

# Trends in Major Tracking Events in KZN 2006-2012

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## 1. Introduction

The management of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN) have decided to issue occasional papers to the tourism trade on the core findings of its research and other projects. The purpose of these papers is to stimulate more debate regarding the findings or progress of such projects, as well as to ensure wider awareness of key research findings.

KwaZulu-Natal's (KZN) tourism marketing and promotions body, Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN) undertakes a range of economic impact assessment surveys during the course of each year of a variety of events which take place in the province. Some of these surveys qualify as what are termed tracking surveys. The reasons for performing such tracking surveys is to ascertain not only how the province has benefitted from holding the event, but also how the event has changed through time, and how successful the marketing efforts aimed at improving and increasing such an event have been. This paper looks at four of the tracking studies through time, highlighting how each one has changed over the years.

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## 2. Background

Events have long been known to attract visitors to the area in which they are held, visitors who wish to participate, as well as visitors who prefer to watch the activity. Events which occur over more than one day thus attracting tourists have even more of a positive economic effect on the area in which they are held.

Understanding this, and wishing to understand the nature and extent of major provincial events in KZN, TKZN embarked upon a strategy to include the tracking of the performance of several major events in the province. The aim was to develop an understanding of the profile and numbers of participants and spectators of the events, the economic value created by holding the events, and the ways in which such events could be improved, enlarged and internationalized. The surveys were also used to track the health of the provincial tourism brand, an exercise which has proved more interesting bearing in mind that the provincial tourism brand has been through several changes since TKZN first opened its doors in 1997.

This paper is concerned with four of the major tracking studies which the research division of TKZN carries out every year. These are the Midmar Mile open water swimming event, the three-

day Dusi Canoe marathon, the Comrades Marathon, an ultra-marathon road running event, and the Amashovashova cycling event – now the Amashova Durban Classic. The first two take place in summer, the Comrades in winter and the Amashovashova in spring.

### **3. Tracking Event Selection**

TKZN has developed a set of criteria for the selection of events upon which to undertake economic impact assessments. In short, each event had to be a large, well-known event, have a strong tourism component, have potential for growth, and have some element of internationalization. These events were then included in the annual detailed research plan. Other events were also included on the research plan, but the aim of undertaking impact assessments of those usually smaller events was different. It was usually to clarify the nature of the success of the event, and thus whether it would be worth holding it again, or whether it would be wise for TKZN to support it.

On an annual basis then, TKZN undertakes economic impact assessments of the Midmar Mile, the Dusi Canoe Marathon, the Comrades Marathon and the Amashova Durban Classic. The impact surveys were not started on all of these events at the same time. The Amashovashova, for example, only began being surveyed in 2007 whereas the impact assessment surveys of the Comrades began in 2005. As far as possible though, the comparative information included in this paper will concern the findings from 2006 to 2012, bearing in mind that neither the Comrades nor the Amashova Durban Classic for 2012 has yet been held.

#### **3.1. Midmar Mile**

The Midmar Mile, held up at Midmar Dam in the Midlands just beyond Howick, is the largest open water swimming event in the country, if not the world. It is held over two days of a weekend in high summer, formerly in January, but more recently in early February. TKZN first undertook an economic impact assessment of the event in 2006.

South Africa's Midmar Mile – the world's largest open water swim – was swum for the first time in 1973 when three friends, Mike Arbuthnot, Dick Park and Brian Glover, unable to compete in the Buffalo Mile in East London because of petrol restrictions, decided to stage a race in KwaZulu-Natal (<http://www.midmarmile.co.za/history.php>).

One hundred and fifty-three competitors entered the first event, with the youngest swimmer being 10 years old. Two years after the first event, in 1975, the first women's entries were received, but were viewed as unofficial. In 1976, with the size of the entry growing quickly, a time limit of one hour was imposed for the swim. Six hundred and thirty-four swimmers started the race.

The following year the number of entries topped 1 000 for the first time. The number of entrants leapt to 2 500 in 1980. In 1981, the number of entries leapt again, topping the 3 000 mark. This led to a new format at the start, with swimmers divided into groups according to age. The 4 000-entry mark was topped for the first time as the Midmar Mile entered the nineties. In 1999, over 10 000 swimmers finished the Midmar Mile for the first time in the race's history. 2004 brought yet another record entry, this time 16 124. In 2009, the organisers decided it was time that the Midmar Mile received official recognition as the world's largest open water swimming event, and contacted the Guinness Book of World Records to make this happen.

The tough economic conditions experienced around the world meant the rate of entries was slow until a last-minute spurt lifted the number to about 16 000. The 13 755 finishers ensured a place for the Midmar Mile in the Guinness Book of World Records, along with the 3 110 finishers – the most yet – in a single event, the Non-Company relay. In 2010, the Midmar Mile surpassed the number of finishers that had earned the event a Guinness World Record a year earlier. Over 14 200 made it across the finishing line to easily better the 2009 mark. The men's race proved to be one of the closest in the 37-year history of the event, with six competitors spread in a line, matching one another stroke for stroke, with only 200 metres to go.

Chad Ho, who had become the first South African to win an open water swimming World Championships medal in 2009, won the main Midmar Mile event in a time of 18:39 in 2010 (<http://www.midmarmile.co.za/history.php>).

### **3.2 Dusi Canoe Marathon**

The Dusi is a three-day canoe marathon which starts in Pietermaritzburg and follows the Umsunduzi River to Inanda Dam then then the Umngeni River to its mouth at the Indian Ocean north of Durban. TKZN first undertook an economic impact assessment of the event in 2005.

The first Dusi was started on the 22nd of December 1951. Unlike the current race, the first race was held on a continuous basis, with the racers only stopping when they reached the finish. Only eight paddlers took part in this first race. They were: Ian Player, Miles Brokensha, Ernie Pearce, John Naude, Basil Halford, Willie Potgieter, Fred Schmidt and Denis Vorster. Only Ian Player finished the race in a time of six days. This was despite having being bitten by a night adder during the race. The canoe that he used to complete the race was made from wood and canvas and weighted roughly 70 pounds. It also held all the supplies he needed to complete the race ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dusi\\_Canoe\\_Marathon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dusi_Canoe_Marathon)).

The following three races were all held on a non-stop basis, before it was decided in 1956 to hold the race over three days. The reason for this change is the danger involved in paddling at night. Before the change was introduced, the winning time had been reduced to 1 day, 3 hours and 28 minutes.

The first known trip down the Dusi was not in fact the race itself, but was undertaken by two Pietermaritzburg men, William Foley and Paul Marianny, in 1893. They covered the distance in seven days! The race is currently held over a period of three days, with each day having a defined beginning and end. The race is referred to as the The Unlimited Dusi, using the company name of the new title sponsor (announced 9 September 2010).

The first day is 45 km which includes roughly 15 km of portaging with the canoe, with shorter portaging sections on day 2 and 3. Day 2 is also 45 km and ends with a 10 km stretch on flat water on the Inanda Dam. Day 3 is 35 km of clean cold water let out from the dam. There are several sections with large rapids, particularly on day 2 and 3. Competitors have a choice to either compete in a K1 or K2 canoe – for one or two paddlers, respectively. The current record stands at around 8 hours (over the three race days) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dusi\\_Canoe\\_Marathon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dusi_Canoe_Marathon)).

### 3.3 Comrades Marathon

The Comrades Marathon road race is one of the oldest ultra-marathons in South Africa having started in 1939. It is an 89 kilometer run, with the start alternating between Durban and Pietermaritzburg. TKZN first undertook an economic impact assessment of the event in 2001.

Vic Clapham, the originator of the race and after whom one of the Comrades' medals was named, was born in London on 16 November 1886 and emigrated to South Africa. At the outbreak of the South African War (Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902) he enrolled as an ambulance man into the Cradock Town Guard at the age of 13. He later moved to Natal and worked as an engine driver with the South African Railways. With the outbreak of the Great War 1914-1918, Vic Clapham signed up with the 8th South African Infantry, and fought and marched 1 700 miles of the eastern savannahs of Africa (<http://www.comrades.com/History/The-First-Race.aspx>).

The hardships and deaths of his comrades, which he witnessed during those awful days, left a lasting impression, especially the camaraderie engendered among the men in overcoming these privations. Thus when peace was declared in 1918, Clapham felt that all those who had fallen in this catastrophic war should be remembered and honoured in a unique way, where an individual's physical frailties could be put to the test and overcome. He settled on the idea of a marathon and he approached the athletic authorities of the day to sound their views. His enquiry led him to the doors of the League of Comrades of the Great War, a corpus of ex-soldiers who had formed an association to help those who had survived the War.

Clapham requested permission to stage a 56-mile race between Pietermaritzburg and Durban under the name of the Comrades Marathon, and for it to become a living memorial to the spirit of the soldiers of the Great War. This was strenuously resisted by the League, but Clapham persisted maintaining that if a sedentary living person could be taken off the street given a rifle and 60lb pack and marched all over Africa, then surely a fit and able athlete could complete the distance. Applications in 1919 and 1920 were refused but in 1921 the League relented and gave permission.

The first Comrades Marathon took place on 24th May 1921, Empire Day, starting outside the City Hall in Pietermaritzburg with 34 runners. It has continued since then every year with the exception of the war years 1941-1945, with the direction alternating each year between Pietermaritzburg and Durban, the so called up and down runs (<http://www.comrades.com/History/The-First-Race.aspx>).

Forty-eight runners entered the first race, but when the starting shot was fired, only 34 had the heart to tackle the daunting task - not surprising when one considers that the course was tarred only for the last few kilometres into Durban.

A time limit of 12 hours was later set and Bill Rowan became the inaugural winner, clocking 8:59 to win by 41 minutes from second-placed Harry Phillips. Of the 34 starters, only 16 completed the race (<http://www.southafrica.info/about/sport/comrades.htm>).

The 1960s proved to be a significant time for the Comrades as the size of the field grew considerably, from 104 starters in 1960 to 703 starters in 1969. Due to the bigger fields, cut-off points were introduced for the first time at Drummond and Cato Ridge. In 1962 the race attracted foreign entries for the first time (<http://www.southafrica.info/about/sport/comrades.htm>).

During the decade of the '70s, the Comrades continued to grow. In 1971 there were over 1 000 starters for the first time, and by the end of the decade in 1979 the 3 000 mark was topped. The

75th anniversary of the Comrades Marathon in 2000 was the largest ever staged, with a massive field of 23 961. An extra hour was allowed for bronze medal finishers to celebrate the milestone. A massive entry of 23 565 was received for the 85th edition of the race, which took place a little earlier than usual, to make allowance for the Fifa World Cup, on 30 May 2010 (<http://www.comrades.com/History/The-First-Race.aspx>).

### 3.4 Amashovashova Cycle Race

The KwaZulu-Natal major cycle road race, the Amashova Durban Classic, starts in Pietermaritzburg and continues to Durban, with associated 'fun rides' starting closer to Durban. The main race is 106kms, but there is also a 40km race plus the 'mini' Shovas although the mini-Shovas no longer took place from 2010 onwards. The 'mini-Shovas' was for children and was held at the finish of the main race. The shorter race from Hillcrest still takes place. TKZN first undertook an economic impact assessment of the event in 2005.

The idea of having a bicycle race on the route of the world famous Comrades Marathon, between Pietermaritzburg and Durban, was the dream of veteran Springbok cyclist Dave Wiseman and his friend Tony McMillan. Permission was granted for the first race to take place in 1986. The race was called 'The Natal Mercury/Pick n Pay National Classic.' The traffic authority gave permission for only 150 riders to participate ([http://www.amashova.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=31&Itemid=48](http://www.amashova.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=31&Itemid=48)).

In the years that followed, the traffic authority gradually increased the allowable participation from this small group to 350, then 500, then 550 and so forth. In addition, these cyclists would have to qualify for the race by doing other events at a fairly high average speed. Only 4 hours was given for all to finish. The impression created by these restrictions was that this was a race for only the most serious cyclists. The 1996 race was cancelled due to bad weather.

The bitter resistance by the traffic authorities toward the race continued until 1998. At that time, just over 800 riders were doing the event. The growth of the race was slow compared with was cycling events in the rest of the country. An approach was made to the new local government to relax the restrictive conditions to the race. Finally, the race organizer showed the revenue generation potential to tourism in the city to Durban's Mayor, Obed Mlaba. The mayor endorsed the event, and the profile of the race changed completely. The route changed from the unexciting Walter Gilbert Road to the front of the City Hall in West Street. The introduction of one of the country's top sponsors went a long way to making the race KZN's biggest cycling race. The total distance was approximately 95 kilometres.

The 1999 organizers wanted to build the race with its own identity and went out to create one. The race takes place in KwaZulu-Natal. Numerous marketing minded consultants were briefed to find a name that would encapsulate what this race is all about. The word 'Amashovashova' was put forward. The word 'Amashovashova' is a Zulu word that describes the pedaling or pushing/shoving motion ([http://www.shova.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=31:winners-history&catid=32:winners-history&Itemid=49](http://www.shova.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31:winners-history&catid=32:winners-history&Itemid=49)).

In 2010 the race finished at the Moses Mabhida Stadium (<http://www.shova.co.za/>).

#### 4. Tracking Event Comparisons

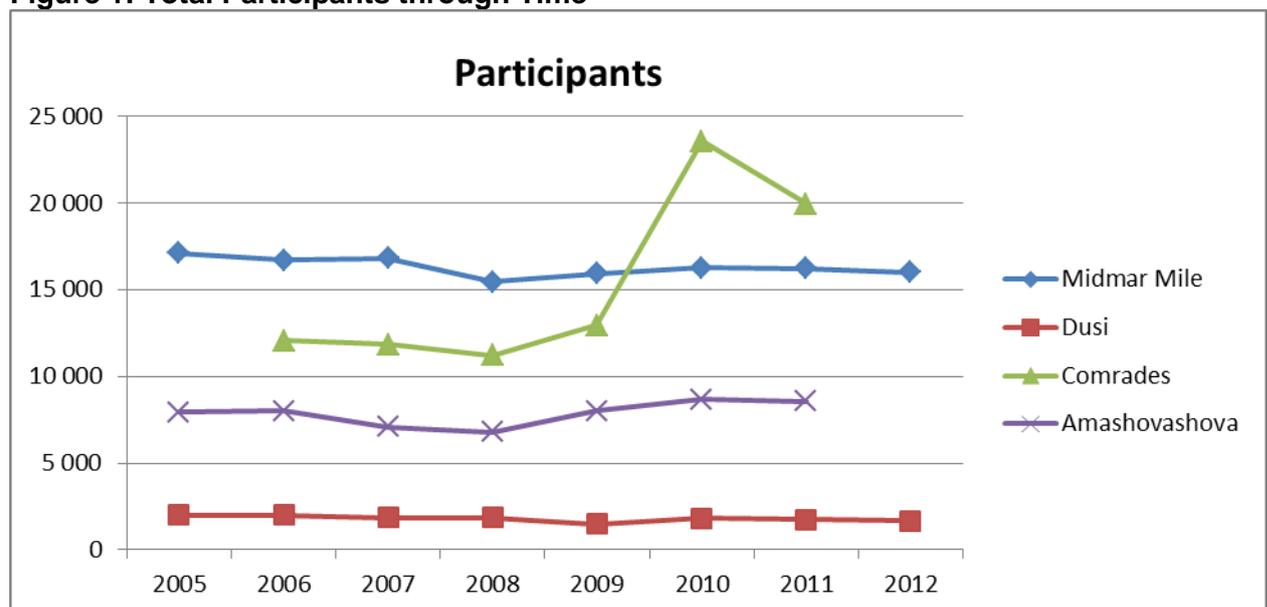
A range of comparisons was used to evaluate the impact and changes through time of these four events. It was deemed important that the overall value or economic impact of the event on the region was important to note. However, this was obviously not the only critical variable. Also important to consider were issues of growth, general participant spend, international participation, and, for the purposes of TKZN, the extent to which the tourism brand had been noted. In this regard the tracking of the noting of the logo was used.

This report deals, then, with four of the variables – entrants/participants, international participants where applicable, overall value of the event, individual average spend, and recognition of the TKZN logo. In every possible case information as ascertained by TKZN was provided. However, in some early cases, the impact assessments had been outsourced, the methodology was different and the information appeared thus to be inconsistent. It was still included. In other cases, a secondary source was used in order to check information, and in these instances, the race or event organizers were contacted and requested to provide the information.

##### 4.1 Total Participants

In the first instance, it was most interesting to track the changes, if any, in the number of participants in each of these events, bearing in mind that they are inherently different from one another.

**Figure 1: Total Participants through Time**



As can be seen from the graph above, with the exception of the Comrades Marathon, all of these events have remained fairly stable in terms of the total number of participants from 2005 until the present year. The Comrades and Amashovashova events were not included for 2012 as they have not yet taken place when this paper was written. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that there had been no major changes through time except for the Comrades in 2010. In that year, an extra hour was given permitting far more people to attempt and to complete it. This was done as it was

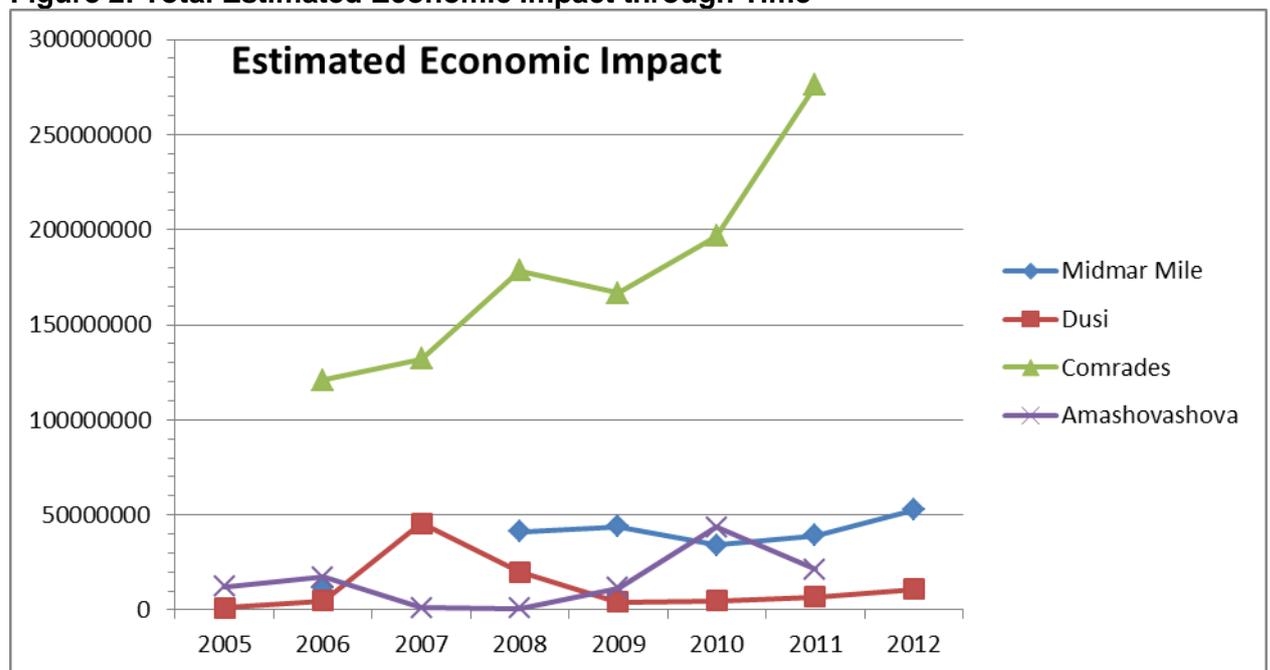
the 85<sup>th</sup> time the race had been run. By 2011, the number had fallen to below 20 000 once again, although remaining high.

The drop in numbers of three events, the Midmar Mile, Comrades and Amashovashova, in 2008 is also worth noting. In that year, the perhaps the greatest impact of the global economic downturn was felt and far fewer people were economically able to travel, much less travel to participate in sports events.

## 4.2 Economic Impact

Each of these four events, although all major sporting events, have critically different internal characters and characteristics. The Amashovashova is a one-day event, the Dusi takes three days, the Comrades has over 20 000 participants although it is only a one-day event, while the Dusi has under 2 000. Each event attracts a certain range of participants – and spectators – and the profiles of these also differ. It is thus not at all surprising that the overall economic impact for each differs substantially. The main point of this comparison, however, is not so much to compare event with event, but to track the performance of the events, in economic terms, through time.

**Figure 2: Total Estimated Economic Impact through Time**



As the table was being compiled, certain anomalies became apparent. Prior to 2007, some of these economic impact assessment surveys had been outsourced to different companies as TKZN at that stage did not have the internal capacity to undertake the surveys in-house. A range of methodologies was thus applied and these, in some cases, turned out not to be comparable. Glaringly obvious discrepancies led to certain data sets being removed as they did not show internal consistency.

Once the obvious 'outliers' or anomalous data sets were removed, the overall economic impact of each event was able to be tracked and depicted as above.

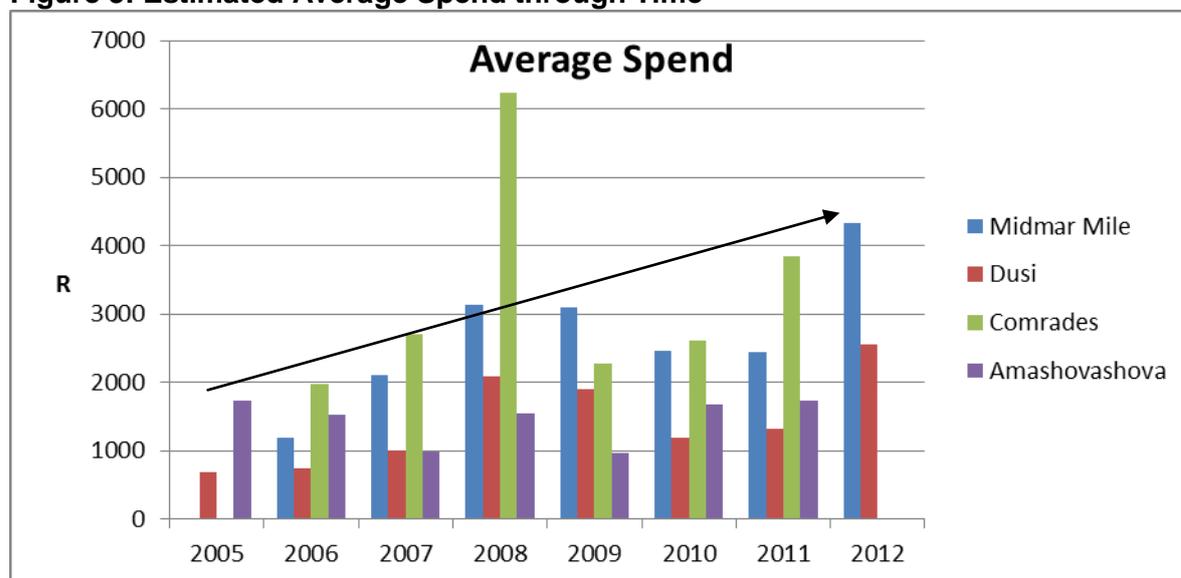
It is interesting to note the performance of each event as measured against itself. The Dusi, for example, has grown in terms of overall economic impact very slowly through time, but it has certainly shown growth. The Midmar Mile has also grown through time, albeit slowly. The substantive growth in the overall economic impact of the Comrades is largely due to the enormous numbers of participants in that one-day event, added to the fact that it is run on a Sunday and many participants arrive in the area either on the Friday or the Saturday. This leads to a longer stay time and thus greater spend.

Nevertheless, there is a fair amount of consistency in terms of the impact of the three smaller events with regards to economic impact. Although growth is apparent it appears slow. Perhaps it is time for the organizers to re-look at the organization of these events in order to format ways in which to improve and to increase their value. In a number of the impact assessment reports produced by TKZN, recommendations have been made for this to occur. For example, in the 2012 Midmar Mile Impact Assessment report, it was recommended that the organizers consider installing mobile ATM machines. This will assist in contributing towards the amount that is spent during the event. The organizers could also arrange for food stalls that would cater for attendees with Halal food requirements so as to increase satisfaction levels. It was also recommended that, to increase participation in the Comrades Marathon, that there was a need to further increase the number of Comrades runners from other African countries. In this regard, TKZN could work with the Comrades Marathon Association to promote the event through the TKZN Regional Manager for Africa, Asia and Australia using packages, where the runner could be accompanied by family or friends.

### 4.3 Average Spend

There has been a fairly steady increase in overall average spend for all events through time, as is indicated by the trend arrow on the diagram below.

**Figure 3: Estimated Average Spend through Time**



The enormous spend on the Comrades in 2008 is somewhat anomalous but could also be attributed to the economic conditions prevailing at the time. It was a time of grave economic ills in

global terms and with many of the participants having to travel, spend was considerably higher than usual. A similar trend, although not as pronounced, can be seen with regards to the other three events also. It must be kept in mind, too, that although the Comrades is a one-day event, participants tend to spend several days in the area prior to the race as it starts before dawn.

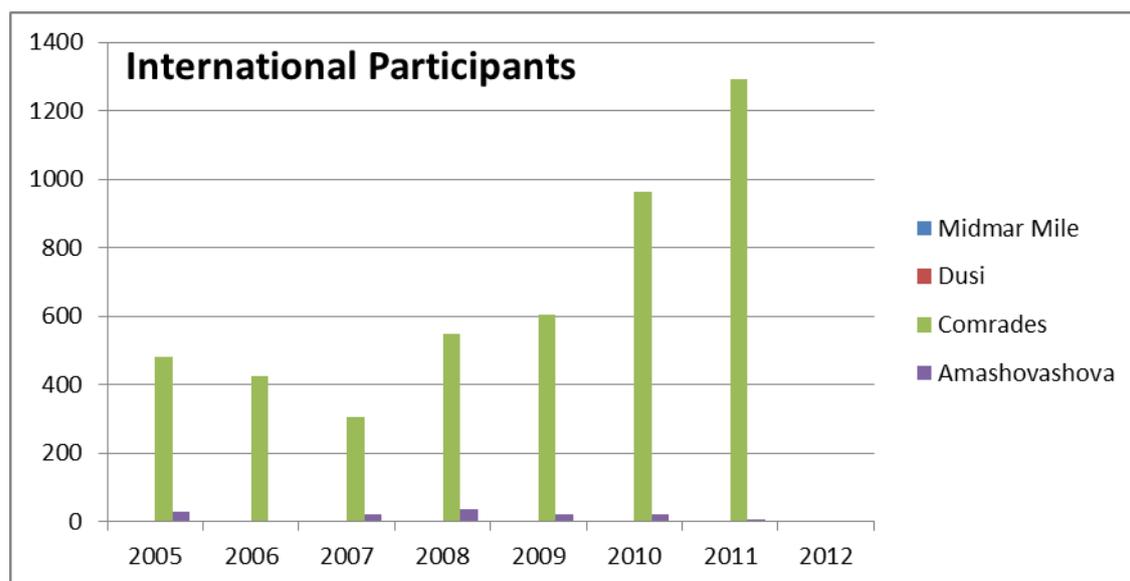
The Midmar Mile spend is relatively high due to it being a two-day event but without on-site accommodation provided for the participants, unlike the situation with the Dusi. Here, tents are provided for the participating canoeists at the overnight stops along the way, and obviously extra money is not spent on such accommodation. It is included in the entry fee.

#### 4.4 International Participants

It was extremely difficult to obtain the numbers of international participants through time for each of these events. As it was, only the numbers of international participants for the Comrades and the Amashova Durban Classic were available. It is clear from the graph below that the number of international participants in the Comrades Marathon has been steadily increasing, achieving the provincial aim of greater internationalization for the main KZN events.

The number of international riders in the Amashovashova remains relatively small and it appears a great deal remains to be done in order to internationalize this event.

**Figure 4: International Participants through Time**



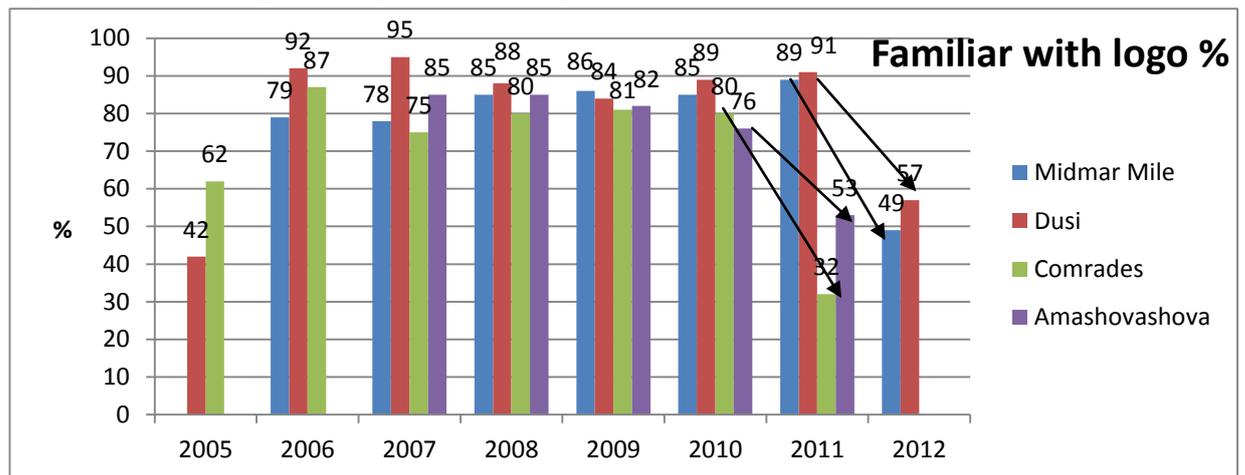
#### 4.5 TKZN Logo Recognition

TKZN has changed its branding and the elements of its branding several times since its inception in 1997. Most recently, a new logo, slogan and other brand elements were developed in accordance with a national directive so as to fall in line with the national brand identity. This was due to the confusion which was caused by a proliferation of brands and their logos which were being used to 'sell' South Africa in the overseas markets. Due to this, the South Africa brand was becoming watered down, provinces and sub-destinations were being confused with countries,

products with destinations and so on. KZN was the first province to initiate a process to develop brand elements which would both be in line with the national brand, but at the same time represent the unique character of KZN as a tourism destination. The exercise was based on Unilever’s Insight Activation process, and was also done in conjunction with Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal.

At the end of this lengthy and intensive exercise, the new logo was finalized and the new slogan, ‘Zulu Kingdom. Exceptional’, decided upon.

**Figure 5: TKZN Logo Recognition through Time**



As can be seen in the graph above, the initial recognition of the new logo, developed in 2004, was at a fairly low level by 2005. By 2006, some two to three years after its inception, the TKZN logo was being recognized by up to 95% of the respondents at events. The Dusi is the longest event of the three, and with participants and spectators being exposed to the TKZN logo for those three days as well as at the Expo and registration period prior to the start of the event, it is not surprising that the Dusi respondents display the highest logo recognition levels.

The new, nationally-aligned logo was launched at Indaba 2011, in May of that year. That is the main reason for the substantial losses of brand equity indicated by the Comrades and Amashova Durban Classic participants in 2011, and the Midmar and Dusi respondents in 2012. This is also indicated by the black arrows in the graph above. The losses were in the region of 48% for the Comrades, 23% for the Amashovashova, 40% for the Midmar Mile and 34% for the Dusi.

The TKZN Marketing division will need to spend significant time and energy, as well as funding, to increase the recognition levels of the new logo, and slogan, to those of previous years. It appears that it will take three to four years to reach previous recognition levels.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper considers the performance of four of KZN’s major sporting events though time in terms of five variables – number of participants, number of international participants, average spend, overall economic impact and recognition of the logo of TKZN. As has been illustrated earlier in this report, the performance of events or their value overall to the province, is dependent upon a number of factors, some internal and some external. It is not only the sheer

size of the event, but also its length and its type which contribute to its overall effect on the province.

External factors also play their part. The global economic downturn was not foreseen and, for the most part, had not been planned for either. Very few measures were put into place to mitigate the disasters which resulted from an event as all-encompassing as that one was. The fact that sporting events continued to be held was nothing short of astonishing. The fact that the sporting events did so very well, is even more amazing.

The events tracked in this paper have all been in existence for many years and overall have become very well known. However, at least three of them have appeared not to have grown in any substantive manner during the past seven, eight or more years, remaining largely static in terms of the number of participants at each one. The exception to this has been the Comrades Marathon which saw an unprecedented growth in participants overall, and a particularly large leap in size during one year when the cut-off time was extended by one hour. There was a subsequent fall-off in the following year, however.

Average spend has shown a trend of increasing through time, but this is largely expected as the increase in the cost of living tends to be constant. The overall estimated economic impact has likewise increased through time for these events, but the Comrades has outperformed the other events due, largely due to the large numbers of entrants, many of whom are from long distances away and who are thus forced to increase their spend on overnight stays.

The recommendations arising out of these findings are as follows:

- Organizers of these events need to find imaginative ways to arrange the 'static' or slow growing events so as to attract more people and encourage them to stay for longer periods associated with each event.
- It has been shown that international participants spend more overall than do domestic participants. There is a need thus to increase the number of international participants to each one of these events.
- Raising the profile of these events in targeted markets would increase international participation.
- Increases in the prize money would also act as a greater incentive for international participants.
- Associated 'side' events could be considered so as to retain both participants and spectators in the area of the event for longer periods.
- The organizers to consider installing mobile ATM machines at each event. This will assist in contributing towards the amount that is spent during the event, and this has already been shown to be successful at the annual Splashy Fen event.
- For the Dusi, three important recommendations were made arising out of the latest survey but which are equally applicable to all events viz
  - The organizers need to attract spectators that do not only have some connection with the event in terms of participants.
  - A security company needs to be appointed to patrol the parking area. Informal car guards should not be relied on for security purposes
  - Entertainment should be provided as an additional attraction. Entertainment can be in the form of a flea market or jumping castles for the children or live music in the marquee. The space around the pond can be used for the flea market and the jumping castles.

- There is a need to further increase the number of Comrades runners from other African countries. In this regard, TKZN could work with the Comrades Marathon Association to promote the event through the TKZN Regional Manager for Africa, Asia and Australia using packages, where the runner comes with family or friends.
- A similar strategy could be initiated with regards to the TKZN Region Managers for other parts of the world for each of these events.
- Efforts should be made also to attract new entrants and new spectators through promoting these events to new audiences and not just to audiences already linked to such activities.
- As far as the recognition of the TKZN slogan and logo are concerned, TKZN's marketing team will need to put a lot of effort and initiative into promoting the new brand elements through targeted awareness-raising campaigns.
- While it is recognized that it will take three to four years before the new brand slogan and logo are as well recognized as the previous ones, even greater efforts should be put into awareness campaigns to promote the brand domestically first, and then internationally.

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