

## **CITY BRANDING THROUGH SPORTS: SPORTS EVENTS IN THE FUNCTION OF BRANDING CITIES AS TOURIST DESTINATIONS**

### **ABSTRACT**

Sport marketing is a branch of marketing that aims to attract the target group, improve the image of a person, or product, raise the level of advertising, and make a profit. Sport offers the greatest branding opportunity due to its diversity and high impact. Sports marketing is a scientific discipline that studies procedures that guarantee the highest level of effectiveness of marketing in sports. Sports marketing uses scientific methods and principles that encourage the progress and development of sports activities, e.g., scientific foresight based on the known past and critical assessment of the present, and connecting supply and demand in the sports market. Public relations often create publicity for the promotion of sports products, but this is not their only function. They also have a communication function that is in charge of informing the public, helping athletes and sports stars in daily communication in the club, the so-called internal communication, and with the media and the rest of the public, or external communication. Public relations and sports marketing can work together to effectively brand a city as a desirable tourist destination. Cultural exchange, export of culture, and sport make up the so-called hexagon of competitive identity. Sports and athletes are the biggest ambassadors of every city and country. Sport, as a healthy way of branding, mostly contributes to the recognition and promotion of a city. The paper emphasizes the potential and importance of sporting events in destination branding and how complex and demanding a process is that enriches the destination's tourist potential and makes it sustainable on the tourist market. The cities of Mostar, Sarajevo, and Ljubuški and the important events that make them recognizable were taken as an example.

**Keywords:** sport; branding; tourist destination.