location next to the attractive city centre (Fig. 1). On the one hand, it encourages people to visit Łódź somewhat 'by the way', but on the other, it is the reason why there is a shortage of parking spaces which are in great demand during international events.

The most renowned city sports facilities include Łódź Palace of Sport, the Atlas Arena, and Łódź football stadiums associated with Widzew and ŁKS clubs (Photos 1-4). They will be described in more detail below.

Until recently, an important role in the history of Łódź sport and cultural events had been played by a sports hall opened in 1957 and later called the **Palace of Sport** - *Pałac Sportu* (Photo 1). In the beginning, it was regarded as the most modern facility of its type in Poland. About 9000 spectators could be accommodated. It hosted not only sports events (boxing and volleyball matches, ice shows and hockey matches), but also large cultural events such as music concerts, film screenings, meetings addressed by famous people and events such as the famous *Łódzka Gwiazdka* Christmas fair. In recent years (1998-2008), it has also hosted Championship League volleyball matches, in which the best known volleyball team from the Łódź Province (*'Skra'* Belchatów) competed. After the Atlas Arena came into use, the Palace of Sport lost its significance, mostly hosting various trade fairs (e.g. *Interstone*). Currently, the hall requires complete

renovation of the main floor and the auditorium. The Sport and Tourism Division of the Museum of Łódź is found here offering permanent exhibitions such as *The history of Łódź sport*, *The greatest achievements of Łódź sportsmen and women*, or *Citizens of Łódź at the Olympic Games*.



Photo 1. Palace of Sport (*Pałac Sportu*)
Source: <http://myself.rogatek.pl>



Fot. 2. Atlas Arena
Source: <http://www.eventim.pl>

The performance and sports hall called **Atlas Arena** (Photo 2) opened in June 2009 is one of the largest of its type in Poland. It offers full service to the organizers of sports and entertainment events. It is suitable for organizing sports events in disciplines such as basketball, volleyball, handball, 5-a-side football, martial arts, *enduro* and many others (Table 1).

It is equipped with modern infrastructure maintaining the standards set by international sports federations and organizations. The central floor has been constructed in such a way that it is possible to place a skating rink on it, or even a swimming pool. The facility's functionality enables artists, athletes, officials, VIP guests and the audience to enter separately. The Arena features a sports hall, its own modular stage as well as conference rooms. Apart from sporting, other events held here include concerts, trade fairs and

meetings requiring a large number of seats. It can hold 13,806 spectators (the grandstand – 10,049 seats, the telescopic stand – 2060 seats, and 1697 additional seats can be made available). Until the Ergo Arena in Sopot (2010) and the Tauron Arena in Krakow (2014) were opened, the Atlas Arena had been the largest and the most modern in Poland.

Table 1. Selected sports events held in the Atlas Arena in 2009-16

Year	Sports event	Sport discipline
2009	World League	volleyball
	Marcin Gortat Camp	basketball
	Hubert Jerzy Wagner Memorial	volleyball
	FIBA European Championships	basketball
	Women's European Volleyball Championship	volleyball
	Professional Boxing Gala	boxing
	Polsat Boxing Night	boxing
2010	Professional Boxing Gala	boxing
	Wojak Boxing Night	boxing
	MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) Gala	martial arts
	16 th Martial Arts Meeting	martial arts
2011	World League	volleyball
	MMA Gala: Fighters Arena Łódź 2	martial arts
	Women's European Basketball Championship	basketball
	17 th Martial Arts Meeting	martial arts
2012	19 th Martial Arts Meeting	martial arts
	Professional Boxing Grand Gala	boxing
	Traditional Karate World Championship	karate
	Monster X Truck	motor sports
	Super <i>Enduro</i> World Championship	motor sports
	Davis Cup eliminations	tennis
2013	WWE Raw Wrestlemania Revenge Tour	martial arts
	FIM Super <i>Enduro</i> World Championship	motor sports
	24 th Martial Arts Meeting	martial arts
2014	FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship	volleyball
	<i>Dbam o Zdrowie</i> Łódź Marathon	long distance running
	Polish Women's Volleyball Cup	volleyball
	Qualifiers for the Women's World Volleyball Championships	volleyball
2015	<i>Pedro's Cup</i>	athletics
	Polsat Boxing Night	boxing
	Super <i>Enduro</i> World Championship	motor sports
	Champions League	volleyball
	<i>Dbam o Zdrowie</i> Łódź Marathon	long distance running
2016	World League	volleyball
	<i>Dbam o Zdrowie</i> Łódź Marathon	long distance running
	Champions League	volleyball

Source: Author based on MOSiR Łódź data.

The ŁKS city stadium (MOSiR) in Łódź (Photo 3) has gone through several stages. After the regaining of independence by Poland in 1918, the first President of Łódź, Aleksy Rzewski, supported building the Park of Sport in 1922, which was to be used by the Łódź Sports Club founded 10 years earlier. The city authorities gave the club an area in Polesie Konstantynowskie. A part of the complex was a football stadium built in 1924-5.

The rundown facility underwent a major modernization in 1969-70. First, a new grandstand was opened, at the back of which, apart from standard offices, there was a hall used later for over 40 years by basketball and volleyball teams. A year later, new floodlighting was installed on four tall gantries. In 1971, 45,000 spectators could watch a match between ŁKS and Polonia Bytom in the renovated stadium.

After installing seats in the 1990s, the stadium started to deteriorate. In 2007, ŁKS gave it to the city authorities to finance and undertake a complete modernization. In 2009, the city announced an architectural competition, but the design of a stadium for about 30,000 spectators was not implemented. In 2011, an idea was conceived to build a new stadium, partly replacing the existing one, this time for only 16,500 spectators but extendable (<http://stadiony.net>).

At present, it consists of a football pitch and one stand with an attractive front, partly made of glass, the sign 'Łódź', several levels inside with spacious changing rooms, saunas, SPAs, conference halls, etc. (<http://www.fakt.pl/sport/pilka-nozna>).



Photo 3. ŁKS City stadium (under construction)
Source: <http://fotopolska.eu/stadiony>

The RTS Widzew city stadium (Photo 4) was built in the 1930s and since then has been modernized several times. In the late 1950s, construction work on developing the football stadium started between the railway and *Armii Czerwonej* St (currently *Pilsudskiego* St). The construction accelerated in the second half of the 1970s after the club had been promoted to the Polish professional league. The old wooden stand on the *Tunelowa* St side was demolished, the athletics track was

removed and new stands were built (later, concrete benches were constructed there) situated quite close to the pitch. At the beginning of 2015, it was demolished together with the club building and sports hall. Currently, a new stadium is being built, with 18,018 seats on the same site as the previous one and it is planned to be ready by the end of November 2016 (https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stadion_Widzewa).



Photo 4. Widzew City stadium (under construction)
Source: <https://www.youtube.com>

The city's four flagship sports facilities described above are complemented by the Park Sports Hall (MOSiR) (Photo 5), located next to the complex of sports grounds called *Łodzianka* (including, e.g. a stadium with a full-size grass-covered football pitch with stands, surrounded by an 8-lane athletics track; a complex of *orlik* (young eagle) football pitches, two beach volleyball pitches, a beach football pitch and five tennis courts, a multifunctional sports centre with a main hall – 23 x 43 m, a mirror hall – 14 x 14 m, a dry sauna and six changing rooms, as well as a driving practice course.



Photo 5. Park Sports Hall in Łódź
Source: <http://Łódź.fotopolska.eu>

An important role in the city's sports space is played by facilities connected with universities. One of them is the University of Łódź Sports Centre (including, e.g., a sports hall and a swimming pool), combined

with the facilities of the university sports club (AZS) (athletics stadium, a football pitch, an indoor tennis court). In the near future (May 2017), the sports infrastructure of Łódź will be enlarged by the investments of the Łódź University Sports Education Centre – *Zatoka Sportu* (Łódź University of Technology). It will include a 50 m long, 10-lane Olympic swimming pool, with stands for 1200 spectators, a 30 m long swimming pool with trampolines, platforms and a multilevel 10 m diving platform, a climbing wall with a boulder training section, a multifunctional and full-size sports hall, also used for multimedia cultural presentations, together with an auditorium and a TV platform. It is planned to be the venue of European swimming and climbing championships.

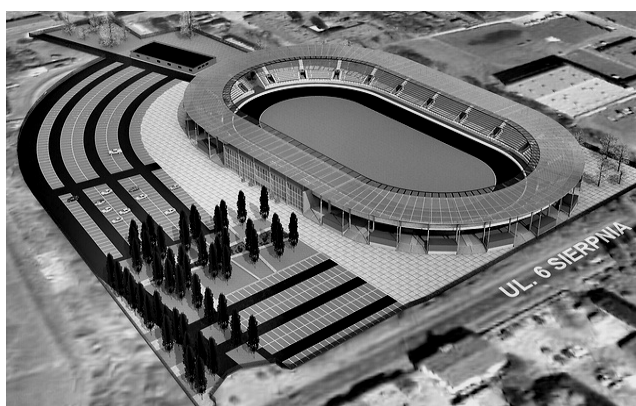


Photo 6. Visualization of the new *Orzeł* (Eagle) Stadium
<http://sportowefakty.wp.pl/zuzel/416277/znamy-wizualizacje-stadionu-omla-Łódź>

The currently modernized speedway stadium *Orzeł* (Photo 6), as well as the *Budowlanych* rugby stadium should become major facilities used for sports traditionally played in Łódź.

4. MAJOR SPORTS EVENTS IN ŁÓDŹ: SELECTED EXAMPLES

Decisions concerning the organization of large sports events are usually taken with the hope of achieving measurable benefits, which include:

- covering the costs of the event;
- predictable, satisfactory profits from the event;
- profits for hoteliers, restaurant owners as well as other entrepreneurs, providing supplementary services;
- a growing interest in the event venue among the fans attending the event;
- building or strengthening a positive image of the host (including advertising value equivalent).

Before building the Atlas Arena in 2009, not many sports events had been held in Łódź. The role of the largest and the most important sports facility in the city was played by the MOSiR sports hall (Urban Centre of Sport and Recreation). Between 1999 and the year when Arena was opened, it was MOSiR that hosted World League Volleyball matches.

Since 2009, when the Atlas Arena – the city's most important sport and performance facility was opened, the number of sporting events organized in Łódź has increased. The event which inaugurated the Atlas Arena was a match played as a part of the World League Championships between Poland and Brazil.

Since 2004 a street run, known as the *Dban o Zdrowie* Łódź Marathon, has been organized in the city. For the first six years, it was called 'mBank Łódź Marathon'. Unfortunately, in 2010, the race did not take place because the titular sponsor withdrew. In June 2011, the event was reactivated under the name *Dban o Zdrowie* Łódź Marathon; its office was established in the Atlas Arena. There are several routes; the main route differs slightly from before, while the start always takes place in *Unia Lubelska*, near the Fala Aquapark, and the finish is situated in the Atlas Arena. Moreover, the event includes shorter routes (10 km long) and those for children. It is becoming increasingly popular; from year to year, more and more people, not only from Poland but from all over the world, participate in it. In 2011, there were 500 competitors, and in 2012 – 2200 from 21 countries. The next two marathons included about 4000 runners each, and the event received a prestigious award – the certificate of the International Athletics Federation (IAAF) bronze in 2013 and silver in 2014 (www.Łódź.sport.pl). The event is broadcast live every year by Polish Television, and many other channels present reports concerning the race. Apart from promoting sport, the race has a further purpose to raise funds for a chosen organization which is a partner of the event. The marathon has become a regular sporting event.

Major sporting events held in Łódź in 2009 included Men's European Basketball Championship and Women's European Volleyball Championship. Matches of the **FIBA European Championship** (second group phase) were played in the Atlas Arena, on 12-16th September. Nine matches were played, during which it was possible to see teams from Spain, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey. The Polish team shared 9th place with Macedonia. To promote the event, the city issued a fan's guidebook and a tourist map which were accessible on the Łódź City Council websites, in hotels, at the airport, and at Łódź Fabryczna Railway Station. Moreover, in *Manufaktura*, a fans' zone was created, where it was possible to play basketball and watch the matches of the Polish team. For the time of the championships,

additional tram and bus routes could be used in Łódź, as well (www.mmŁódź.pl).

The **Women's European Volleyball Championship** (2009) was also held in the Atlas Arena, and the matches were played from 25th September – 4th October. They included those of the first and second group phase and of the final phase. Altogether, 19 matches were played in the Arena and the Polish team came third. To promote the event, a Volleyball 'Picnic' was organized in *Dąbrowskiego Square*, during which it was possible to take part in competitions or play volleyball.

Both events held in 2009 in the Atlas Arena, contributed to the growing recognition of Łódź and – according to the authorities – the city gained a positive image among tourists. Due to the opening of the Atlas Arena and holding two significant sports events there, it was named as the **Sports Facility of 2009** (www.atlasarena.pl).

2011 was the year when the **Women's European Basketball Championship – Eurobasket Women** was organized in Łódź. The final phase of the event included five days of matches and lasted from 29th June to 3rd July. The championships included 16 national teams, eight of which advanced to the finals and played matches in Łódź. The championship was watched by 500 spectators (quarter finals) rising to 5000 (the final match between Russia and Turkey). Out of 12 matches played in Łódź, 11 were broadcast live by various European television and internet channels. Following the example of the greatest sports events in the world, a well functioning fan zone was created near the sports hall. Despite the relatively small attendance at the matches (considering the Atlas Arena capacity), the whole event was positively evaluated both by international institutions and the fans.

Apart from the European Championships, Łódź has hosted other international events as well. In 2012, in the hall of Łódź MOSiR, an equestrian parade took place. A year earlier, this event was organized in the Atlas Arena, but it did not attract a large audience. In 2012, at the same venue, the Davis Cup eliminations were held as well. Apart from major sporting events, local, regional or provincial sports events are being organized in the city all the time (www.mosir.lodz.pl). The **POTZCUP International Ice Hockey Tournament 2014** was held at the Łódź ice rink called *Bombonierka* at 28 *Stefanowskiego St.*

The sports event which was the most important for the city in 2014 was the group phase of the **FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship**. The competition comprised 12 matches in all, including six in which the Polish team played while winning the overall title.

In February 2015, the 11th 'Pedro's' Cup indoor athletics meeting was organized in the Atlas Arena. On 26th September 2015, it was the venue for the **Polsat Boxing Night** gala.

Over the last 10 years alone, Łódź has hosted many sporting events of varying importance. These events make tourists more interested in the city and contribute to the improvement of the image of Łódź, which is becoming increasingly attractive not only to sports tourists.

Taking advantage of this wave of success was the organization of the FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship, the authorities established a new institution, called Łódź Event Centre, which started its activity in 2015. The main aim of the new body is to promote all cultural and sports events organized in the city, as well as gain support for organizing subsequent events involving both smaller and larger audiences.

The biggest failure during that period, as regards organizing grand sports events, was the unsuccessful application to be a part of UEFA EURO 2012. The latest media reports suggest that the city's efforts to win the organization of the Men's European Basketball Championship in Poland, in 2017, will also be un-successful.

5. WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS IN MEN'S VOLLEYBALL 2014: A CASE STUDY

The Volleyball Men's World Championship is held every four years and is a great international event organized by the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB – *Federation Internationale de Volleyball*). Until now, 18 such tournaments have been organized. The opening ceremony in 2014 took place on the National Stadium in Warsaw while the opening match (Poland-Serbia) was watched by 61,500 fans and invited guests. Polish Volleyball Association, as the Polish organizer, selected the seven Polish cities which met the strict requirements as regards sports and hotel infrastructure, as well as convenient accessibility by transport. Apart from Łódź, matches were played in Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Kraków, Wrocław and Warsaw. In total, between 30th August and 20th September, 103 matches were played. The final match, Poland – Brazil was played in Katowice *Spodek*.

Long before the championships started, Łódź had begun intensive promotional activity, providing comprehensive information about the event, running an advertising campaign (large-format banners, new design for public transport tickets, events preceding

the championships – the World Volleyball Mini Championships Poland 2014, participation in a tourism trade fair in London). In addition, the city gave almost seven million zlotys to PZPS for promotional activity. At the same time, the advertising value equivalent, i.e. the value of publications in newspapers, on the radio, TV and the internet was estimated to have reached almost 25.5 million zlotys (if the city had had to pay for it).

For people who for different reasons were unable to watch the matches in the Atlas Arena, a ‘fan zone’ was organized on the *Manufaktura* agora, which turned out to be very popular. Apart from professional services (security, paramedics, etc.), the organization of the event in Łódź was aided by 83 volunteers working in the press office, marketing, information and other services (SOBIERAJSKA 2015). During the championships, on presenting their tickets, the fans could travel free of charge on city transport, and had free entry to some museums, swimming pools, the Zoo, the Botanical Gardens and the Palm House.

In the Atlas Arena, the second and the third group phase matches were played, as well as the match for fifth place. Out of 13 matches played by the Polish team at these championships, six were played in Łódź. Despite relatively high ticket prices (80-290 zlotys), the attendance was over 95% (Fig. 2).

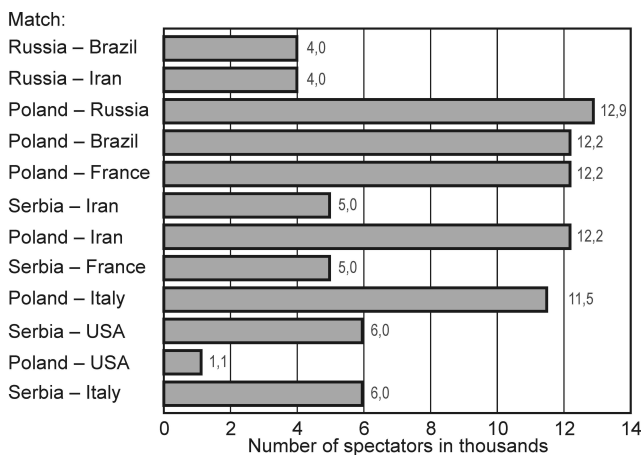


Fig. 2. Attendance at matches played in the Atlas Arena
Source: www.lodz.gazeta.pl

All in all, during the event the Atlas Arena was visited by 102,100 fans. Based on research conducted, it was possible to establish that they were mostly inhabitants of Łódź and Łódź Province (35%), as well as Masovian (25%) and *Wielkopolska* Provinces (10%) i.e. regions located the closest to the event venue. The number of fans from the remaining provinces did not exceed 5%. Each of the matches was watched by up to a hundred foreign fans (depending on who was playing in the match). The championship attributes

rated the highest were atmosphere (4.83) and the sound system (4.64), and the lowest – the availability of parking places (3.63) (SOBIERAJSKA 2015).

As many as 82% of all the fans from outside Łódź arrived by car. The respondents were most often accompanied by friends (44%) and family (43%). 75% of them watched only one match, so they may be classified as one-day visitors (SOBIERAJSKA 2015) but this did not stop Łódź hotels located within a close distance from the Atlas Arena from earning a good income (Fig. 3). The room occupancy figure during the championships was on average 10-50% higher than at other times of the year.

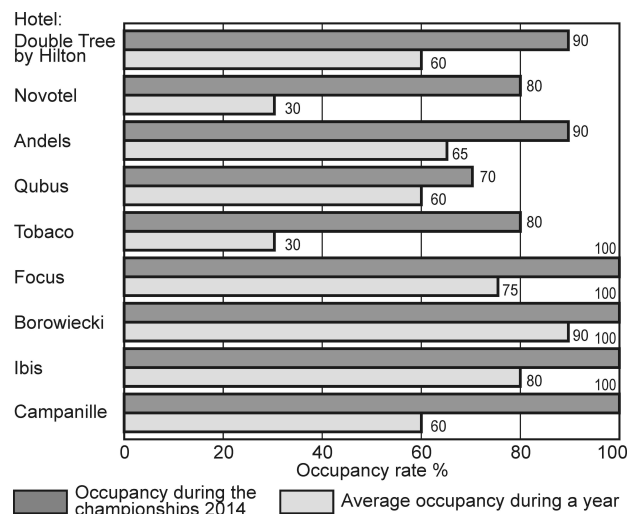


Fig. 3. Occupancy of selected Łódź hotels during a year and during the Men’s World Volleyball Championship
Source: www.lodz.gazeta.pl

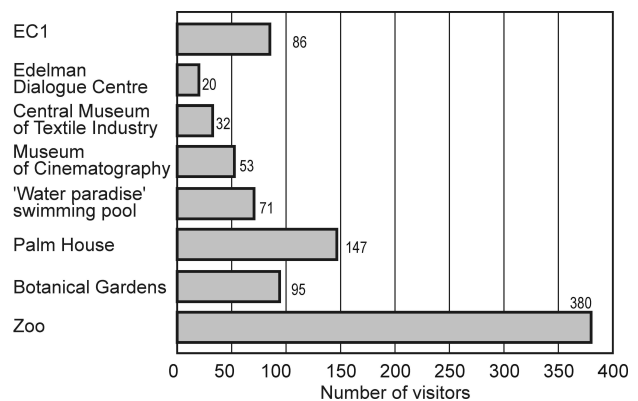


Fig. 4. The number of people visiting Łódź at selected sites during the Men’s World Volleyball Championship 2014
Source: www.lodz.gazeta.pl

Interviews conducted with the owners of Łódź ‘gastronomic establishments’ who had also prepared for the championships (e.g. by buying a licence to show the matches on jumbotrons or television sets, 10-15% discounts for meals, beer for ticket holders to

the matches), showed that interest in their offers during the championships was much less than expected.

The supplementary offer prepared by the city for fans present at the matches and fan zones was not very popular either. Compared to the number of people in the Atlas Arena, those who visited museums and the remaining attractions made up less than 1% of fan tourists (Fig. 4). Nevertheless, the championships turned out to be a huge success as regards organization and building the image of Łódź as a city supporting large sports events and friendly to the fans.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Organizing huge sports events is a very attractive undertaking for the majority of large cities. Having the status of host city usually brings specific benefits which not always can or should be evaluated in terms of money. Occasionally, the image is more important, and sometimes it is sufficient to one find oneself in good company. Łódź, which in recent years has made a clear 'civilizational leap' as regards accessibility by transport, the capacity and standard of accommodation, as well as its gastronomic and sports infrastructure, is a good example of the skilful use of large sports events for the purpose of building a positive image of a city supporting sports events and friendly to the fan tourists attending them.

Based on the discussion and the case study presented in the article the following general conclusions have been formulated:

- sports events organized in Łódź contribute to an increase in the number of tourists and visibly shape the tourism structure;
- national and international sports events result in positive changes in the perception of the city by visitors, most of whom rate their organization as 'good' or 'very good';
- the fans participating in the sports events in the city, apart from going to matches, take little advantage of the supplementary cultural offer, other than sport;
- despite the low level of participation in supplementary events, the fans rate the tourist attractiveness of Łódź as 'good' or 'very good';
- sports events organized in the city bring the greatest benefits to the hotel and catering industries;
- due to its success and professionalism in organizing huge sports events, especially volleyball competitions (league matches, World League, European championships), the media has named the city the capital of Polish volleyball.

As a result of the Men's World Volleyball Championship, Łódź's image has considerably improved, proved by the advertising value equivalent. However, apart from hotels located close to the Atlas Arena and the city centre, as well as selected gastronomic establishments, economic benefits were much lower than expected. On the other hand, one of the positive outcomes was the establishment of the Łódź Centre of Events in 2015, whose aim is to promote regular cultural and sports events, as well as support the organization of new mass events.

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