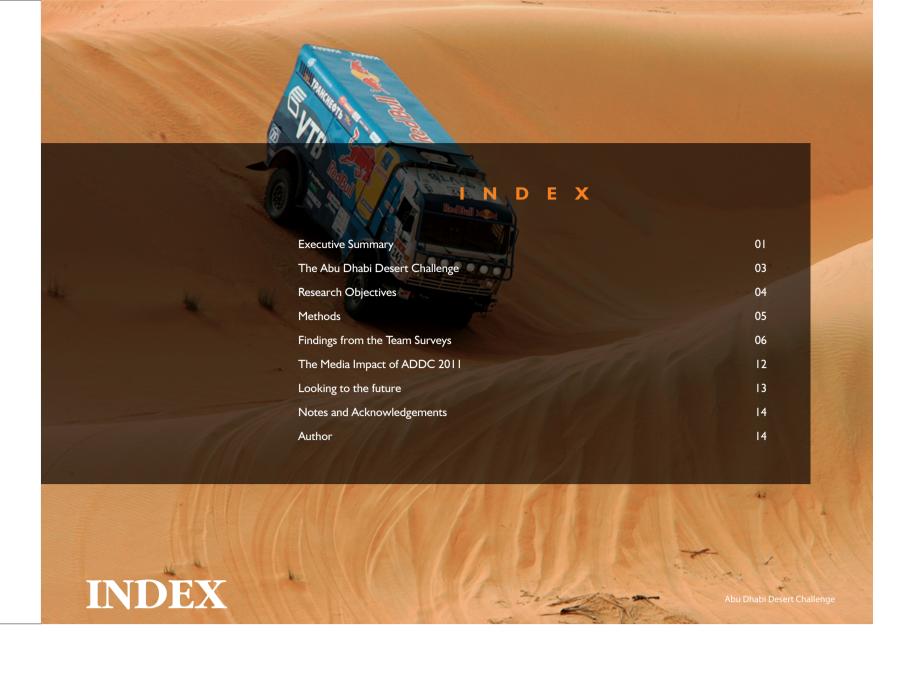


Findings of a Competitor Survey undertaken at the **Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge 2011** and the event's associated Economic Impact within the UAE

> Dr David Hassan MSc. University of Ulster, United Kingdom

\* The Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge 2011 is a FIA and FIM sanctioned event. 2nd round FIA Cross Country Rally World Cup - 1st round FIM Cross Country Rallies World Championship

Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge



## **Executive** Summary

- The key findings that emerge from this report, examining the views of teams that took part in the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge (ADDC) 2011 and the event's associated impact within the host country (UAE), can be
- 1. There were 106 registered competitors at the 2011 ADDC event. Of these no. 55 (58.3%) represented teams based outside of the UAE. Specifically 43% of all auto competitors (car, van and truck) were non-UAE domiciles and likewise some 56.3% of bike competitors were based overseas. In any event where the confirmed entry list is made up of more than half of all competitors from outside the host country there are clearly significant impactful benefits accrued in terms of foreign currency investment (i.e. expenditure) within that state. Moreover the ability to attract overseas teams to an event of this type is often the basis on which significant multi-media coverage (specifically television) is predicated and justified.
- 2. The average cost of competing in the ADDC is Euro 43,136.64 according to the findings of the team survey, which forms the basis of this report. This figure excludes additional expenses (incurred only by certain teams) around freight and instead accounts for flights, accommodation, car/vehicle hire and incidental expenditure (e.g. food) for an average of 12.9 team personnel. Some 8 of the 26 teams were based in the UAE so the individual costs per team vary considerably, even if the average daily level of expenditure for a 7 day rally (Euro 6162.37) is appropriate for an event of this size and scale.
- 01 Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge
- excluded then the average cost of competing in the ADDC for international participants is in fact considerably higher at Euro 58,686.91, a 36% increase in expenditure over the mean (this figure is calculated on the same basis as point no. 2, i.e. excluding 'outlying' costs such as freight expenditure). Thus the overall value of overseas entrants to the ADDC could be said to be, on average, more than one-third greater than UAE-based entrants, underlining the disproportionate importance of the ADDC in this realm on account of its capacity to attract competing teams from outside the UAE. The average daily level of expenditure for international teams therefore stands at Euro 8383.84. Of course one of the reasons for this increase in expenditure is because overseas tend to be larger than UAE-based teams, albeit not significantly so or in all cases. 4. The media value placed on the cumulative coverage of the ADDC
- 2011 event by the broadcasters Eurosport (across all platforms) was Euro 1.29 million. This equates to some 258 x 30 second advertisements on the same channel or 645 x 30 second advertisements on Eurosport 2, one of the group's 6 television platforms. The broadcaster reaches 121 million homes in 59 countries throughout the world. The benefits to the UAE in terms of inward investment and specifically tourism by the depth and breadth of coverage offered by Eurosport are manifest. The opportunity now exists for the organizers and sponsors to work with Eurosport (and



## **Desert Challenge**

The Abu Dhabi

The Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge (ADCC) 2011 took place between April I and April 7 20 I I in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The event is part of the FIA Cross-Country Rallies World Cup and represented the opening round of the FIM Cross-Country Rallies World Championship.

The event is open to competitors driving cars and trucks complying with FIA T1, T2, T3 and T4 technical regulations and motorcyclists and quads running under the auspices of the FIM. The Rally HQ, which opened on March 28 2011, was based at Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina circuit, the iconic home of the Formula I<sup>™</sup> Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The event got

to Abu Dhabi, taking place on April 7. The event was organized by the Automobile and Touring Club of the UAE (ATCUAE), which is the officially nominated representative in the Emirates of the FIA, motor sport's world governing body, and its motor cycling and classic car counterparts, the FIM and FIVA.

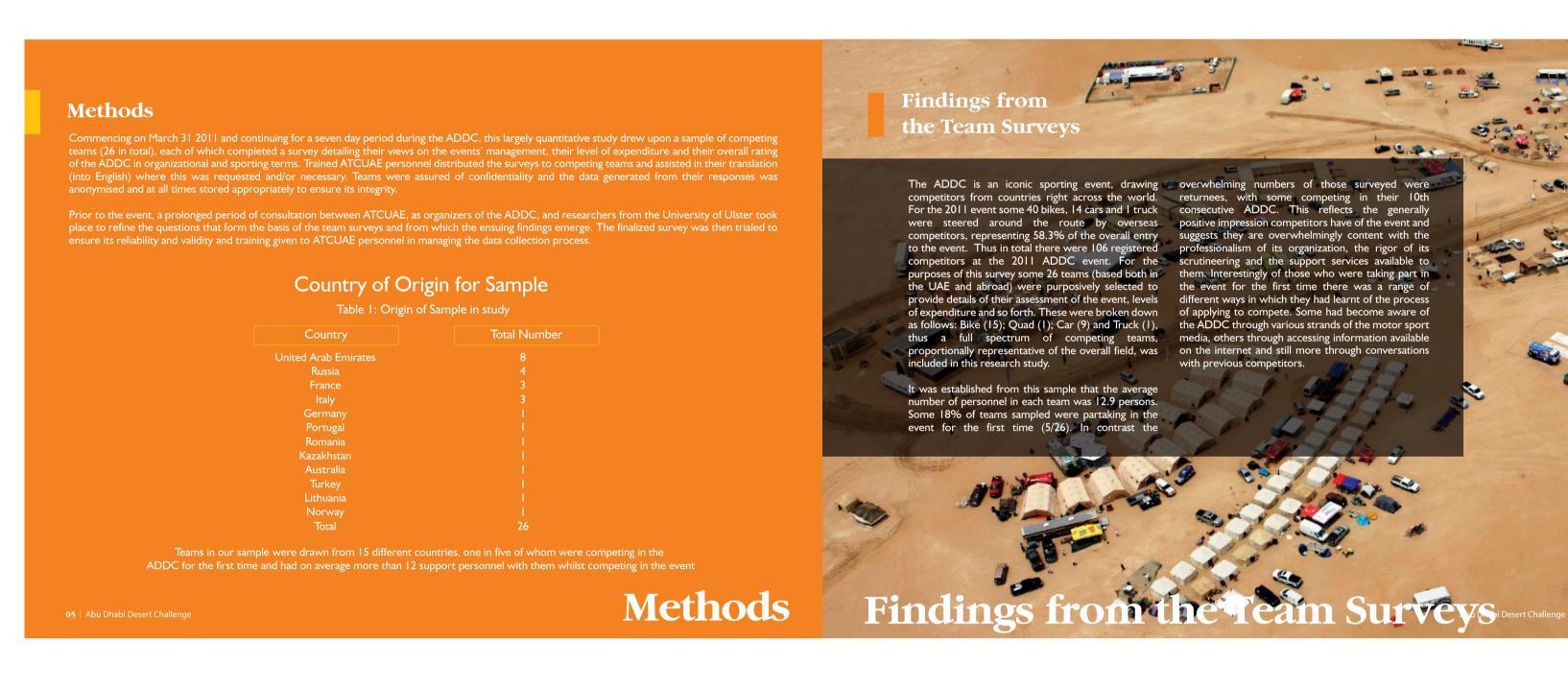
under way officially with a Super

Special Stage and ceremonial start on

April 2 with the final leg, from Liwa

03 Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge







Likewise, in some cases, it points to the professionalism of many competing teams in ensuring they are acclimatized to the unique demands of the rally, with its challenging climatic conditions and atypical terrain. In this regard the range of time spent by teams in the UAE specifically to compete in the event is revealing. Additional spend/economic advantage offer by the ADDC: Major sporting events like the ADDC clearly have an economic impact

This is significantly longer than the event itself and suggests that the

UAE is a destination that appeals to competitors who also wish to

enjoy the considerable attractions that the country has to offer.

beyond their immediate role as a site for sporting competition. opportunity to extend their time in the country for the purposes of sightseeing, travel or business. Thus the benefit of hosting such events extends into the hospitality and tourism sectors (amongst others) and in this regard the ADDC is no different. All the teams surveyed, without exception, revealed their intention (specifically the desire of team personnel) to undertake a vacation in the UAE following the ADDC. What was interesting however was the exact nature of these proposed vacations as they fell, almost equally, into either a 'short

reasonable conclusion, even if such a conclusion is not allowed for in the calculations outlined in this report. Team Expenditure whilst competing at the ADDC Full Cost of Competing at the ADDC: Teams reported across a range of established expenditure points the full extent of the costs

on three levels: firstly, because it builds a picture of the

stay' of some 3-4 days or a significantly longer period of time,

typically exceeding one week. The data does not conclude a direct

correlation between international competitors and longer stays in

the UAE but such an assessment would nevertheless represent a

they incurred when participating in the ADDC. This information is

overall level of expenditure typically incurred by participating teams; secondly, it highlights the nature of so-called 'hidden' expenses, such as freight carriage or vehicle maintenance, and how these can significantly affect overall cost and, finally, it provides valuable data for service providers (e.g. airlines and accommodation services) as to the level of current expenditure absorbed by competing teams at the ADDC, which can be useful when considering future provision, pricing policies and competitor



person was Euro 705 (15 respondents) which is the average cost of a return flight from mainland Europe to the UAE. There were a range of carriers utilized, foremost amongst these being Etihad, Emirates and the Russian carrier Aeroflot. Hotel/Accommodation: The ADDC is ultimately a cross country rally undertaken in desert terrain and thus is unlike most other forms of motor sport as the ethos of the event guides the behavior

and attitudes of those taking part. In so doing this presents a

challenge to the forms of accommodation available to ADDC

competitors relative to the majority of other events. Thus some

Airline flights: The costs incurred (per person) by non-domiciles to

fly to the event were a central and vital aspect of their taking part.

These were expenses that applied across all overseas team

members and were largely unavoidable. The average cost per

accommodation costs (those incurred during the main body of the event) are sporadic. Otherwise all the overseas teams (non-UAE) stay in Abu Dhabi (at a designated event hotel) from their arrival until the competitors depart en masse for Liwa and the commencement of the rally in its truest sense. Prior to this a period of at least 3 days in Abu Dhabi is considered mandatory to deal with event documentation, scruitineering and the opening 'Super Special' stage of the rally. On return competitors will again reside in Abu Dhabi for at least one night. Taking all of this into account the overall cost of accommodation at the ADDC (i.e. as incurred by team's that took part in this survey) was Euro 96.36 per team member over the average period during which teams were present in the UAE for the specific purposes of participating in the ADDC (i.e. 11.1 days or 10 nights). Again due to the variable nature of the team's accommodation needs it is not possible to specifically detail the accommodation providers in each case but a significant minority of teams stayed at the Rotana group of hotels. Car/Vehicle Rental: The nature of the ADDC is such that additional vehicle hire to support competitors remains inevitable. Although

**09** Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge

'the best sand dunes in the world'.

figure is inflated by the needs of a small number of teams that hired multiple vehicles. Daily/Expenditure on Incidentals: Alongside significant levels of expenditure incurred by competing teams (principally outlined above) there is also daily expenditure on food, other forms of provision and leisure. At the level of the team the average figure stands at Euro 824 per day (allowing for the variation in team size)

this expense was relevant only to 40% of respondents it remains

substantial for those who do require additional vehicle rental. The

average figure in this regard was Euro 1123 per day (keeping in

mind that the average 'competitor stay' period was 11.1 days). This

which when divided by the average number of team members (12.9) gives a daily expenses figure (per person) of Euro 63.88. This is a direct economic benefit to service providers along the route of the ADDC (and of course prior to the event and afterwards), a not insignificant boost to their daily income directly attributable to the ADDC. Other benefits not accounted for here include spending on the part of spectators, officials and media personnel, all of which were beyond the direct remit of this survey.



Further Uncategorized Expenditure/Freight Costs: Whilst there was only minimal levels of further spending beyond that outlined above, some overseas teams did inevitably incur very sizeable freight costs to ensure their vehicles were present in the UAE for teams find these costs close to being prohibitive (some figures in multiples of Euro tens of thousands) and this may represent a point of concern for both competitors and organizers alike. In this case 22% of respondents cited detailed figures for freight and led to the average cost per team of some Euro 31,916. When this figure is factored into the overall cost of participating in the event it is self-evident that this represents the single largest outlay for overseas (principally Australian and European) competitors. That said, ATCUAE (the event organizers) did offer very

competitive rates for consolidated sea freight, reflecting the responsible attitude the host committee took towards encouraging

non-UAE competitors. By way of example competitors departing

the event. Whilst it wasn't detailed specifically, it is clear that many

from Italy could have availed of return shipment at the following rates: USD 750 (bike), USD 850 (quad), USD 3150 (Car/Van) and USD 12100 (truck), with typical shipment times of between 21 and 25 days. It is clear however from the freight figures offered by some competitors that their either chose not to avail of this offer or it simply was not feasible or practical for them to do so. **Overall Levels of Satisfaction towards ADDC** The third aspect of our findings relates to the overall levels of satisfaction towards the ADDC on the part of competitors, how

they rate the event relative to other motor sport events and particularly noteworthy elements of the rally that may be highlighted and recorded. The latter also offered an opportunity for teams to outline constructive criticism of the event and thereby allow the organizers to make further improvements for the 2012

Overall rating of the ADDC as a motor sport event: The competing

teams at the ADDC 2011 event were for the most part well

established in their field, over 75% of whom were returning to

respondents. Evidently there is a high level of satisfaction on the part of competitors towards the ADDC in its current form, including the amendments made to the event from 2010. The Best Features of the ADDC The teams were then asked to detail, in order of preference, the three best features of the ADDC 2011. No forms of guidance or constraint was offered on the part of those conducting the survey

compete in the event having done so previously and clearly had

competed in other rounds of the FIA Cross Country rallies World

Championship over previous years. They were well placed to rank

their overall opinion of the ADDC. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1

represented 'Very Disappointing' and 10 'An Outstanding Success'

(25 respondents) the event was ranked at 8.1 (range of 7-10) by

and thus its notable the level of consistency across all team

respondents around those factors that impressed them most about

the ADDC event.



Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge 10

being amongst their top three favorite aspects of the ADDC 2011. The overwhelming view was that the event was stage managed exceptionally well by ATCUAE, the correspondence, guidance and assistance offered competitors being of a very high professional Finally, teams overwhelmingly referred to the safety and medical cover offered at the event as being one of its very best features (rated joint

second). The nature of the terrain used for the event, its comparative

remoteness, the climatic conditions and the often enduring demands placed upon competitors combine to place exacting requirements

Ranked very closely behind the changes to the event route was the overall organization of the rally, which was cited by some 16 teams as

upon those charged with ensuring the safety and well being of competitors. It is clear that teams are both aware and grateful for the level of expertise offered by the ADDC event in this regard. Priority Areas/Opportunities for Further Enhancement for **ADDC 2012** An important feature of the team survey was to ascertain further positive developments that may be implemented on the part of

ATCUAE to enhance the overall standing of the event still further. It represented an opportunity for the teams, in the spirit of constructive criticism, to highlight possible shortcomings amongst the event's organization or suggest aspects of other FIA-sponsored events that

were not apparent at the ADDC 2011 but which may develop its standing in the respective championships still further. Catering//Refreshments: Almost all of the teams surveyed (20/26) suggested that there was some further work to be done by the organizers in responding to their nutrition and hydration needs, some of which are specific to the climatic conditions experienced during this event. Of course this may point to a lack of preparation on the part of teams or full awareness of the typical conditions faced by competitors at the event but nevertheless it is an area that organizers will have to properly consider for future rallies. In fairness to ATCUAE, the event organizers, it did make available unlimited amounts of water to the

11 Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge

Organization/Correspondence: Despite the organization/correspondence with competing teams being ranked by many teams as being amongst the best features of the event, conversely a minority felt there was still further room for improvement. The overall cost of the entry drew concern from some respondents (statistically the ADDC entry fees remain the most competitive in the championship) whilst others felt there was a lack of

competitors and it may simply have been a case that the latter chose

not to avail of this free support.

complete facilities available around bivouac camps and again this was an aspect of the event that was worthy of specific remedial work they Time of the Year (atmospheric conditions): Certain teams, primarily from mainland Europe, found the climatic conditions particularly challenging and this led to some (albeit a minority – 5/26 respondents) to suggest that the event may benefit from being staged at another

(presumably cooler) time of the year. In practice this feature was cited (54 responses offered to this question – from a possible 78) by only 9.3% of respondents as being amongst their top three concerns so it is not an overriding reservation on the part of competitors as a whole but, in keeping with the point made above around the unique climatic demands placed upon teams in the UAE, it suggests further provision (including information and education around hydration and nutrition) may be a useful factor to consider for the event organizers ahead of the 2012 rally.





transmitted. There were a range of other TV broadcasters present at the event, including Abu Dhabi TV, Al Dhafra TV, Al Jazeera Sports, Al Laith TV Production, CCTV Middle East, Ten Sports, Russia Al Yaum, TVP Polish Television, TVP Polish Television and Poland TV. Some 59% of those awarded media accreditation by the event organizers other sporting fixtures.

amongst the largest broadcaster to cover the ADDC 2011 event but

it was not the only such platform upon which the rally was

1.3 million worth of coverage of the UAE across 59 countries. Indeed it is by any international comparison a very impressive motor sport event across all established markers – competitor feedback, team surveys, safety standards, sporting challenge and its media The organizers are to be commended for the level of professional organization and expertise they bring to bear upon the ADDC and the positive impression it offers the UAE as a site for inward investment, either in terms of tourism, business or indeed sport events, going forward.

spectacle, it creates a positive impression upon competing teams

and, according to the figures from only one (albeit major)

broadcaster - Eurosport - generates the equivalent of almost Euro

the potential to give rise to considerable benefits for host countries, in this case the UAE, and thus it would be a worthy advance for other such organizers of similar rallies in the championship to consider undertaking such independent research of their own events in the time ahead.

Acknowledgements Three different currencies are referred to in this report - AED Emirati Dirham, Euro and USD. This is to reflect the global relevancy of these findings and to respect the integrity of the source from which figures are derived. Thus for the purposes of compari-

Notes and

son the following exchange rates were used in this report: EUR = 5.14654 AED AED = 0.194292 EUR USD = 3.67295 AEDAppreciation is extended to Mohammed Ben Sulayem, Mahir Badri,

Sean O'Connor, Ronan Morgan, Tanya Kutsenko, Natalia Sosa and Lina Abbas of ATCUAE for their assistance in providing access and support for this piece of research.

David Hassan is a Senior Lecturer based in the Sport and Exercise Sciences Research Institute at the University of Ulster, UK. The University of Ulster is one of the top ranking universities for sports-related scholarship and research in the UK. Dr Hassan has 100 + academic outputs, is Academic Editor of Sport in Society, one of the field's foremost academic journals, is joint-Editor of Foundations in Sport Management, the leading Routledge series of

Author

16 books examining sport management throughout the world and has written extensively in the field of motor sport research from historical, social and economic perspectives. He is the only scholar in the field of sports research to be awarded a Distinguished Research Fellowship (2006) by his University, is a Visiting Professor at Griffith University, Australia's leading research university, and University of Technology, Sydney and is a member of a number of national advisory bodies in the field of



were members of the international media corps, with the remaining 41% based within the UAE. Members of the international media present at the event were employees of 17 different print publications, 5 websites and 4 television channels (some of the TV channels carried multiple staff). Again the full extent of the media impact of the event is beyond the scope of this report. However it is clear that the 'reach' of the event, provided by the breadth of those broadcasters who cover it, is considerable and possibly even disproportionate for an event that is less spectator-led than most Looking to the future The findings from this bespoke research project provide significant pointers for the further development of the ADDC and to enhance its already very substantial reputation as an international motor sport event. As it stands the rally is a very successful sporting

In fact, on this latter point, it is clear that a further distinguishing feature of the approach adopted by ATCUAE to the ADDC 2011 event was its willingness to engage in systematic assessment of the event's economic and sporting impact (albeit by only surveying competing teams). It is self evident that events of this nature have

Looking to the future