

34 - ORGANIZATION OF SPORTS EVENTS – CASE OF THE SLOVAK SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIP 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Sports events are very popular all over the world and can be a good way to promote the sport to the wider environment. Within the conditions of Slovakia, squash is a minor sport and the largest squash event is a good tool for attracting new people to this sport. For this reason, we will present an analysis of this event in the article.

Before we analyze the legal regulation of sports events in Slovakia, let's look at how sports events abroad and in Slovakia are defined by authors who write about this issue. According to Parent, M., M. and Smith-Swan, S. (2013), we can classify sports events among specially planned events. Specific sporting events can be divided into three groups: minority sporting events, festivals, and majority sporting events.

On the other hand, Arcodia and Baker (2003) divided the events into three main categories, which are: business events, cultural events, and sports events. Business events include conferences and fairs, defining cultural events like festivals and exhibitions. Sports events or games are the last group and include the Olympic Games, football championships, car races, and many other sporting events.

Goldblatt (1997) defined a four-pillar approach to event management. These four pillars are time, finance, technology, and personnel management.

"Time is the most urgent problem in organizing events. Without good timing, events could not go as smoothly as most of them." (Damm 2011)

"Finance is an issue that we must keep in mind. There are various reasons why events are organized, but none of them has an unlimited budget." (Damm 2011) Modern times have made marketing events more challenging due to increasing publicity than people originally thought. The potential complexity of marketing for the event is indicated by the results that local people prefer newspapers as a source of information while non-local people prefer information from local people and relatives. Surprisingly, we can also state that the most important experience for marketing is a previous experience rather than the effectiveness of individual channels. (Smith 2008)

"Technology is the most important factor in creating an event. Modern technologies allow us to communicate with people around the world, receive information, and do research important to identify the chances of the event." (Damm 2011)

"Human resources are the basis of the event because, without people, no one would be able to organize the event. And also, people are behind everything that takes place at the event." (Damm 2011)

Management is a process focused on the effective achievement of goals, the content of which is planning, organizing, leading people, and control as the basic functions of management. (Mullins 2002)

In Slovakia, the organization of sports events is regulated by Law Number 1/2014 Coll. Act on the organization of public sports events and on the amendment of certain laws. It replaced Law number 479/2008 on the organization of sports events, sports events, and tourist events.

Our article aimed to bring an analysis of the Slovak Squash Championships 2019 using SWOT analysis followed by IFE and EFE matrix and based on the results to assume the future of the event.

METHODS

The Slovak Squash Championships are the most popular event within the calendar of the Slovak Squash Association and are attended by the best squash players from Slovakia. The event aims to find out which player is the best in the Slovak Republic in a given season, to show this sport to a wide area, and to attract new players to squash. In 2019, they took place in the period from 13th to 16th March 2019 in Bratislava, specifically in the BORY MALL shopping center and in the IMET SQUASH - RELAX CENTER. The men's part of the Championship is played by 32 players, 28 best players of the all-Slovak ranking valid for March 2019 are nominated for the men's tournament. ranking of women valid for March 2019. In case of higher interest than 16 players, it decides on inclusion in the competition in the order: • Slovak Squash Association Women's Ranking, • Slovak Squash Association Men's Rankings, • Registration in Slovak Squash Association, • Login date.

We obtained data for the needs of this article through a study of documents, observations, and interviews.

We used the study of documents and professional literature primarily when writing about the issue in the introduction and helped us to better understand it.

The second data acquisition method we used was an observation. During the event, we observed the activities of the organizational team and communicated with 8 members of the organizational. During the event, we also communicated with 42 players and 75 visitors of the event.

We conducted interviews with people working in the structures of the Slovak squash community. Interviews were made specifically with the president of the Slovak Squash Association, Secretary General of the Slovak Squash Association, and a representative of an external company that cooperates with the Slovak Squash Association on the organization of sports events.

Based on individual interviews, we analyzed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. From this, we created a SWOT analysis. We sent the created SWOT analysis to the respondents, who evaluated it individually. Subsequently, we averaged the individual SWOT analyzes into one and determined the appropriate strategy. For the purposes of this analysis, the rating scale of the individual components of the SWOT analysis was from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning the lowest value and 5 the highest. To create the average value of each item of the SWOT analysis, we added the ratings of individual respondents and divided them by the number of respondents.

Subsequently, we transformed the strengths and weaknesses of an IFE matrix. We have also transformed opportunities and threats into an EFE matrix. Individual respondents assigned weights and points to the IFE and EFE matrix items, which in the end created a total value for the IFE and EFE matrix. We created average values from individual weights and points of respondents of IFE and EFE matrices. In the IFE matrix, respondents assigned a weight to each factor, ranging from 0.0 (not important) to 1.0 (absolutely important). The weight assigned to a given factor indicates the relative importance of this factor for success in the company's industry. Whether internal strength or weakness is a key factor, the factors that are considered to have the greatest impact on an organization's performance should be given the highest weights. The sum of all weights must be equal to 1.0. Subsequently, each factor was assigned a rating of 1 to 4 to indicate whether that factor represented a major weakness (rating = 1), a minor weakness (rating = 2), a small strength (rating = 3), or a greater strength (rating = 4). In the next step, by multiplying the weight of each factor by its values, they determined the weighted scores for each variable. We added this score to the weighted score of each respondent and divided it by the number of respondents and thus received the average weighted score, which we present in the article. The same principal we used also with EFE matrix, but the rating system was different. Respondents assign a rating from 1 to 4 to each external factor to indicate how effectively the company's current strategies respond to the factor where 4 points belong to - significant opportunities, 3 points - insignificant opportunities, 2 points - insignificant threats and 1 point - significant threats. In the next step, by multiplying the weight of each factor by its values, they determined the weighted

scores for each variable. We added this score to the weighted score of each respondent and divided it by the number of respondents and thus received the average weighted score, which we present in the article.

RESULTS

As we wrote above, based on interviews with representatives of the organizer and based on observations, we compiled a SWOT analysis of the event. Below in figure number 1, we can see a graphically illustrated SWOT analysis. Below the picture, we present in more detail the individual elements from the SWOT analysis.



Figure 1: SWOT analysis of Slovak Squash Championship, source: own

Strengths

The Main sponsor - continuity (S1). The interviews showed that the extension of cooperation with the main sponsor, after which the event was named for two years in a row, is very positively perceived.

Qualification system (S2). The qualification system for the Slovak Squash Championship is set according to the systems used abroad and reflects the all-season performance and form of the players. At the same time, it takes into account unique and unpredictable moments, such as the award of a wild card to a player and the possibility of participating in the Slovak Championships without meeting the qualifying conditions.

Place - Bory mall (S3). The Bory mall shopping center acts as a co-organizer of the Slovak Championships. A glass court has been built in the shopping center, thanks to which it is possible to organize an event. Based on person sensors, 78,000 people moved around the court for 3 days, while on Saturday, when the final day was 26,000 people. Such numbers would not be reached in sports centers and the general population would not reach squash at all.

External partner (S4). Thanks to the cooperation with an external partner, the burden of the Slovak Squash Association is not only purely financial but also in terms of personnel and time.

The amount of people and the amount of funds that the association would need to organize championships of the same scale is unacceptable to the association's budget.

Brand Squash Tour Slovakia (S5). In cooperation with an external partner, the Slovak Squash Association has built the Squash Tour Slovakia brand, which it offers to its current and potential sponsors as a product, culminating in the Slovak Squash Championship.

A balanced budget (S6). The amount of funds needed to organize the Championships to the extent that they were in 2019 is over € 30,000. For a smaller sport than a squash on the smaller Slovak market, it is more difficult to find sponsors and partners, but the external company together with the association is doing well.

Marketing (S7). Marketing activities in connection with the Slovak Squash Championships 2019 were developed by three different entities, namely: the Slovak Squash Association, an external company, and Bory mall. The power of marketing activities developed in this way is much stronger than if it were only under the responsibility of SSQA.

Weaknesses

Collaboration with Golem fitness center (W1). Based on the answers from the interview, we can state that the biggest problem in the organization within the Bory mall shopping center is the areas for changing clothes and preparing players. The only equipment of this character in the Bory mall shopping center is located only in the Golem premises and cooperation with them is at a weak level, although it has improved over the years.

Finances from Slovak squash Associations (W2). The total budget for the Slovak Squash Championships 2019 amounted to more than € 30,000. SSQA contributed € 4,452 to this budget, which is up to 15% of the total budget. From this, it is objectively visible the high dependence of SSQA on partners and sponsors in organizing the event.

Marketing by Slovak squash Associations (W3). Marketing activities as described in the chapter on marketing are developed by three different entities. Of these three entities, SSQA participates minimally in marketing and is thus dependent on other entities, which we consider to be a weakness of the Slovak Squash Championships.

Referees (W4). For a small number of players in the Slovak membership base, it is also problematic to fill the positions of sports experts - referees. There are no professional referees in the whole squash movement. Although there are some players who have referee licenses, there is no referee who only deals with decision making. Even at the Championships, only players who are also participants decide.

Small base (W5). The narrow membership base is manifested mainly in the women's part of the Championships, where the SSQA cannot fill even a full 16-member single-elimination tournament. The 32-member single-elimination tournament is not a problem for the men's part of the Championships, as there are more than 200 registered male players within the association.

The new generation of players (W6). In the last 12 years, only 4 different winners have exchanged for the Championships in the men's category and 3 different players in the women's category. Also, on the basis of these data, we can evaluate the weaker performance of the new generation of players compared to players who have been playing squash for a longer period of time.

Opportunities

The Championship open for foreign players (O1). In other racquet sports, it is common to have the Championship open to other players as well, thus increasing the quality level of the entire event. This step would not endanger the announcement of an individual winner of the Slovak Championships but would mean the awarding of two prizes: for the best player of the entire Championship and the best Slovak of the Championship.

V4 Country Championship (O2). Creating a squash event with a strong background could bring increased quality in the future, especially for weaker countries within the V4, which would

be able to confront the best players from more developed countries year after year and thus gain new experience.

Finances from Ministry (O3). The possibility of obtaining funding under the sports funding component of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Specifically, the option concerns a contribution to a national sports project and a subsidy for the use of the construction or modernization of a squash center. Thanks to these funds, a center could be built in which larger-scale Championships could be organized.

Club's involvement (O4). According to the Secretary-General of Slovak Squash Association, Mr. Dávid Kubíček, is important for the involvement of clubs in this activity and not just leaving the whole activity to the main organizers to address a larger number of visitors to the event and also greater interaction with sports youth. The mobilization of club players and visitors to the centers in which the clubs operate should be the responsibility of the clubs.

Accompanying activities (O5). As part of the Slovak Squash Championships 2019, one smaller accompanying activity took place within the scope of the Golem, and it was the measurement of strength and the measurement of fat. As part of these activities, the organizer would be able to continue in the future and expand these services, such as consultations with a nutritionist, physiotherapist, masseur, and others, which could attract the general public, but would also be useful for the participants.

Location - Incheba (O6). To increase the attractiveness for players and to increase the capacity for spectators, the Incheba exhibition center is a suitable place based on an interview. In these spaces, the organizer would be able to build not only one glass court but such several courts that all matches can be held only on glass courts and at the same time in one place. Due to the large space, it would be possible to build a sufficiently large number of stands for spectators.

Festival of small sports (O7). As part of the enlargement as mentioned above, for example, the Incheba Exhibition Center, the interview could be organized at the same time with the Slovak Squash Championships and the Slovak Championships in other sports, which could potentially attract more spectators and thus could be more attractive to sponsors and partners.

New partners (O8). As part of the organization of the event at the Bory mall, there is a potential to establish new partners who have their business premises within the Bory mall and would be able to make their business visible to people who came to the business center for a sporting event or raise awareness of their business for ordinary visitors by being more visible than the sponsor of the activity that takes place at the Bory mall.

Threats

The main sponsor (T1). With the expected arrival of economic recession comes the threat of further extension of cooperation with the main sponsor of the event and hence the organization of the Championship with current range and quality.

People (T2). Representatives of the association and an external partner stated in the interviews that they see one of the threats as a possible end to the cooperation of people involved not only in organizing the Championships but also in running the entire association, as they perform these functions and activities in their free time either free of charge or for the symbolic reward.

Finances from sponsors (T3). We can identify the same threat as with the main sponsor with finances from other sponsors. With the onset of the expected economic recession, sponsors will be more careful in releasing funds into the marketing of their brands, and thus there may be a problem with the outflow of sponsors of the Slovak Squash Championships.

In Table 1 below we can see the average evaluation of the SWOT analysis of individual respondents. According to the averaged evaluation, the SWOT strategy for the event came out as an offensive strategy, which is referred to as strengths opportunities. According to Euroekonóm.sk (2019), this strategy is the most attractive strategic option. It can be chosen by an organization in which strengths prevail over weaknesses and opportunities over threats. Due

to its powerful strength, it is able to take advantage of all the opportunities offered. An offensive strategy from a position of strength is recommended. A visional representation of the SWOT strategies can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Table 1: Average evaluation of SWOT analysis Slovak Squash Championship 2019 according to the evaluation of the respondents, source: own

	Strengths			Weaknesses	
S1	The Main sponsor - continuity	5	W 1	Collaboration with Golem	4
S2	Qualification system	3	W 2	Finances from Slovak squash Associations	4
S3	Place – Bory mall	3	W 3	Marketing by Slovak squash Associations	4
S4	External partner	4	W 4	Referees	4
S5	Brand Squash Tour Slovakia	5	W 5	Small base	4
S6	A balanced budget	4	W 6	The new generation of players	4
S7	Marketing	3			
	Overall	27		Overall	24
	Opportunities			Threats	
O 1	The Championship open for foreign players	2	T1	The main sponsor	4
O 2	V4 Country Championship	3	T2	People	4
O 3	Finances from Ministry	4	T3	Finances from sponsors	5
O 4	Club's involvement	3			
O 5	Accompanying activities	3			
O 6	Location - Incheba	2			
O 7	Festival of small sports	2			
O 8	New partners	4			
	Overall	23		Overall	13

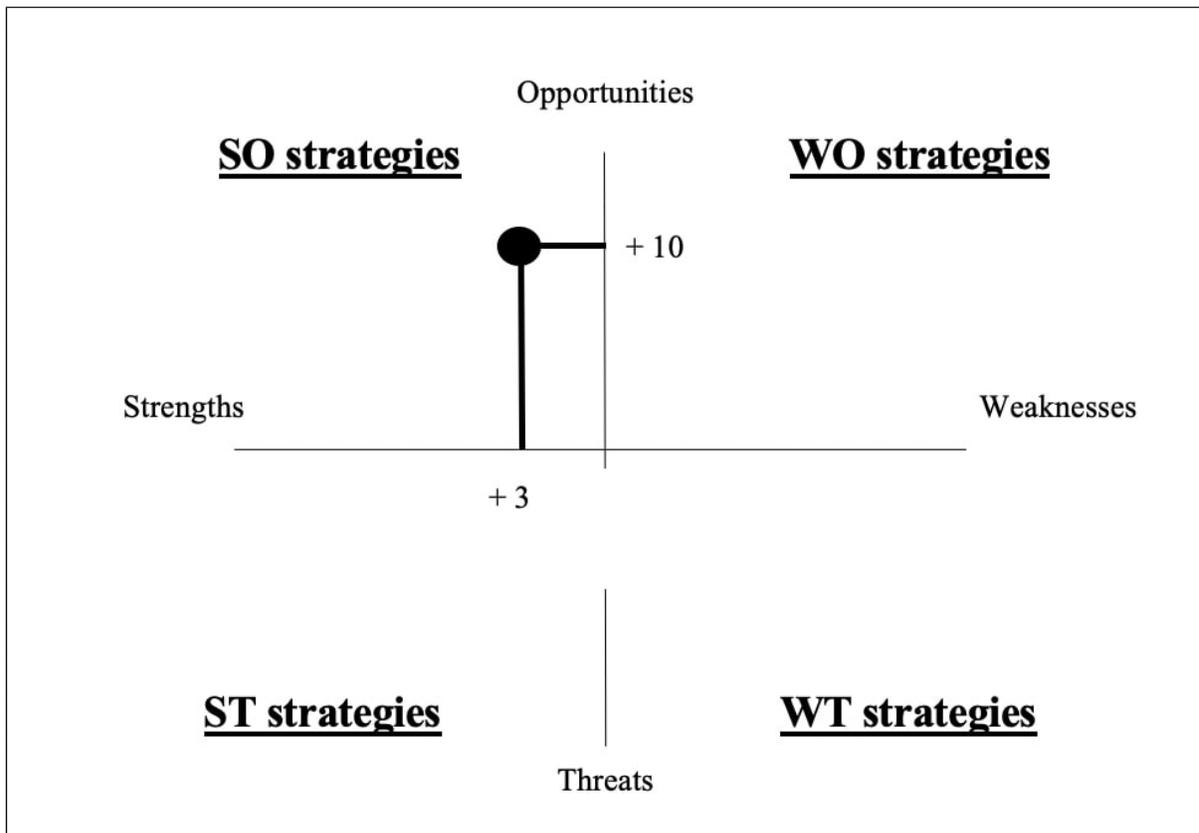


Figure 2: A visual representation of the SWOT strategies from average evaluation of the respondent for Slovak Squash Championship 2019, source: own

In Table 2 below, we present the average evaluation of the respondents of the IFE matrix, according to which the average evaluation of the internal environment of the Slovak Squash Championships 2019 was 2.65. If we know that the best rating, we can achieve with the IFE matrix is 4 and the worst is 1, then we can determine that 2.650 is higher than the mean value, which is 2.5. From this fact, we can evaluate that the internal environment is slightly above average, which corresponds to the results of the SWOT analysis, where strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Table 2: IFE matrix from average evaluation from respondents for Slovak Squash Championship, source: own

S/W	Average evaluation			
	Description	Weights	Rating	Evaluation
S1	The Main sponsor - continuity	0,13	4	0,48
S2	Qualification system	0,12	4	0,18
S3	Place – Bory mall	0,06	3	0,32
S4	External partner	0,08	4	0,32
S5	Brand Squash Tour Slovakia	0,08	4	0,09
S6	A balanced budget	0,03	3	0,15
S7	Marketing	0,05	3	0,05
W1	Collaboration with Golem	0,05	1	0,09
W2	Finances from Slova squash Associations	0,09	1	0,18
W3	Marketing by Slovak squas Associations	0,09	2	0,1
W4	Referees	0,10	1	0,08

W5	Small base	0,04	2	0,09
W6	The new generation players	0,09	1	0,48
IFE		1,00		2,65

As with the IFE matrix, also with the EFE matrix, the best rating we can achieve is 4 and the worst is 1. From Table 3 we can see that the average evaluation of EFE matrices from respondents is 2,710 which is higher than the mean value of 2,500. It is based on this that the external environment is above average, which came out of us with a positive evaluation of the SWOT analysis. This is also evidenced by the fact that opportunities far outweigh threats.

Table 3: EFE matrix from average evaluation from respondents for Slovak Squash Championship, source: own

O/T	Average evaluation			
	Description	Weights	Rating	Evaluation
O1	The Championship open for foreign players	0,03	3	0,09
O2	V4 Country Championship	0,05	3	0,15
O3	Finances from Ministry	0,13	4	0,52
O4	Club's involvement	0,11	4	0,44
O5	Accompanying activities	0,09	3	0,27
O6	Location - Incheba	0,07	3	0,21
O7	Festival of small sports	0,01	3	0,03
O8	New partners	0,13	4	0,52
T1	The main sponsor	0,14	1	0,14
T2	People	0,11	2	0,22
T3	Finances from sponsors	0,12	1	0,12
EFE		1,00		2,71

CONCLUSION

Our article aimed to bring an analysis of the Slovak Squash Championships 2019 using SWOT analysis followed by IFE and EFE matrix and based on the results to assume the future of the event.

Based on the SWOT analysis from the average evaluation of the respondents, we have an offensive SWOT strategy as a result from SWOT analysis for the event. The results of the SWOT analysis also support the results of the IFE and EFE matrices. We can see the consistency of the evaluation of our respondents on these results. Based on the evaluations, we rank the continuity of the main sponsor among the most important strengths, which is important especially for another strength, namely a balanced budget, as it contributes a large part to cover the budget. An important main page in terms of finance is also the Squash Tour Slovakia brand, thanks to which the organizers find it easier to find sponsors to whom they can sell the brand even with the event. The opportunities that we think the organizer should focus on are accompanying activities for event visitors and the club's involvement. These two opportunities would be able to attract more people to the event and thus more possible new players. The offensive SWOT strategy is mainly used when we try to use the identified opportunities with the help of strengths. In their evaluation, however, it must be taken into account that they are directly involved in the organization of the event and there may be an underestimation of weaknesses in the evaluation of the internal environment and an underestimation of threats in the evaluation of the external environment.

At present time, we cannot say how the corona crisis will affect sports in Slovakia and how it will affect squash. If the main financial impact on the organizers is noticeable, we think that organizing of next Slovak Squash Championships would not be realistic to the extent of the past

years. This also agrees with the threat assessment in the SWOT analysis, where we identified finances from sponsors as the most serious threat to the event. As the corona crisis has affected all segments of the economy, we do not know whether all previous sponsors will be willing to continue to be sponsors of the event and finding new sponsors will be a huge problem. At the same time, we cannot say at the moment how hygienic standards will change in society and sport. Increasing hygienic standards will increase the cost, which may not be tolerable for the organizers in such a difficult situation. If the financial impact of the crisis on the organizers is not too huge, it is possible to organize the event to a similar extent while respecting all of the new facts.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis aims to analyze the organization of the Slovak Squash Championships 2019. We had analyzed the organization of the event from the beginning of preparations for the event, through the event and to its completion. Based on interviews and knowledge of the obtained study of documents and observations, we compiled a SWOT analysis, followed by IFE and EFE matrix. The SWOT analysis, IFE and EFE matrix were evaluated by the President of the Slovak Squash Association, the General Secretary of the Slovak Squash Association, and the representative from the event organizer. Based on the results of the analysis, we have proposed that the future of the Slovak Squash Championships is going to be bright if they stick to the main strengths such as the main sponsor – continuity, brand Squash Tour Slovakia and a balanced budget. Also the organizer of the event should target their efforts to develop the most possible and the most effective opportunities for the event such as accompanying activities and the club's involvement.

Key words: squash, organization, sport event

ABSTRACTO

La tesis tiene como objetivo analizar la organización del Campeonato de Squash de Eslovaquia 2019. Habíamos analizado la organización del evento desde el inicio de los preparativos del evento, pasando por el evento y hasta su finalización. Con base en entrevistas y conocimiento del estudio obtenido de documentos y observaciones, se realizó un análisis SWOT, seguido de la matriz IFE y EFE. El análisis SWOT, la matriz IFE y EFE fueron evaluados por el Presidente de la Asociación Eslovaca de Squash, el Secretario General de la Asociación Eslovaca de Squash y el representante del organizador del evento. Basándonos en los resultados del análisis, hemos propuesto que el futuro de los Campeonatos de Squash de Eslovaquia será brillante si se adhieren a las principales fortalezas, como el patrocinador principal: continuidad, marca Squash Tour Slovakia y un presupuesto equilibrado. Además, el organizador del evento debe orientar sus esfuerzos para desarrollar las oportunidades más posibles y más efectivas para el evento, como las actividades de acompañamiento y la participación del club.

Palabras clave: squash, organización, evento deportivo

RESUMO

A tese visa analisar a organização do Campeonato Eslovaco de Squash 2019. Analisamos a organização do evento desde o início dos preparativos para o evento, passando pelo evento e até a sua conclusão. Com base nas entrevistas e no conhecimento do estudo obtido dos documentos e das observações, elaborou-se uma análise SWOT, seguida da matriz IFE e EFE. A análise SWOT, a matriz IFE e EFE foram avaliadas pelo Presidente da Associação Eslovaca de Squash, pelo Secretário Geral da Associação Eslovaca de Squash e pelo representante do organizador do evento. Com base nos resultados da análise, propusemos que o futuro do Campeonato Eslovaco de Squash será brilhante se eles se mantiverem nos principais pontos fortes como o patrocinador principal - continuidade, marca Squash Tour Eslováquia e um orçamento equilibrado. Além disso, o organizador do evento deve direcionar seus esforços para desenvolver o máximo possível e as oportunidades mais eficazes para o evento, como atividades de acompanhamento e envolvimento do clube.

Palavras-chave: squash, organização, evento esportivo