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# Do Hotels Benefit from Hosting IIHF World Championships? Case of Prague and Bratislava Hotel Market

## Abstract

This paper focuses on the impact of hosting of IIHF World Championship on the local hotel market using the case of Prague (IIHF World Championship 2015) and Bratislava (IIHF World Championship 2011). Many previous studies were focused on the impact of hosting mega sports and cultural events on destination perception and visit rate during and after the event, perception of hosting these events by residents or the effect on the local economy. Using unique daily empirical data collected from 95 Prague hotels and 25 Bratislava hotels, key findings of this study show lack of long-run positive impact but a high short-run (immediate) effect. In the case of Prague, the main increase of market performance can be identified during the final stage of the tournament, mainly in selling room rates; for Bratislava, the significant effect was determined during the whole tournament, and the entire market never reached the same level of performance. The study shows the need to examine these effects further, emphasizing more variables like seasonality and market segmentation, revenue management, and destination management.

**Keywords:** event tourism, event marketing, hotel performance evaluation, IIHF Championship, hotel market performance, Czech Republic

## 1. Introduction

Hosting sport or cultural events is connected with a wide range of positive and adverse effects on the local economy and society (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010). Several authors examined the economic impact of events in past studies to prove not only the positive outcome of event hosting. (Davies, 2012; Gold & Gold, 2008). The intercultural environment of major events can lead to cultural development or preservation (Müller & Petterson, 2006) or life quality and community identity improvement (Foley & Mcpherson, 2007; Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003; Van Der Vagen & Carlos, 2005).

Several studies focused on the destination level (destination marketing and destination development). As proposed by Wang and Xin (2019), these events are getting more considerable attention. They are directly connected with a specific destination or city, which can boost the performance of destination marketing and attract more visitors after the event. To avoid overtourism, destinations should plan their activities and manage demand to attract more visitors, mainly in low season (Connell et al., 2015; Hinch & Jackson, 2010). Higher exposure and attention paid by visitors need to be connected with local development. Spilling (1996) describes sports events as a catalyst for local development. More studies are being conducted in recent years to promote the role of hosting sport and cultural events within regional development (Hiller, 2006; Taks et al., 2015, Gold & Gold, 2016; Higham & Ritchie, 2011; Oses et al., 2016).

The people-oriented focus is visible when estimating the impact of events on the local community and when focusing on event visitors and future destination visitors. Event organizers and destination marketers share the same interest in understanding their motivations and behavior (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2011; Robinson & Gammon, 2004).

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The main focus of this paper is in examining the effect of hosting the IIHF World Championship on the hotel market performance in hosting cities. For this study, Prague (Czech Republic) and Bratislava (Slovakia), were selected. To understand the impact on the market level, STR benchmarking data were used for both cities, emphasizing the comparison of hotel key performance indicators before, during, and after to IIHF World Championship. The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on medium-sized sports events which researchers did not previously examine. As seen within the literature review, when examining the impact of sports events on hotel performance, the researchers are focusing mainly on the major event (one-day like Super Bowl or long-term like The Olympics). Even though the IIHF World Championship can be considered a major event by its internationality, the number of visitors, participants, and length cannot be compared to previously mentioned sports events.

## 2. Literature review

Event tourism is continuously getting more attention, leading to a deeper understanding of the topic and its effect. Many previous studies focused on hosting sports events, where Getz and Page (2016) propose a comprehensive overview of event tourism-focused studies and literature.

Several meta-studies were conducted to understand the platform of sports event tourism effects in a more sophisticated way. Cerna Silovska and Kolarik (2019) focus on describing different methods used to evaluate the impact of event tourism, mentioning mainly Input-Output analysis, CGE model, or LM3 (local multiplier), and CBA analysis. A more detailed and comprehensive evaluation of methods used for the economic evaluation of major sports events can be found in the study of Li and Jago (2013). Koenigstorfer et al. (2019) discuss the case of unclear definition and biased selection of stakeholder groups, missing long-run evaluation framework and low-level evidence for cause-effect relationships. Thomson et al. (2019) confirm the need for long-run evaluation of effects of the events and the need for more complex evaluation of these effects from different disciplines that should feature experimental and mixed-method designs. Gaudette et al. (2017) focus on the legacy of the Winter Olympic Games, where the event can be perceived as an urban renewal and development catalyst and tourism booster. Not mentioning the only direct impact of the Winter Olympic Games, the authors also mention the need for long-run evaluation and development framework creation. Weed et al. (2015) describe the demonstration effect of Olympic Games on sport participation while concluding that the Games are an insufficient tool for people stimulation to the sport but can increase the participation frequency or regain engagement. Key findings of this study are confirmed by another meta-study of Mahtani et al. (2013), while McCartney et al. (2010) states that there is a lack of evidence to prove or refuse the expectations about health or socioeconomic benefits of hosting sport mega-event. The majority of these meta-studies concluded that there is a need for a better assessment of hosting mega sports events in the long term and a need for a more comprehensive evaluation of event outputs. A study by Kasimati (2003) described the possible benefits and disadvantages of hosting mega sports events.

Within sport event tourism, considerable attention is being paid to Olympic Games (Mahtani et al., 2013; Weed et al., 2015; Kasimati, 2003), and major events of FIFA (Nicolau, 2012; Peeters et al., 2014), or UEFA (Pavlov, 2016; Lamla et al., 2014).

Many research studies can be found that focus on the FIFA World Cups (as soccer is perceived as one of the most popular sports in the world). Allmers and Meaning (2009) evaluated the impact of hosting the FIFA World Cup (WC) in 1996 (France) and 2006 (Germany) with mixed results. There was no significant effect of hosting 1996 WC compared to 2006 WC, which substantially increased overnight hotel stays and total income.

Close attention was paid to the 2010 WC hosted by the Republic of South Africa. Peeters et al. (2014) evaluated tourism activities in hosting regions where the number of international visitors (excluding non-South African Developing Countries) increased by 220,000 during the tournament and by 300,000 during the

whole year. The authors conducted the cost analysis and found out that 13,000 USD was spent to attract one new visitor. Grix et al. (2019) examined not only tourism-oriented data and described the hosting of FIFA WC 2010 as a tool of destination and political marketing. In 2010, the team of Spain won the tournament. Nicolau (2012) tried to declare the impact of winning WC on the winner's tourism activity. After the tournament, the increase in arrivals was identified. In a recent study, Nicolau and Sharma (2018) tried to generalize this effect. The author found out that there is no room for this generalization, and the winning effect was identified only in Spain, the winner of the 2010 WC.

During the 2002 WC, Kim et al. (2006) investigated the social impact of hosting WC. Results of their study show a positive increase in perception of benefits of cultural exchange, economic and cultural development. The decrease was identified in the perception of increases in prices, traffic congestions connected to pollution, social problems, and high construction costs.

Baumann and Matheson (2017) analyzed total arrivals to Brazil from 2003 to 2015. Hosting of WC 2014 brought more than 1 million new visitors where the advancements of the Argentinian national team caused nearly a quarter on the increase. In the study of Vierhaus (2019), the effect is examined deeply to conclude that there is no evidence of a long-term rise in international arrivals. Barreda et al. (2017) focused on the hotel performance during 2014 WC with emphasis on revenue management. Authors identified the increase in RevPAR in all hosting cities, mainly dragged by increasing room rates while the demand and occupancy rate differed from city to city.

Similar to the FIFA World Cup, UEFA EUROs were examined in a few studies to identify the effect of slightly smaller sports events. Lamla et al. (2014) examined EURO 2008 held in Switzerland through a survey of entrepreneurs in tourism. The study focused on the whole destination of Switzerland, where nearly half of the respondents stated no effect of hosting EURO 2008. Further examination showed a negative outlook for further development after the tournament. The identified positive effect was located mainly in hosting cities hotels (2.5% growth in sales volume compared to the previous year).

Contrary to Lamla et al. (2014), Pavlov (2016) shows a stunning 200% increase in daily rates of hotels during hosting EURO 2012 in Poland while maintaining the occupancy of 75%. The conducted study focused not only on the hotel performance but as well on the performance of other entrepreneurs, where 87% of them took no action to increase their revenue during the tournament. Bazzanella et al. (2019) and Schnitzer et al. (2017) focused on the perception of sports events from stakeholders' point of view. The hoteliers stated that they benefit from hosting these events when they took action and are part of the organizing committee or build a strong relationship with organizers. Without this action, there would be no direct impact on their hotel performance.

Previously mentioned studies focused mainly on the major events (the Olympics, FIFA World Cup, UEFA EURO). Falk and Vieru (2020) analyzed several events hosted in Lapland (Finland). Key findings show that major international events are connected to a bigger impact on hotel performance (the room rates increased by 60% during the Levi FIS Alpine Ski World Cup). In general, room rates are higher (by 14%) during the events. In the pre-event period, no significant price change was identified. After the events, researchers found a 6% decrease in hotel room rates.

Other researchers examined the effect of short-term or one-day events. Depken and Stephenson (2018) analyzed the impact of NFL and NBA games (including college basketball tournaments) on Charlotte's hotel occupancy rate and revenues. The results show a different impact on the hotel in the suburbs and city center, where the positive revenue impact was identified only in the city center. In the suburbs, the authors identified a decrease in occupancy and revenue. Dermody et al. (2003) identified a significant positive effect of home NFL games in several hosting cities on hotel occupancy rate, average daily rates, and revenue per available room. As well, no effect was identified for most of the cities.

Baade (1994) and Coates (2006) conducted much research in examining the NFL, NBA, and MLS games and their impact. Few studies focused on the presence of the professional team and stadium in the city and their impact on income and taxable sales (Baade, 1994; Baade et al., 2008; Baade et al., 2011). The results show no significant effect of the additional team, stadium, or mega-event on taxable sales except for MLS games. In the study of Coates (2006), the insignificant effect of the MLB All-Star Game and Super Bowl on taxable sales was identified. Rishe (2014) analyzed the impact of hosting the Super Bowl on hosting city hotels performance. Highly favorable results were found for the 2012 Super Bowl in Indianapolis, where a 250% increase in hotel occupancy was identified. Contrary to 2012, in 2010 and 2014, Miami and New York City faced only a minor increase in hotel occupancy of 19%.

Lavoie and Rodríguez (2005) found a negative impact of NFL, NBA, and MLB leagues game absence due to team relocation of league reduction on hotel performance. The same effect was analyzed by Coates and Humphreys (2001) with the identification of no significant effect. In studies of Chikish et al. (2017) and Chikish et al. (2019), the main focus is on the hotel performance of the Los Angeles hotel market connected to the hosting of sports events in Staples Center. During the games, only hoteliers located close (in range of 1 mile) to the Staples Center benefited from these. After these events, an overall decrease in hotel performance measured by RevPAR was identified. The authors stated that the overall impact of these events was not positive.

According to Collins et al. (2019), hosting sports events brings mixed effects according to the market segmentation, where the hotel's performance in different classes differs from event to event.

Previously mentioned studies show very inconsistent results in terms of possible generalization. Different effects were identified within these studies, as well as the need for further comprehensive research. Based on the results of previously mentioned studies, two hypotheses were stated.

- H1: Hosting the IIHF World Championship in 2011 in Bratislava had no significant effect on the performance of the hospitality industry.
- H2: Hosting the IIHF World Championship in 2015 in Prague had no significant effect on the performance of the hospitality industry.

### 3. Methodology and data

This study focuses on examining the possible effect of the IIHF World Championship on the hotel market in selected destinations (Prague and Bratislava). Prague and Bratislava were selected as they share common characteristics on a national and regional level. From the perspective of sports popularity, ice hockey is being considered one of the most popular sports within the country, sharing the top position with football. Both capital cities were hosting IIHF World Championship several times, and national teams of the Czech Republic and Slovakia regularly attended these championships. After examining available data, both destinations are focusing mainly on leisure groups during the summer season and leisure individuals and corporate clients during the rest of the year. The only difference is that Prague is being considered one of the best MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Events) destinations in Europe. From the perspective of hosting sports events, both destinations are hosting mainly small and medium-sized events, and IIHF World Championship represents the largest event being held in these destinations.

As proposed by several authors, STR (Smith Travel Research) data are used (Pan & Yang, 2017; Viglia et al., 2016; Makki et al., 2016). Data used in previous studies were mostly used on an aggregated level, and monthly/yearly performance was observed. Some authors used the same approach to identify and measure the impact of cultural events (Litvin & Fetter, 2006; Sainaghi et al., 2018). Data provided to STR by hoteliers are processed daily with a wide range of aggregations. Hoteliers are using this paid service to benchmark their performance with their competition or the whole market. It is important to mention that participation in this program is approximately 35% of Prague hotels and 52% of Bratislava hotels. For Prague, following

participation structure was identified (using STR scale) – Luxury Class (8.3% of participants), Upper Upscale Class (16.7%), Upscale Class (26%), Upper Midscale Class (27.1%), Midscale Class (13.5%) and Economy Class (8.3%). More than 80% of all participating hotels can be listed as 3-star and 4-star hotels. The majority of these hotels were offering special packages for visitors of the IIHF World Championship. When focusing on the Bratislava participation report, the following structure was identified – Luxury Class (4%), Upper Upscale Class (16%), Upscale Class (48%), Upper Midscale Class (20%), Midscale Class (12%).

Participating hoteliers are sharing the following set of data.

- Rooms Revenue adjusted for fees, taxes, third-party commissions, refunds, and gratuities. Room Revenue is as well adjusted for the revenue of other departments like F&B, wellness, and conferences.
- Additional Rooms Revenue Allocation data are showing revenue generated by other departments, excluding Room Revenue.
- Rooms Sold by the hotel for a specific date. This value is adjusted for no-shows and gratuities.
- Rooms Available in a hotel. The number of available rooms in a hotel is adjusted for a room in reconstruction or renovation or other rooms not sufficient for sale.
- Segmentation data are showing the performance of Transient, Group, and Contracted customer groups.

The following key performance indicators are were used. These KPIs are widely used in hospitality for performance measuring and comparison. Barreda et al. (2017), Pan (2007), and for example, Sainaghi et al. (2019) used these KPIs for measuring the performance of the hotel market.

Occupancy rate (in%),

$$Occupancyrate = \frac{RoomsSold}{RoomsAvailable} * 100$$

ADR (Average daily rate),

$$ADR = \frac{RoomsRevenue}{RoomsSold}$$

And RevPAR (Revenue per available room).

$$RevPAR = \frac{RoomsRevenue}{RoomsAvailable}$$

As mentioned before, hoteliers are submitting daily data, which are later aggregated on the requested level. Rishe (2014) used the daily comparison of hotel performance data during the observed period. Allmers and Meaning (2009) used monthly market performance data comparison. Several other authors used the same approach, for example, Lavoie and Rodríguez (2005), Depken and Stephenson (2018), or Dermody et al. (2003).

## 4. Results

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were identified and tested using t-tests.

- H1: Hosting the IIHF World Championship in 2011 in Bratislava had no significant effect on the performance of the hospitality industry.
- H2: Hosting the IIHF World Championship in 2015 in Prague had no significant effect on the performance of the hospitality industry.

Bratislava and Kosice hosted IIHF World Championship in 2011. In Bratislava, Group A and Group D matches were played and the final stage of the tournament. According to statistics, 406,804 visitors attended the tournament (on average 7,264 visitors per match). In 2015, the World Championship was hosted by Prague and Ostrava. In Ostrava, the only group stage was played, and the final part of the tournament was held in Prague (as well as the group A matches). In total, 741,690 spectators visited championship matches (11,589 visitors per match), being the most visited tournament in the history of the IIHF World Championships. (Talbot, n.d.)

#### 4.1. IIHF World Championship 2011 – Bratislava

In many studies, RevPAR is being used to describe hotel performance. As STR data are available for Bratislava from 2011, there is no data available to compare the year-to-year impact on a daily basis. For that reason, a comparison of the evolution of RevPAR in 2011 and 2012 was used. During the tournament, the average Occupancy rate was 71.5% compared to 48% in 2012. When focusing on the selling rates, ADR in 2011 was 112.1 EUR, and in 2012 59.56 EUR.

As presented in Figure 1, the hotel market shows a significant difference in RevPAR development during the period of the IIHF Worlds Championship. The average RevPAR in 2011 was 82.54 EUR compared to 29.01 EUR in 2012. The most significant decrease can be observed during the final stage of the tournament from 11th May to 15th May and from 2nd May to 4th May. To understand the reduction in 2012 evolution of other KPIs properly was analyzed. The decrease of RevPAR was mainly dragged by a shift of selling rates on average by -46.1%. The fluctuation of occupancy rate reflected a very low average occupancy of 48% in 2012, while in 2011, the occupancy rate was 71.5%.

**Figure 1**  
Comparison of RevPAR development during the period of IIHF World Championship 2011 and 2012

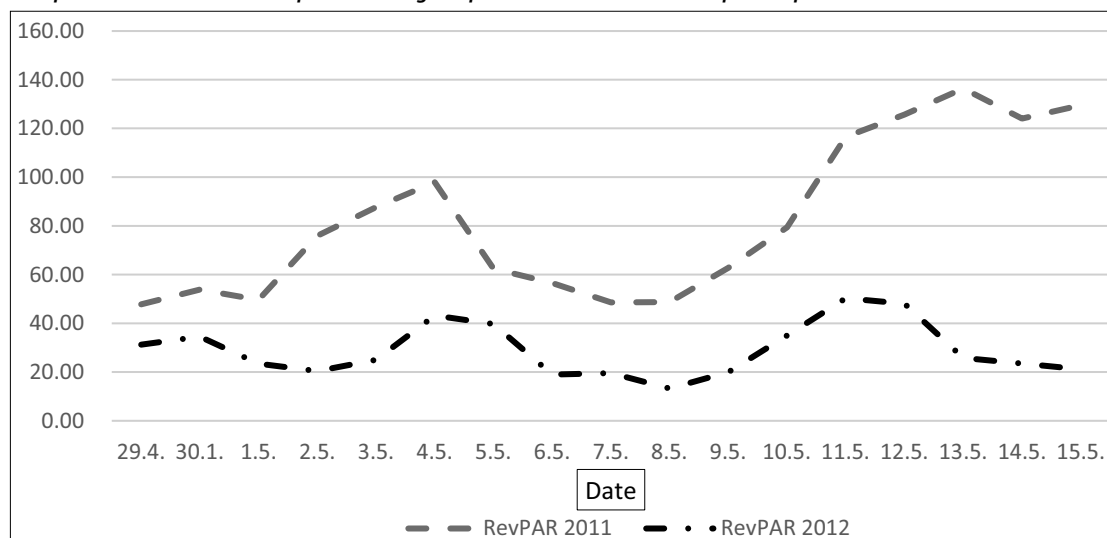


Table 1 describes the results of the T-Test from IBM SPSS Statistics. Testing H1, it is statistically significant that there is a difference in hotel market performance in 2011 and 2012.

**Table 1**  
Results of T-Test for the IIHF World Championship in 2011

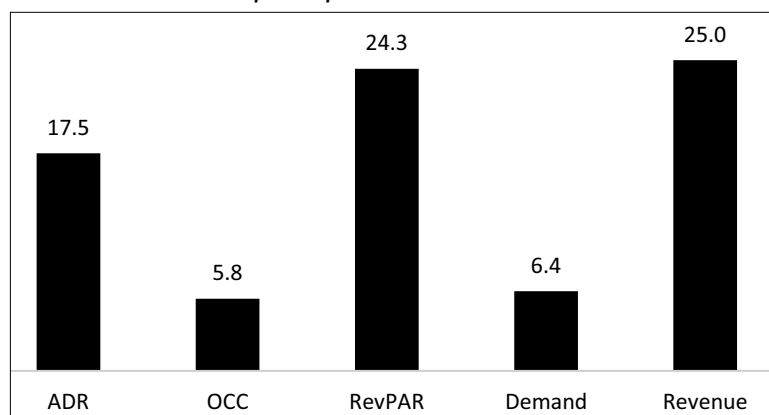
Pair	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
RevPAR 2011 - RevPAR 2012	53.52841	30.52333	7.40299	7.231	16	.000

The values were later compared to the market performance in the upcoming years until 2018. Regarding occupancy, the Bratislava market reached the same level in 2017 and 2018. From the perspective of room rates, in 2018, the market reached only 63.4% of the performance in 2011.

## 4.2. IIHF World Championship 2015 – Prague

Thanks to the availability of STR data for Prague, it was possible to compare the performance of the Prague hotel market with the previous year 2014 and the upcoming year 2016. In 2015 during the period of the IIHF World Championship, the average RevPAR increased by 24.3%. This increase was mainly caused by ADR, which grew by 17.5%. As shown in Figure 2, the occupancy rate grew only by 5.8%, from 77.4% in 2014 to 83.5% in 2015. As the impact of hosting the IIHF World Championship was significant mainly in the final stage of the tournament, the occupancy rate reached an average level of 94.3%.

**Figure 2**  
Effect of IIHF World Championship 2015



The pre-set hypothesis of no impact of the IIHF World Championship on hotel performance was tested by paired t-test for during and ex-post effect. Table 2 describes the results of the T-Test for two pairs of variables.

**Table 2**  
Results of paired T-Test for the IIHF World Championship in 2015 (comparison with 2014 and 2016)

Pair	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
RevPAR 2014 – RevPAR 2015	17.66661	10.33800	2.50733	7.046	16	.000
RevPAR 2015 – RevPAR 2016	6.92351	14.99047	3.63572	1.904	16	0.75

The results do not support the hypothesis as there was a statistically significant difference in hotel market performance caused by the IIHF World Championship. When analyzing this impact in more detail and more comprehensively, this impact can be identified only during the tournament's final stage. The group stage did not create a significant increase in hotel performance. The ex-post effect was examined as in the previous case of Bratislava. The decrease in hotel performance was not as substantial as in Bratislava, and the t-test results failed to falsify the hypothesis on no ex-post effect. There is no evidence of the IIHF World Championship effect on hotel performance in 2016.

## 4.3. Ex-post evolution of hotel market performance

Both destinations, Prague and Bratislava, recorded the difference in the hotel market. Focusing on Bratislava, the upcoming year after the IIHF World Championship, the data have shown a significant decrease in hotel market performance. Total revenue during the period of the championship fell by more than 60%. This decrease was caused by the combination of ADR (-46.1%) and occupancy rate (-29.5%). It is important to note

that the demand decreased by 27.4%. To better understand the effect, the data for the upcoming year (from 2013 to 2018) were analyzed. The performance of the Bratislava market in May 2011 was not surpassed or leveled. With missing data for 2010, this can be used as proof for impact identification.

Year after the IIHF World Championship 2015, Prague also faced a decrease in hotel market performance. The occupancy stayed nearly leveled with 2015. The only difference was identified within the ADR, which fell by 6.8%.

## 5. Discussion

Both studies followed the methodology used by Baretta et al. (2017) by using STR data for year-to-year comparison with the same mixed results. Performance of the Bratislava hotel market during the IIHF World Championship was significantly better than performance in upcoming years. Compared to the study of Pavlov (2006), the lack of data caused the impossibility of a year-to-year comparison, and the significant increase was documented by a substantial decrease in hotel market performance. The combination of occupancy and ADR caused a decrease. During the event, the occupancy grew up thanks to higher demand which the IIHF World Championship directly induced. The ADR growth was connected not only with higher demand but also by the definition of short-term events; as proposed by Getz and Page (2016), the sports events are fixed in time and gain considerable attention from visitors. The IIHF World Championship is being played once per year where the visitors are willing to pay higher rates to attend the event.

On the other hand, Prague documented a significant increase mainly in ADR. A combination of three different segments mainly created the 2014 occupancy rate of 77.4%. In May, there is a peak in conference travel in Prague, and the number of leisure groups is continuously increasing. The third segment to mention is transient, which consists of online and corporate business. It is essential to note that the ADR grew faster than the occupancy rate thanks to the limitation of previously mentioned segments and using price-demand inelasticity of championship visitors. Contrary to studies mentioned within literature reviews, the researchers focused also on the partial evaluation of these events. The analysis of the available data had shown a minor effect during the group stage of the tournament but a significant effect for the final stage.

The short-term effect differs according to the hosting destination characteristics. For the destination with a diversified market focus, the hoteliers tend to increase selling rates while maintaining a high occupancy level as they substitute the FIT segment with the price inelastic visitors of the IIHF World Cup. The simultaneous increase in occupancy and selling rates was identified in the leisure-focused destination of Bratislava, where the championship was planned for the low season (as Bratislava is missing high-value business groups and MICE segments). When focusing on the long-term effects of these tournaments, the authors confirm findings of previously mentioned studies of Vierhaus (2019), Barreda et al. (2017), and Lamla et al. (2014) that there is no evidence of this effect. On the other hand, the data analysis of the Prague market performance during the final stage showed a significant impact like the studies by Dermody et al. (2003) and Rishe (2014). For hoteliers, it is crucial to understand the possible implications of the event and its size on their hotel operations and implement a sophisticated revenue management strategy. As there is no proof of a long-term effect of selected tournaments, hoteliers can improve their position on the market by providing high-quality services for these visitors and include them in the CRM system to increase sales and decrease distribution costs.

The results of this study can be beneficial as well for destination management companies. As ice hockey is one of the most famous sports in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, destination management companies should focus on the marketing impact of these events on the destination visitors. Planning these events in the low season can be more beneficial not only for the entrepreneurs in tourism and hospitality but as well for the whole destination, as proved by the case of Bratislava. On the other hand, planning these events in the high season can lead to a short-time price level increase (the case of the Prague market).



During the data examination and analysis, several shortcomings were identified as well as validity threats. Focusing on the STR data use, no data validity check has been done to ensure the credibility of these data. Another validity threat can be found within the participation of hotels in the STR program. The higher is the participation rate, the better can be the results. Focusing on the structure of hotels, the majority of these hotels were preparing special offers or using other marketing tools to attract valuable customers during this medium-sized event.

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