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## **CLUSTER AS A PERSPECTIVE OF ENGAGING A NETWORK OF ENTITIES WHICH CREATE PRODUCTS SUCH AS INTERNATIONAL SPORTS EVENTS**

JAKUB RYŚNIK, ANDRZEJ HADZIK

### **Introduction**

Recently the subject of big sports events is becoming more and more important, also in Poland. Kozak gives three reasons of this trend:

- 7 The increase of expenditures on organization of such events;
- 8 The increase of income of international sports associations which have rights to the brand of the event;
- 9 The increase of people's awareness as to the scale of organization costs, income of international associations and a possibility of spending public money in an alternative way.

Even though demand for emotions is growing [22], it cannot be satisfied separately from performance indicators that characterize such an event both ex ante and ex-post (efficiency in reaching the expected aims of organizing the event, effectiveness and economy).

Sports events are events which have different functions, knowledge of which decides about undertaking attempts to organize such events in a particular location. In literature, there are listed functions such as entertainment function, catharsis function, sports function, aesthetic function, economic function, promotional function or recreational function[12]. The final reason for realization of those expensive venues is promotional and economic function, often underlined by the people interested<sup>1</sup>. As a consequence, big sports events become commercialised and they become sports and tourists projects[12]. That brings the bigger emphasis on searching for new ways (methods and techniques) which will bring bigger benefits and minimizing costs.

In the following article the authors aim to present and discuss the problem of whether using the cluster concept can improve the effectiveness of managing big sports events.

That is why the authors are trying to check whether processes which take place during realization of international sports events are similar to those which take place among entities in a cluster. They also wonder if the characteristic of tasks and entities realizing international sports events matches characteristics of environment of functioning clusters.

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<sup>1</sup> The discussion on the real effects of organizing big sports events can be found for example in: [12]

The positive answer to such a question can confirm the thesis that a cluster concept can be implemented and it should bring the organizers of international sports events better effectiveness and economic indexes than assumed.

## 1. A term and features of international sport event as a sports product

All goods which satisfy consumers' needs can be called a product. The core of a sports product can be watching a sport event, and the structure of a sport product offered to the consumers consisting of, among others: the form of the game, the show, its stars, tickets, sports facilities and areas, sports equipment and outfits, staff and their contacts with consumers, and a general image. But being service-oriented is a prevailing characteristic of a sports product. Even though sports product can be a mix of services and goods, the role of the latter is only complementary. As a consequence, often it is not a physical object, but a set of services which cannot be verified until they are bought and used. Thus there are such features as complexity, complementarity and unity of the production process, exchange and consumption, inability to produce in advance, some kind of intangibility and specific lack of an owner and seasonality. What is more, a sports product has a unique character – it is changeable, subjective in perception and verifiable through experience[21].

Each sports product can be characterized through terms of scope and depth. Currently we are experiencing widening and deepening a mix of sports product through offering more comprehensive set of services. The aim of introducing innovative components is attracting new consumers and maintaining bonds with current ones[21].

In a broad collection of sports products we can find a term of a sports event, which is defined as visually watched social event of entertainment and recreational character, organized in the form of sport rivalry of players, played according to the accepted rules, with participation of players, referees, organizers and spectators<sup>2</sup>.

Sports events may have many varieties due to<sup>3</sup>:

- 10 discipline,
- 11 type of an event (match, tournament),
- 12 aim and rank of the event (friendly or cup),
- 13 place of the event (outside, hall),
- 14 course of sports action (mono- and polycentric),
- 15 features of an audience (polarised and non-polarised audience).

The following article focuses on big sports events, which are an element of the term of mega events or hallmark events. The latter can be defined as festival, exposure, cultural event or important sports event, which can be regular or one-time event with the aim to give the host city an important place on the tourism market<sup>4</sup>.

Sports events belong to one of the types of hallmark events (tab. 1),

**Table 1. Location of sports events among hallmark events**

EVENT TYPE	EVENT FORM
Cultural event	- festival - carnival

8) Misiolowski R., *Marketing w Sporcie*, MT Publishing House, Warsaw 2005, after [21]

9) Matuszewicz Cz., *Widowisko Sportowe*, AWF Warszawa, Warsaw 1990, p. 72, after [21]

10) Hall, C.M.. *Imaging, tourism and sports event fever: the Sydney Olympics and the need for a social charter for mega-events*. In *Sport in the City: The Role of Sport in Economic and Social Regeneration*, eds. C. Gratton and I.P. Henry, 166-183, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 169 after [27]

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- celebration</li> <li>- ceremony</li> <li>- religious event</li> </ul>
Politics and the state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- political summits</li> <li>- conferences</li> <li>- other political events</li> <li>- VIP's visits</li> </ul>
Business and commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- business meetings</li> <li>- convents</li> <li>- consumer and commerce meetings</li> <li>- trade fairs</li> <li>- exhibitions</li> </ul>
Science and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conferences</li> <li>- seminars</li> <li>- lectures and seminars</li> </ul>
<b>Sport and recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- amateur tournaments</li> <li>- events for professionals</li> <li>- <b>watching sports events live or in the media (passive participation)</b></li> <li>- recreational physical activity in order to relax, for fun and pleasure (active participation in recreational sports events)</li> </ul>
Art and entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- concerts</li> <li>- award ceremonies</li> </ul>
Private events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- wedding receptions</li> <li>- parties</li> <li>- celebrations</li> </ul>

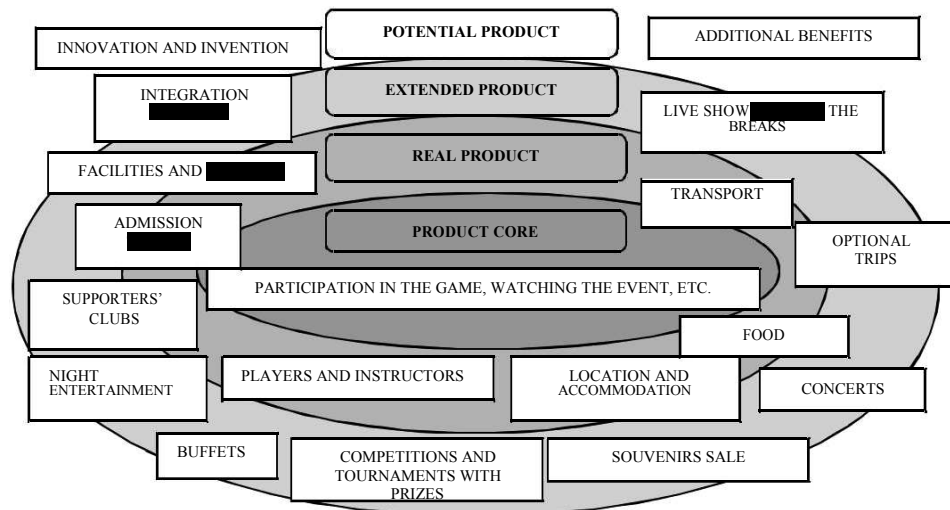
Source: Getz D., *Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research*, In: [12]

Big sports events are often international events. In literature they are understood as events attracting guests from all over the world and attractive for internationally known media[27].

Big global sports events are described as “short-term events with long-term results for host cities”<sup>5</sup>. In comparison to other types of sports events, big sports events in times of globalisation are characterised by mass participation of supporters, relatively longer duration time in comparison to other events and promotional, media, social and economic importance, mentioned above[12].

Sports products have complicated internal structure of goods satisfying different needs of participants. For example, from the point of view of a participant of international sports event, the product is the whole experience – from the moment of leaving the house, through participation in the event, to coming back to the place of residence. The experience is a result of consumption of sports and tourist product; not a single service, but a combination of material and non-material components creating a set of services[12].

<sup>5</sup> Ritchie, J. R., Crouch, G. I. 2000. *The competitive destination: a sustainable tourism perspective*. In *Tourism Management*. 2000, no. 21 (1), p. 155 – 156, after: [12]



Pic. 1. The model of sports and tourist product, such as international sports event  
Source: [12]

The main problem for the entities responsible for creating each product is its attractiveness to a consumer. The attractiveness reflects competitiveness of a particular sports and tourist event in comparison to other forms of spending leisure time.

In case of sports and tourist product, the decisive factor is not only a level of its complexity (numerous elements), but the quality of components of the analyzed product as seen by a consumer[11].

From the perspective of effectiveness of managing sports events, it can be said that a sports event is a carefully carried out experience which is to make impression on the supporters. The event is carried out and directed so precisely that spectators cannot notice technical aspects at all[10].

International sports event is a unique product due to a high level of complexity of its internal nature. It consists of numerous tasks that strongly depend on one another. At the same time, the product is unique and limited in time, that is why it is difficult to achieve all the aims assumed by the organizers and keep all expected deadlines as well as quality and cost regimes.

It can be stated that there is constant, strong demand for all methods and techniques of action which improve the process of creating and offering products such as international sports events, including its unique specificity.

## 2. Actors in sports event

In sport the most important elements are players themselves, who are the actors of the event, spectators as the audience as well as the arena where the event takes place. In the background, not so visible, but equally important, there are other entities involved in the event. These are, among others[10]:

[7] the organizer of the event,

[8] the entity which has rights to the brand of the event (which at the same time may be the organizer of the event),

- local DMO (Destination Management Organizations, which aims to develop local destinations in a long term),
- sports committees working within DMO, convention bureau, chambers of commerce (which connect people looking for possibilities to organize business or tourist events).

Those entities belong to organizers – the hosts of the event. As there must be integration between the goods satisfying sports and tourist consumption needs, those organisations must cooperate with a network of others entities, equally important for the success of the whole event. The organizer, who is the owner of rights, and local DMO must cooperate with[10]:

- managers of local tourist attractions (museums, memorial sites, etc.),
- vehicle rental companies and carriers,
- sports venues and stadiums’ managers,
- accommodation places,
- local businessmen and sponsors,
- local media,
- entities managing sports associations (for example sports associations).

The above-mentioned elements must cooperate at all stages if the event is to be successful. According to Shonk and Bravo[34], those entities need to create relations between organizations or a network in order to carry out the event in the right way, and this is possible only on some conditions (for example, ensuring necessary resources and demonstrating trust towards other actors of the event).

Through cooperation, each element of the network contributes to the success of the event and increasing its rank. When the event is more attractive, participants are willing to spend more, stay longer in a given location and keep the economic results in the local economy, to which the hosts of the event belong as well[5].

### 3. Network as a research perspective of big sports events

In the above description of main characteristics of big sports events we can notice a research field concerning determinants of the event’s success. The most important factor seems to be a criterion of effectiveness of creating a network of entities and using it to create the event.

Strategic management of sports events should also concern a cooperation network and social capital if the event is to bring short- and long-term benefits to the host location, its society and hosts[26].

Accepting a network research perspective can mean examining relations between entities which create big sports events and answering a question which relations are most beneficial. In the context of big events, the network perspective has often been used in literature (see table below).

**Table 2. Examples of using network perspective in research of big sports events**

<b>Scope of the research</b>	<b>Author of the research</b>
Analysis of social networks	Jarman et al. 2014 Caprinello et al 2011 Izzo et al 2012 Wäsche 2015
Network analysis	Soteriades et al. 2011

Analysis of the value chain	Soteriades, M, & Dimou, I 2011
Theory of relationships between organisations	Schonk et al. 2010
Concept of scene from the network perspective	Rundh et al. 2015
Concept of regional sport tourism (RST) network	Wäsche et al. 2010 Sallent et al. 2011
Analysis of cooperation strategies in regional sport tourism networks	Lorgnier et al. 2014
Network organisation	Dobusch et al. 2014
Creating local societies networks (social capital) through big sports events	Misener et al. 2006 Chalip 2006
Network pension	Dollinger et al. 2010

Source: Own study

The above-mentioned authors share one repeated thesis that networks of entities (natural persons or companies) are one of the elements necessary to carry out big sports events, thus they are a condition of achieving aims of the events for local societies and hosts. There is also a rule that characteristic of those networks influences achieving real benefits for the interested entities short- and long-term. The publications mentioned above explain differently the phenomenon of the network effect and its influence on big sports events.

#### 4. Cluster concept as a potential research network perspective of big sports events

According to the authors of this publication, accepting network perspective as a useful model to explain effectiveness of realization big sports events, cluster concept can be used as well, in which the most important is a view of processes taking place in groups of entities through the network perspective.

The review of the literature done by the authors hasn't given the answer as to whether "big sports events" and cluster concepts have been linked before. The lack of publications in this field shows that this kind of link can be treated as an theoretic innovation.

Cluster concept seems adequate to description of processes which take place when carrying out big sports events, as the latter seem similar to the objects (economy sectors, locations, groups of entities) to which the cluster concept has been used before.

Even though the cluster concept comes from observations of companies from the industrial sector first by Marshall[24] and then by Beccattini[1], later it started to be used in a wide range of sectors, not only in industry, but in services as well<sup>6</sup>. In Poland the term "cluster" is identified with works of Porter who defines it as "geographic cluster of linked companies, specialised suppliers, entities providing services, companies working in similar sectors and connected institutions (for example, universities, standardizing entities, trade associations) in particular fields, which compete, but also cooperate with one another[28].

There are many common features in the existing cluster definitions. According to Skawińska, these are[33]:

<sup>6</sup> see [28], [20]

geographic concentration of competing companies,  
concentration of companies within one sector or a few similar sectors,  
cooperation (formal or informal) of companies with local institutions  
(networking),  
specialisation of entities,  
flow of knowledge, technology and innovation between entities forming clusters.

From the point of view of this article, an important fact is that those features are similar to characteristics of big sports events. Events usually take place in a **particular, geographically limited location** (for example a city). As for cyclicity, it can be an event taking place regularly in the same location (for example ski jumping competition which takes place in the same locations every year) or in different locations which become hosts (the Olympic Games).

Big sports events are organized with the use of **geographically concentrated base of specialized entities** from the sports, tourist, recreational and industrial sector of meetings and owners of the event rights, appointed entities coordinating the event as well as local government and representatives of the society, which was described in the first part of this article. Often the presence of such entities is a condition of organizing events in a particular location.

Those entities **cooperate with each other** on conditions stated in formal agreements, but often also as an informal social networks<sup>7</sup>. Relations between entities taking part in organization of big sports events often give possibility to share specialised knowledge within created social networks[38].

Undertaking a big sport event depends on the presence of network of relations, which means not only a set of entities, but a system that creates the effect of synergy. Like in a cluster, which can be seen from the perspective of dynamic processes taking place there, which is underlined by Stachowicz: "Cluster is a group of organizations in a given location, together with the whole network of internal and external relations and links with particular vision and a common business purpose, which are achieved through a process of building and developing relations of cooperation, based on creating and developing trust between people from those companies and organizations"[36].

The most important for sports industry and for the sector carrying out big sports events understood in a more limited way is the fact that recently the concept of cluster is also used to explain phenomena of tourist and recreational products offered on the leisure market. Sport, tourist and recreational sectors often overlap if we use a wide approach to qualifying particular entities to a given sector. Sports sector uses the "material" of tourist and recreational sectors, and vice versa. Those sectors share not only economic entities and people, but also social networks, networks between companies and as a result, they have similar problems when it comes to economy and management.

Even though tourist cluster is a fairly new idea, its aim is to look for ways of creating new innovative tourist products, the development of tourist destinations or achieving economic benefits through local economy<sup>8</sup>. Kaczmarek, Stasiak, Włodarczyk claim that in some form clusters have existed in tourism for a long time and it is a field of people's activity destined, more than any other, to close cooperation of similar companies in the given location[19]. Kachniewska presents a finding that tourist clusters seem the most obvious form of developing tourist product in a given tourist

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<sup>7</sup> Jarman et al. 2014, Caprinello et al 2011, Izzo et al 2012, Wäsche 2015

<sup>8</sup> for example: A. Hjalager 2000, J.Jackson and P.Murphy 2002, Staszewska 2008

destination due to the fact that no other institutional form allows to create so many combinations of so many non-profit organisations and companies[18]. According to other authors, tourism is a field in which clustering mechanism are a natural way of supporting it. Clustering initiatives or other entities being a coordinator of actions within a cluster, can be treated as a substitute of DMO for the local tourist destination[31].

A concept of cluster is not used unconditionally though. In a tourist field there is some controversy concerning using the concept of cluster to describe creation processes in industrial sectors[7]. Using the model of cluster to describe big sports events can be equally controversial, as the tourist product consists mainly of services. In sectors of services the consumer is not only the final recipient of material goods created in production processes of a cluster. The consumer of a tourist or sports product, which is highly focused on services (a set mainly consisting of services) is a co-participant and a key link in the process of creating the value of cluster network. Clegeau and Violer raise doubt whether the key condition of discussing cluster – the presence of network of informal social relations – is still met in the creation environment, in which an important link – tourist – is usually a person living away from the given location and outside the network created by the cluster[7]. The same doubt can be raised in the context of supporter of a big sports event, which is usually a person outside the place in which the product is created. What is more, big sports events, apart from those organized periodically in a given location, attract different groups of supporters/clients, which doesn't encourage long-term relations between a client and a cluster.

## 5. A model of cluster of international sports events

Despite reservations made above, the authors of the article are convinced that it is possible to show entities from the local environment, engaged in organisation of big international events, which could simply be called a cluster and treated like that from the point of view of theoretical description and indications within a range of functioning practice. As a consequence of this, it is also possible to formulate the preliminary model of international sports event cluster and the basic set of policies which should be implemented to develop it.

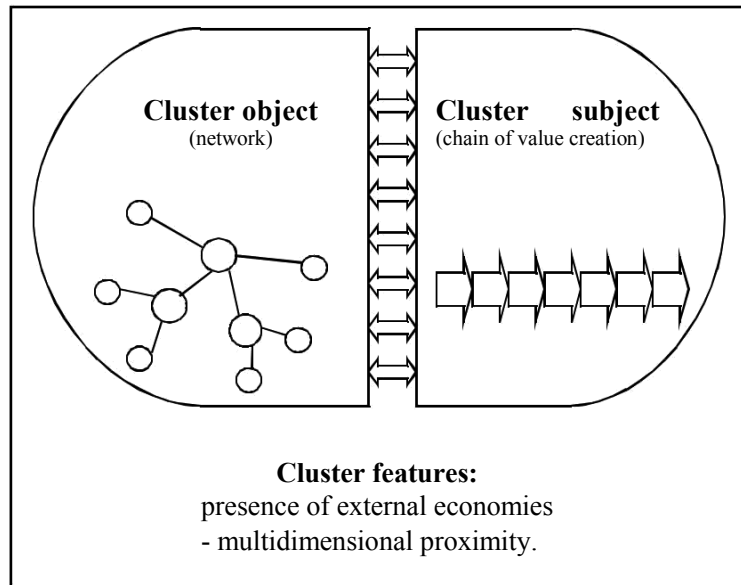
The authors suggest appointing universal frames of the international sports event cluster. Defining it, the following elements should be taken into consideration:

[7] cluster object

[8] cluster subject

Using the above-mentioned basic elements of the cluster definition, the authors of this article define **international sports event cluster as a collection of objects consisting of business people, local community members and representatives of other organisations (authorities, scientific and research, educational entities) which are engaged in realisation of value chain (cluster subject), which main aim is obtaining and realising international sports events with the use of external economies resulting from cooperation, and multidimensional proximity as either the cluster object and cluster subject are characterized by geographical, social, business, cultural, organisational and institutional proximity.**





Pic. 2. International sport event cluster – ideological model  
Source: Own study

Developing the above, it must be said that **the objects of the international sports event cluster**, analogically to the product of a big sports event previously described in the article, are:

- [16] players themselves (the sport level of local players is important to obtain sports events and the success of the event for the local community),
- [17] spectators as the audience (the level of interest in the event and the culture of supporting is a factor influencing the decision about organisation of sports event and its realisation),
- [18] arena of the event (or set of arenas, sports venues and stadiums' managers),
- [19] business people, workers, local communities, stakeholders of a cluster,
- [20] the organizer of the event,
- [21] the entity which has rights to the brand of the event (which at the same time may be the organizer of the event),
- [22] sports committees working within DMO, convention bureau, chambers of commerce (which connect people looking for possibilities to organize business or tourist events),
- [23] local government engaged in obtaining and organisation of the event,
- [24] local DMO (Destination Management Organizations, which aims to develop local destinations in a long term),
- [25] managers of local tourist attractions (museums, memorial sites, etc.),
- [26] vehicle rental companies and carriers,
- [27] accommodation places,
- [28] local businessmen and sponsors,
- [29] local media,
- [30] entities managing sports associations (for example sports associations).

The above-mentioned entities play different role, depending on whether they are a supplier of services for clients using the created product (eg. arena of the event) or a coordinator of the created networks for the needs of the event (the organizer of the event, local DMO).

**The subject of international sports event cluster** are processes of obtaining and complex realisation of big sports events, which can also be understood as realisation of chain of value creation within the international sports event product. Cluster defined in such a way means business activity of entities which aim is to gain profit (eg. accommodation places), but often also activity which has other organisational aims on the micro level (eg. local DMO or government). International sport event cluster, through the entities which it consists of, offers a complex realisation of international sports event product which was described in the article. Locally concentrated collection of entities has a potential that lets to apply for organisation of such events and realise them successfully.

The only thing left is to specify some characteristic features of the subject and object of cluster. Clusters differ in many dimensions: the type of products and services they produce, the locational dynamics they are subject to, their stage of development, and the business environment that surrounds them[20]. According to the authors of the article, **the key features of international sports events cluster** are:

- presence of external economies (specialisation, learning, innovation),
- multidimensional proximity.

M. Bellandi and F. Sforzi noticed that collective activity (cooperation of companies) can take place in clusters thanks to three processes which generate **external economies**. These are:

- ongoing and relatively located division of cluster production processes;
- locally dispersed education;
- generating possibilities of innovation through interactions between complementing skills used in designing and realising of a product. [2].

**Multidimensional proximity** relates to both subject and object of cluster. It is characteristic for the cluster subject, because people who create cluster (business people, local community, stakeholder of industrial district) are all “in the vicinity”, creating mutual subjective relations of “proximity”, like M. Heidegger presents<sup>9</sup>. The proximity is present in cluster in many dimensions (geographical, social, industrial, cultural, organisational, institutional) mentioned by A. Jewtuchowicz<sup>10</sup>. The proximity

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<sup>9</sup> Heidegger also defines a relation of proximity which is shown as a result of contact with things – “what’s at hand and useful, what’s in the vicinity, becomes known and familiar. The close thing is what’s near and you know how to deal with it. You have to notice that it has nothing to do with the distance. The difference between familiar (close) and strange (distant) is objective and cannot be measured, and is always subjective and stated in relation to a person, not the absolute. [3]

<sup>10</sup> A. Jewtuchowicz makes a review of various ways of understanding this term in literature and lists the following types :

- geographical proximity (the basic type of proximity, understood more widely than only physical space, but as combined with social dimension – the proximity creates social relations),
- industrial proximity (technological similarity and/or complementarity),
- cultural proximity (similarity of values, attitudes, norms)
- organisational proximity (similarity of rules of organization activity),
- institutional proximity (belonging of actors to particular community using the same rules of activity).

which characterises the subject of cluster activity means focusing it around the particular chain of value creation and auxiliary activities supporting this process.

## Summary

According to the authors there are many analogies between processes taking place during international sports events and those that can be observed in the environment of the working clusters. Even though the content of the clusters includes some objections, in the end it seems possible to support the thesis that a cluster concept can be implemented as a tool of description and drawing normative conclusions as to functioning of entities which create a big sports event. As a result, it can be expected that using the knowledge about clusters should bring the organizers of international sports events achieving better indicators of success than assumed.

The proved usefulness of cluster concept to describing the processes taking place during international sports events is a condition of , first of all, treating the actors involved in the event as a cluster members and using a set of tools which foster the development of the cluster. Kettel formulates an opinion that “while we have a fairly good understanding of clusters as an empirical phenomenon we have far less systematic knowledge about turning this understanding into effective policies”.[20] The authors are aware of this, but in this article they only mention the problem and at the same time see the potential of research in this field. According to their intuition and through analogy to tourist clusters, big sports events clusters seem to require a kind of organisation leader, which on one hand will control the current organisation of sports events, and in the long run it will control the development of local networks of relations in order to keep and develop the potential of successful activity. In tourist industry such is the role of DMO organisations or cluster initiatives.

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Such description of proximity can also be used to explain cluster phenomenon, the functioning of which seems to be correlated with the existence of multidimensional proximity created locally. A. [17]

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**Note about the author s:**

Andrzej Hadzik, Professor, Department of Tourism, Faculty of Physical Education, The Jerzy Kukuczka Academy of Physical Education in Katowice  
Jakub Rysnik, Ph D., Department of Tourism, Faculty of Physical Education, The Jerzy Kukuczka Academy of Physical Education in Katowice

**Abstract**

In the following article the authors aim to present and discuss the problem of whether using the cluster concept can improve the effectiveness of managing big sports events.

That is why the authors are trying to check whether processes which take place during realization of international sports events are similar to those which take place among entities in a cluster. They also wonder if the characteristic of tasks and entities realizing international sports events matches characteristics of environment of functioning clusters.

**According to the authors, a cluster concept can be implemented and it** should bring the organizers of international sports events achieving better effectiveness and economic indicators of success than assumed.