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Examining the Use of Experienced Learning in a
Sports Event Host Organisation: A Case Study on The
Alpine World Championships in Åre

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Abstract

The Alpine World Championships are held every other year and involves the hosting organisation and external actors (e.g. the International Ski Federation, media, investors) that interconnect with each other to create the best event possible. The Swedish ski-resort, Åre, is chosen to be the host for the upcoming Alpine World Championship in 2019. After hosting the event in 2007, Åre saw many positive effects and the host organisation now aims to go from good to great, making the 2019 event an even greater success. The study will examine how experienced learning gained by the host organisation from 2007 is utilized and adapted in the planning process towards 2019. Therefore, qualitative interviews with the current members of the hosting organisation were conducted in order to further understand this process.

The findings of the study reveal how experienced learning facilitates the work of the hosting organisation in the planning process towards the Alpine World Championship 2019. Contributions to the field of sports management are made through examining the impacts of experienced learning in the planning process for a major sporting event.

Keywords: *experienced learning, sporting event, hosting organisation, Alpine World Championship*

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1. Introduction

The first section of this thesis acquaints the reader with a background of the area of study, followed by a problem discussion, purpose and the research question. Lastly, a disposition of the research is outlined.

1.1 Background

Sporting events have grown largely in numbers, diversity and popularity in recent years (Dolles & Söderman, 2013). They affect and involve billions of people worldwide through participation, spectating and the general organisation around the event. Sporting events often aim to provide leisure and cultural value for communities and its residents, as well as create economic development benefits (Dolles & Söderman, 2013). Factors surrounding an event, including sponsorships, media, etc., have an impact on the outcome and how people experience the event. A successful event often has positive effects and generates opportunities, knowledge and experiences within businesses and communities. The positive effects include attracting visitors and investors, and results in competitive advantages in terms of regional growth for the hosting area (Pettersson, 2007). Sports management is the study and practice of people, activities, businesses and organisations involved in producing and organising any sport related business (Pedersen, Miloch & Laucella, 2007). It involves any combination of skills related to planning, directing, organising, controlling, budgeting and evaluating within businesses in the field of sports (Pedersen, Miloch & Laucella, 2007).

There is a complexity regarding the process of hosting and organising major international sporting events (Parent & Chappelet, 2015). The complexity of the process lies within managing a wide range of aspects following a large-scale event, such as: organisational-, resources-, and technological complexity (Maylor, 1996). In order to successfully organise such an event, there is a need for experienced staff and professional expertise (Shone & Parry, 2004). Hence, there is a parallel between project- and sports management, as project management often is used in the process of creating and developing an event (Kötser, 2010).

The term project management refers to the process of planning, organising, monitoring and controlling a project to see that it is carried out efficiently and how to manage these different

factors (Kötser, 2010). A project differs, from regular operations within an organisation, in form of being temporary, unique and often risky since it often involves non-routine work (APM, 2006a: 3). International projects results in additional complexity because of further diversity and uniqueness due to different cultures and larger communication networks required (Kötser, 2010). The aim of a project is to add value to an organisation and the outcome should justify the resources invested in that project (Kötser, 2010).

1.2 Problem Discussion

Despite the increase in sporting events, there has been relatively limited research regarding the intangible assets of an sporting event such as personal relationships and human/social capital (Dolles & Söderman, 2013). Researchers within the field of event studies have often focused on tangible assets such as the economic impact, infrastructure and sporting facilities, but intangible aspects of hosting large-scale events has not received the same attention (Dolles & Söderman, 2013). Parent & Foreman (2007) have a similar conclusion, stating that managing and constructing intangible assets within a sporting organisation is vital, but that there has been a lack of research to identify these aspects and how they are managed (Parent & Foreman, 2007). Because of the continuous evolvment within the area of sports management, and sporting events in particular, examining the more intangible assets is an interesting field in which there is currently a lack of research.

Projects, emphasising on international projects, are very suitable for experienced learning due to the constraint of resources, time limitations and wide complexity (Kötser, 2010). Experienced learning refers, in this study, to the concept of tacit knowledge. Grant defines knowledge as “*that which is known*” (Grant, 1996, p. 110), but he distinguishes tacit knowledge from explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge refers to knowing *how*, where explicit knowledge refers to knowing *about*. Having experienced learning from previous projects could be beneficial in the process of organising events. Failing to share experienced learning after an event could, however, lead to repeating mistakes and reduce efficiency in the planning phase for upcoming events (Kötser, 2010).

The organisation of major sporting events is a process with many different factors and phases to consider. In the initial planning phase, the host organisation is likely to experience different aspects

of complexity regarding organisational-, resources- and technical factors (Maylor, 1996). Having experience is key in working efficiently and effectively in the initial phase of an event (Parent & Smith-Swan 2013). Therefore, sharing experienced learning from previous sporting events is a potentially significant aspect in being a successful host. However, how an organisation use and implement experienced learning in the planning phase for an event is not commonly known. Therefore the following question of issue is raised:

How does a sports hosting organisation utilize and adapt experienced learning from previous projects in the planning phase for a sporting event?

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how a host organisation use experienced learning in the planning phase for an international sporting event. The field will be examined by conducting a case study on the upcoming Alpine World Championships (AWC) in Åre in 2019. Åre stands host for the upcoming AWC in 2019, after being elected by the International Ski Federation (FIS) delegates. Åre has hosted the AWC at two previous occasions, most recently in 2007. This provides better conditions for our study, by enabling the opportunity to examine what kind of experienced learning that has been utilized and adapted by the hosting organisation.

1.4 Disposition

This study consists of five major sections. It starts off with an introduction, providing a relevant background, the purpose, and problem discussion regarding the chosen study. The theoretical framework follows, in which the key areas of this study are based upon; sports event planning and experienced learning. This part will bring up research and literature within the respective fields, that are deemed relevant for the purpose of the study. Thirdly, the methodology and research approach is described and evaluated. This section illuminates the methodology utilized in the research process as well as our way of conducting the series of interviews. This chapter includes an evaluation regarding the choice of research and data collection by reviewing the reliability and validity of the sources used throughout the study. Thereafter, a thorough description of the case study is presented. In this chapter, the reader will be provided with background information regarding the case study: Alpine World Championships, Åre 2019. It will give a better



understanding about the event of Alpine World Championships, Åre as a ski-resort and the involving participants process and preparations in hosting a World Championship. Following the presentation of the case, the empirical findings are laid out in that section of the study. This part will mainly consist of the empirical findings collected through primary data from in-depth interviews. The analysis of the empirical findings follows. Here, the reader will be presented with an analysis of the research and its result. This is done through reviewing the empirical findings along with the theoretical research. The purpose in this section is to answer the study's question of issue. Lastly, a conclusion is given based on the main findings of the study.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section of the thesis a theoretical framework is developed in order to provide understanding and describe existing research within the chosen field. Firstly, the definition of events is presented followed by the lifecycle of an event. Thereafter the process of planning for events is outlined, involving the bidding phase and the following planning stage. Then theories regarding experienced learning are described and related to the fields of sports- and project management. Lastly, the chapter is concluded with a short summary.

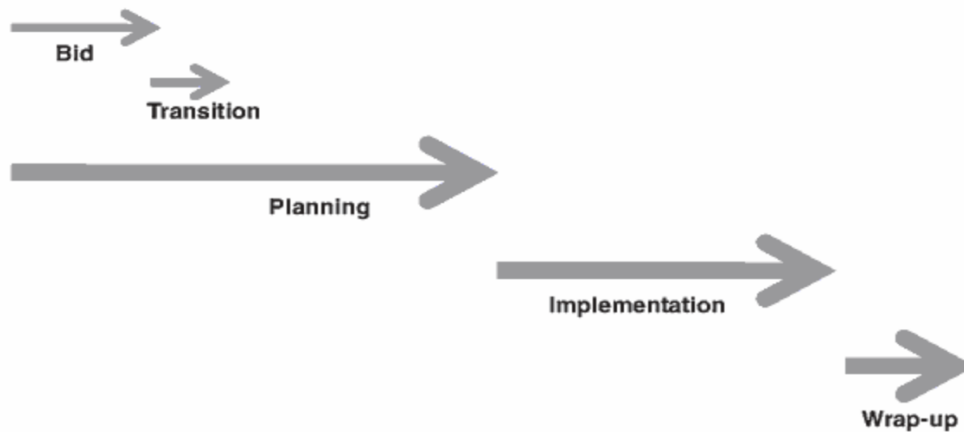
2.1 Defining Events

Events are by definition a temporary phenomenon with a beginning and an end (Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson, 2002). Planned events are usually restricted to a confined area, such as a city or an arena. What characterizes events is that they are unique, meaning that they never occur in exactly the same fashion again. While they might be similar in execution, there are always factors such as the program, setting and weather that people experience differently. Special events, major- and mega-events are regularly defined as hallmark events (Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson, 2002). Major sporting events are often considered hallmark events due to their size and international dimension. Hallmark events differ from non-hallmark events mainly in size, which can be operationalized in four different ways (Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson, 2002). Firstly is the level of involvement from national or regional government authorities. Secondly the amount of attention from domestic and/or international media, coupled with the selling of broadcasting rights. Thirdly is the technical competence needed, including skilled personnel and the suitability of the hosting location. The requirements are set by international organisations, and standards on the organiser to deliver in these areas are also significantly higher than in smaller events. Lastly is the hosting locations need for support from both direct and indirect stakeholders, such as approval from the government and the general public, due to the vast investments required in bidding and preparing for a larger event. (Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson, 2002).

2.2 An Event's Lifecycle

In order to understand the different factors of a sporting event, it is useful to view the entire lifespan of an event. This enables to comprehend the work needed before, during and after, and thereby see what type of tacit knowledge is created in each process. The point of a lifecycle model, of an Rasmus Bergentz

sporting event, is to be able to understand the organisational aspect by simplifying the chronological order and development process (Westerbeek, Smith, et al, 2006) This is done in order to see a timeline and to recognize when different activities come into play. Parent & Smith-Swan (2013) has created a lifecycle for a sporting event where they divide it into three modes, that an organising committee goes through in the process of creating a sporting event. The first is the planning mode, which starts with the bidding phase and lasts approximately one to three years. The bidding phase is the initial stage of the planning process where the work of the organising committee initiates. If the committee obtains the right to host the event, the role changes from bidding to organising. The second mode is mainly characterized by implementation. The third mode is called the wrap-up mode and typically last around half a year, in which the committee and stakeholders conduct final reports and feedback (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013). The first stage of a lifecycle, bidding and preparing for an event, often involves up to 90 percent of the entire event duration (Westerbeek, Smith, et al, 2006). With this in mind, and the main focus of the study being on how a hosting organisation utilizes experienced learning in the planning process of a sporting event, the primary focus will lie on the bidding- and planning phase of the lifecycle.



The Major Sports Events Lifecycle (Parent & Smith-Swan 2013)

2.3 Planning for Events

2.3.1 Selection Process for Hosting a Major Sporting Event

Hosting sporting events has increased rapidly in popularity as a mean of attracting attention to that particular geographic location (Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson, 2002). A clear example of this

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rapid increase can be seen by viewing the change in number of bids to stage one of the largest events there is; the Summer Olympic Games. Towards the 2004 Olympic Games there was a total of 48 bids to be one of the final hosting candidates. That number can be compared to the 36 applicants just four years earlier, and by looking further back to the 1988 candidacy, that same number was as low as seven. This extensive growth supports the fact that cities now perceive major benefits to be derived from hosting major sporting events such as the Olympic Games (Essex & Chalkley, 1998). The host location put high effort and large resources in marketing the city, in order to maximise the benefits that can be achieved from event-driven tourism, sponsorship, media exposure and other beneficial factors (Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson, 2002). Furthermore, the limited number of major international sporting events along with the increased attractiveness in hosting has led to a fierce competition between the cities in their way of winning the business of becoming the event host (Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson, 2002).

In the bidding phase for a major sporting event, the host city or bidding organisation enters the initial process of hosting. Getz (2004) states that the beginning of the bidding process comes from 'an interest in bidding on an event that can be won for the community or a venue' and that the most attractive events are owned in the way that the bidders must abide to certain specifications set in advance, with some potential leeway to innovate within the concept of the event (Getz, 2004). Various bidding processes are not identical when it comes to the application and decision making for a major event. However, there are some common features, especially regarding sporting events. The key similarities is that the candidates provide a bidding proposal before a set date, to a committee of delegates such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Fédération Internationale de Football Association Executive Committee (FIFA ExCo) and FIS. The main purpose of the bidding proposal is to demonstrate that the bidding organisation/city has the capability and resources to stage the event. Secondly, the bidding proposal provides additional reasons why the bidding organisation should be selected over other rival bidders. It is also common for the selecting authorities to hold formal meetings in which the bidding organisation can present their proposal face-to-face, and further explain their competitive advantages compared to their rivals (Isaac, 2015). The content presented in the proposal may vary but when it comes to hosting a sporting event it is practice (*Swe: Praxis*) to include information regarding: 1. The event team, present the key members and previous experience and qualifications. 2. Venues and facilities, a

detailed description on what kind of facilities that are available such as jury-rooms, lockers, toilets, car-parks etc. 3. The capacity of the facilities, maximum visitors the venue can manage. This is also the part in which public transportation to and from the venue are presented, what kind of side activities that are provided to the visitors and if the venue has staged similar events in the past. Often, the hosting organisation has little impact on deciding the dates on which the event are held, but a suggested program should be included in the bidding proposal in order for the selection authority to know the expected number of days, start and finish times and how many hours a day the venue will be available (Isaac, 2015). The program should also provide information on the time schedule for award ceremonies, side activities and other relevant entertainment events. Finally, the budget is an essential part to present in the proposal. Host organisations/cities often receive funding from the sport governing body in order to relieve the host from certain costs. Even though the host receive funding, they must present a proper budget of probable income and expenditures, as well as expected cash-flows from profitable opportunities like bars, restaurants, merchandise etc. (Isaac, 2015).

Mentioned above, are factors that all are important in the bidding proposal directed to the deciding authority. Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson (2002) presents not only the fundamental factors in the proposal described above, but factors that give additional value and competitive advantage in the bidding process. Their study is primarily based on previous research made by Westerbeek & Ingerson (2000), who found that there were some bid process factors that consistently emerged as being of significance, and classified them into primary and secondary criteria. Criteria classified as primary, such as economy, infrastructure and media, were deemed crucial to the formal process in hosting the event, and for the organisation/city to be considered potential bidders these were criteria that must be met. Secondary criteria were classified as such due to that they were considered less important. These criteria, such as business and competitive support, were regarded only to enhance the bid proposal but not to bring any fundamental value in whether or not the event would become a success. Their study also resulted in the establishment of a new category: new primary criteria. This category included criteria that were considered significant but did not fit into the same category as the previous determined factors (for an extensive list of the different classifications, see appendix 1). Even though there was little research supporting the value of these new criteria, excluding them would result in an incomplete bid preparation and evaluation (Westerbeek &

Ingerson, 2000). The majority of the criteria in the new category were recognized as being critically time-dependant, meaning that the more time invested in these criteria, the more advantageous it would be for the bidding organisation/city. Westerbeek & Ingerson (2000) also found that some of the factors, like building relations, commitment, team composition and experience, had a clear relation and were especially vital to the bid team. Experience of being involved in the bidding process is of great importance to the bid team. It brings knowledge and networks as well as enables team members to establish relationships with different event organisers over time, which is important as *“building and enhancing interactions with key stakeholder (decision-makers) can develop long-term satisfaction and mutually beneficial partnerships”* (Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson, 2002, p 309).

According to Crockett (1994) the organisations/cities that bids on events needs to improve their strategy about the bidding process, due to the limited number and the increased demand of hosting major international sporting events. Bidding teams must assess certain areas, such as; region, economic impact, financial return, promotion, needs of decision-makers, etc., prior to entering a bidding process. The event bidding process requires well-planned strategies and competitive positioning tactics. Results of the research made by Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson (2002), have helped identify what kind of criteria that are considered important by both event organisers and event owners in order to create and establish a successful bidding proposal (Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson, 2002).

2.3.2 *The Planning Process*

Once the candidature has been confirmed and a commitment has been made to organise the event, the in-depth process of planning and preparing begins (Westerbeek, Smith et al., 2006). As previously noted, the role of the bidding committee then transforms into an organisational role.

Because the nature of events is defined by limited time duration and having a fixed schedule, which is set in advance, planning according to this schedule is a necessity (Getz, 2013). Event failure can in many cases be explained by an overrun budget or schedule, which relates directly to poor planning and insufficient control systems (Getz, 2013). Parent & Smith-Swan (2013) relates the planning process of an event to piecing together a puzzle, with several different pieces having to fit

together in order to be successful. These include budgets, financial controls and project management, but also more intangible assets such as competence, which hereby relates to a range of skills and abilities, along with experience from events. If these pieces are changed, there could be drastic effects on the overall picture. However, there needs to be an understanding that the situation for the organising committee can change significantly during the several years, from the bid to when the event starts (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013).

The business plan is one of the first major steps in the planning process. The purpose of the business plan is to implement the visions, ideas and plans from the bid-book, including marketing and sponsors plans, the committees mission and goals, and contract information regarding venue, etc. (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013). It is important to keep the business plan updated throughout the planning process. If the budget and estimated costs is not continuously revised, it can result in event failure (Getz, 2013). Financial planning is therefore an important part of the planning process. Another aspect of financial planning is to determine the major sources of funding. Sponsorships and broadcasting revenues often account for the largest amount, but it is important to not overlook the consumer who buys tickets and merchandise (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013).

Regarding the use of project management for event planning, Parent & Smith-Swan (2013) states that it is necessary in order for the organising committee to be on time, on budget and efficiently integrate new members into the organisation. They claim that not all events use project management tools, but should. This is because they allow for people outside of the organisation to come in at any time and see what progress has been done, where the committee is going, what needs to get done and when. Recognizing critical activities that needs to be completed in order to be able to continue the planning process is key in organising an event (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013).

2.4 Strategic Planning and Knowledge

Beyond having fixed plans, tools and goals for an event, event producers also often have a vision and strategic goals for the long run, even if there is no clear evidence that having a strategic plan results in a better event (Getz, 2013). There is, however, an increased importance for the organisers and event owners to justify the large investments being made and the resources used for major

sporting events and show how they affect the legacy in regards to sustainability (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013). The term legacy is defined as something that has been handed down by a predecessor, and has evolved as a concept in sports management, associated with the general impacts and benefits of hosting an event (Leopkey & Parent, 2012). Parent & Smith-Swan (2013) discusses legacy from the perspective of the host city's experience of organising events, and how knowledge is shared in the event organisation. Hence, the complexity of hosting major sporting events has increased awareness of the benefits of having prior experienced learning when delivering an event (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013).

Another interesting aspect to experienced learning are the so-called "game gypsies" which are a workforce that migrates from one major sporting event to another and works as consultants. They carry with them large on-the-job experience and personal network relationships which makes them an attractive resource for a hosting organisation to hire (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013). Having knowledge and sharing it is a key resource in sustaining a competitive advantage and finding ways to tactically transfer knowledge from one event to the next (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013).

2.5 The Importance of Experienced Learning from Organising an Event

This section will consist of further defining the term experienced learning, theories focused on learning from experience including the importance of having support from the organisation in order for individuals to gain experiential learning. Learning from failure and success, and the importance of evaluating both outcomes, will round up this section.

2.5.1 Defining Experienced Learning

As earlier mentioned in the Introduction-chapter, the term experienced learning is synonymously with tacit knowledge, and refers to the *knowing how* (Grant, 1996). The Oxford dictionary defines experience as: "*The knowledge or skill acquired by a period of practical experience of something, especially that gained in a particular profession*" (Oxford University Press, 2015). In relation to the definition, experience that has been gained from responsibilities within a certain field/industry can generate perspectives and a deeper understanding, which in turn provide competitive advantage and a high level of knowledge (Adams & Mallen, 2013). Traditional knowledge, also known as explicit knowledge (Grant, 1996), that is gathered from projects is relatively simple to document, as it often

consists of cost figures, technical data and time estimations. More complex knowledge however, such as cause-and-effect relationships, is much harder to grasp (Kötser, 2010). This type of high-level knowledge gives quick insight, understanding and intuition, and is used for decision-making (Adams & Mallen, 2013). Experiential learning contributes to competence development in different degrees, depending on the structures and strategies of individuals and organisations in order to utilize experienced learning (Turner, Keegan & Crawford, 2000).

2.5.2 Theories on Learning from Experience

Learning from experience is complex, it relies on the learner, the task and the context. An active partnership between the learner and organisation, in which the experience takes place, is therefore required to achieve experience based learning and competence development (Turner, Keegan & Crawford, 2000). According to Kötser (2010), organisational learning is created through individual learning, but this is not an automatic process. In order for organisational learning to occur, individual learners need to communicate efficiently with each other, and allowing such communication to be a part of the organisation's culture and structure (Kötser, 2010). The partnership between the learner and the organisation is important in the process of achieving experiential learning. It includes the preparedness and skills of the individual in learning from experience, guidance, support and encouragement provided by the organisation (Turner, Keegan & Crawford, 2000), consequently making experiential learning a vital part in the competence development of individuals and organisations. As an individual progress, by advancing their position within the organisation, they get exposed to the practices of the business, and in that manner gain experience on how the organisation operates (Turner & Keegan, 1999). Since the competence of project management is dependant on that of its individuals, competent project organisations, according to Turner, Keegan & Crawford, (2000), 'provide environments that foster and sustain competent project management teams and through them successful project outcomes'. Turner, Keegan & Crawford (2000) continues by stating that the majority of project personnel have gained their knowledge through experiential learning, and that it is the only source of competence development for that majority. For that reason, it is crucial that project-based organisations support the experiential learning of their project personnel in order to achieve their desired outcome.

Experiential learning is considered to be the primary element in the work of project management to develop competence of individuals and organisations (Turner, Keegan & Crawford, 2000). The process of individual experiential learning should be structured, for greater result, within competent project organisations and relevant contexts. Well-formed plans for the project management selection and development procedure are required within the organisation. Project-based organisations are in need of developing competent individuals, effective project management systems and procedures, in order to develop its own competence (Turner, Keegan & Crawford, 2000).

2.5.3 Learning from Failure or Success

Learning from projects is as previously stated advantageous, but it is not always a simple matter. There are two important aspects when aiming at acquiring knowledge from international projects (Kötser, 2010). Firstly there needs to be a cause-effects relationship in which organisers can link knowledge to the context in which it was created, in order to share and apply it. Secondly, an organisation aiming for gaining knowledge needs to have the right information and communication technology, in order to make knowledge accessible for others (Kötser 2010).

After the completion of an event, another barrier for retrieving knowledge is to recognize whether or not the project was successful and how to review it, in order to learn from it. An after-event review (AER) is an effective way of learning after an event, failed or successful (Ellis, Mendel & Nir, 2006). After a failed event, any type of review is considered effective for learning, and failure is essential for effective organisational learning (Ellis, Mendel & Nir, 2006). There is also a general consent by scholars, that learning coming from experience, partly explains the actions of an organisation (Dolles & Söderman, 2011). Learning from failure often lead to discomfort and confusion, but such emotions can potentially stimulate growth due to hypothesis-testing and increased efforts to succeed (Ellis, Mendel & Nir, 2006). Learning from failure can, however, lead to executives of an organisation failing to make rational assessments and being overly optimistic about not committing further mistakes (Lovallo & Kahneman, 2003). The difference between events that have failed and succeeded is mainly the number of errors that has been made but also how those failures are assessed. This is because errors tend to motivate learners to correct them in order to improve (Ellis, Mendel & Nir, 2006).

In contrast, successful events, and experiences gained from them, does not clearly indicate errors. This makes it harder to detect deviations from decisions made while hosting the event (Ellis, Mendel & Nir, 2006). Not being able to detect smaller errors in otherwise successful decisions are not prominent enough triggers for organisers to change their behavior. This is one of the main reasons why it is difficult to analyze successful events, but it is equally important since performance can always be improved (Ellis, Mendel & Nir, 2006). By reviewing successful events, the findings can surprisingly be that outstanding performance was partly accidental, or that some errors actually did occur. It is therefore reasonable to claim that the possibility of learning from successful events increases if the right AER is used (Ellis, Mendel & Nir, 2006). The AER should be focused on the potential mistakes that could have occurred in the decision-making and under what conditions they were made. Performance can then be further improved if knowledge is gained on how to repeat successful behaviours without repeating smaller errors.

2.6 Summary

To sum up the importance of experienced learning, it is reasonable to say that it adds value, and allows for a more efficient organisation by providing greater knowledge, which in turn gives competitive advantage. The use of experience in the planning phase of a hallmark event is key for making it successful (Ingerson & Westerbeek, 2000). Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson (2002) continues by stating that 'the ability to organise an event is proven by having a solid track record in organising similar events'. The more experience a member of the organisation has, the greater it ultimately is for the success of the event itself (Westerbeek & Ingerson, 2000). This is supported by Emery's (2002) suggestion that an organising team should consist of members with considerable experience of successful events. With the support of this, it is fair to state that experience is an important aspect throughout the process of hosting and managing a sporting event in order for it to be successful.

3. Methodology

The methodology describes and justifies the methods used to conduct this thesis. The research approach is presented and explained by the use of systematic combining along with an abductive approach. The research process of the study follows, along with the collection of primary and secondary data. The analysis process and quality of the study is thereafter described. Limitations and ethical issues conclude the chapter.

3.1 Research Approach

The purpose of the study is to explore and understand how a sports hosting organisation utilize and adapt experienced learning from previous projects in the planning phase for a sporting event. After becoming more updated on the existing literature within the field of sports management, it became evident that there had been plenty of research done in this field. However, it also became clear that there had been a very limited amount of research based on the combination of sports management and intangible assets, which is supported by Dolles & Söderman (2013). Dolles & Söderman (2013) states that there has been limited research regarding intangible assets of a sporting event such as personal relationships and human/social capital. They continue by stating that researchers within the field of event studies more often focus their attention to the impact of the tangible assets, rather than the intangible aspects of organising a large-scale sporting event. Due to the lack of existing research on the intangible aspect of sporting events, the research framework of this study has been constructed with the assist of previous studies and research on related fields, such as knowledge-based research, project management and the general process and key factors in organising an international large-scale event. These areas cover a lot of ground so it has been vital in constructing the research framework, that the research applied to this study have had a significant relevance and clear relation to the organisational work, and the function of utilizing knowledge in the organisation process of an international large-scale event. This is in the academic world know as systematic combining (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Systematic combining consists of four basic components: framework; theory; the case; the empirical world. “*The main objective in any research is to confront theory with the empirical world*” (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p.555). In systematic combining, this confrontation is seen as continuous throughout the research process. How this process develops is furthermore dependant on another confrontation between the evolving framework and the evolving case. Systematic combining has been evident in this case study by the Rasmus Bergentz

fact that the research gathering has been an ongoing process. As well as the clear matching between theory and empirical data, along with seeing the development in both case and framework, have proceeded throughout the whole work process. The use of systematic combining was deemed beneficial by providing objectivity through continuously reviewing and disputing the relevance of both the theoretical and the empirical material. Systematic combining is linked to applying an abductive approach, in the way that abductive approach refers to the similar process of simultaneously constructing the theoretical framework, empirical findings and analysis throughout the whole research process (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

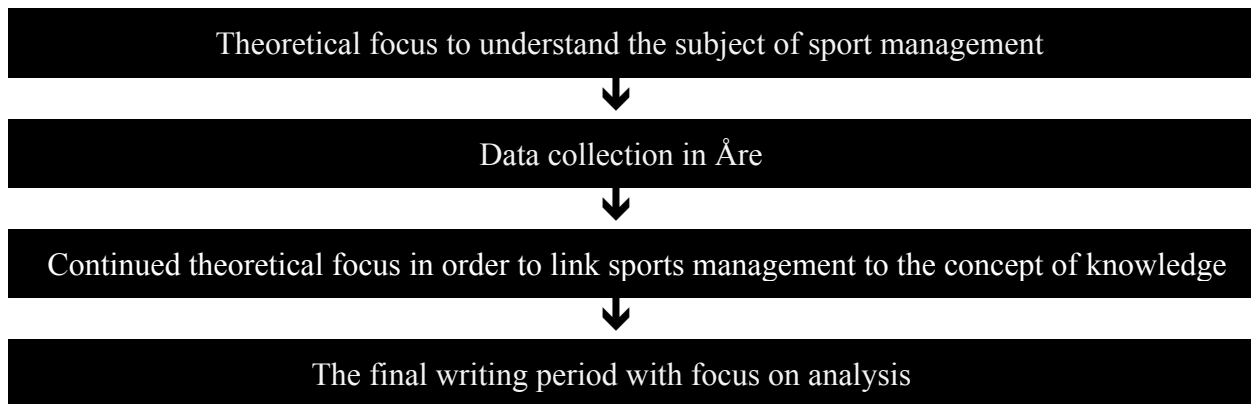
3.2 The Choice of a Single Case Study

The study is constructed with the basis of a *How-* question. In order to get a deeper understanding of how a sports hosting organisation utilizes and adapts experienced learning, which is an intangible asset, it would be insufficient to conduct a quantitative study due to that it mainly focuses on entailing the collection of numerical data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore a qualitative study, meaning in this case that the primary empirical findings were retrieved by qualitative interviews, has been deemed more suitable (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A case study is necessary in order to perform a detailed examination around the research question. By having a *How-* research question along with the appliance of qualitative research, Yin (2014) states that a case study is the preferred method compared to others, such as experiments, surveys, etc. The selection of a single case study, in front of multiple case studies, was made in order to get a more in-depth understanding of the chosen field, and due to time limitations. Purposive sampling was applied, since there was a shared interest for the field of sports management between the researchers. Several research topics of sports management were discussed which led to an interest of interviewing employees of a sports organisation with involvement of hosting a sporting event. This led to further discussion regarding the subject of study, which in turn led up to the use of convenient sampling, which is sampling made due to accessibility (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The accessibility was in form of prior connections to the management of the Åre hosting organisation for the Alpine World Championships. The management had prior experience of hosting an AWC and were in the planning phase for the upcoming championships in 2019, which further made the sampling convenient.

3.3 The Research Process

The research process of the study was characterized by working on the various chapters simultaneously (see figure 1). The collection and transcribing of primary data was preceded and followed up by focusing on the theoretical chapter in order to better link theory to the empirical material. The research process commenced by a theoretical focus, where sport management literature was studied in order to get a deeper understanding of the subject. This gave an understanding of the lack of research of the intangible assets in sporting events, and enabled the focus of the study to be more defined. Data collection was thereafter conducted and transcribed. After retrieving primary data, focus again shifted to the theoretical aspect in order to link sports management to the concept of knowledge, and because the gathered data gave new discoveries that could be linked to theory. Lastly, the work process consisted of the final writing period with focus on analysis.

Figure 1



3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Primary Data Through Interviews

The majority of the content in the empirical data comes from primary data conducted through qualitative interviews. The interviews were made face-to-face in April of 2015 in Åre. The initial contact was with the CEO of Åre World Cup AB, who in turn ensured access to the Arena Manager. There was a total of six people interviewed (for a full list of interviews, see table 1), all whom were involved in the 2007 Åre Alpine World Championships. This was important in order to comprehend their experience and how it has affected their current work process. Four of the six interviews were held at the Åre National Arena, where the majority of the people involved, in the Rasmus Bergentz

planning process towards the 2019 AWC, works. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the internal relationships within the group and gave insight to their respective working roles.

The interviews were conducted by the assist of a carefully formulated, semi-structured interview guide, which encouraged to a more open dialogue, and follow-up questions based on the interviewees answers (for a list of the topics covered in the interviews, see appendix 3). The questions were arranged to begin with the interviewees experience from 2007 and from there on towards the current work process. Face-to-face interviews were preferred because it allowed for reading body and facial expressions, thereby facilitating the process of asking follow-up questions and interpret answers. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and the answers gave an understanding of how experience from the previous event has facilitated the work process towards a new event. The answers also gave insight to several factors and aspects that later could be connected to the theory, and thereafter contribute to the analysis and conclusion.

Table 1 - Informants of the Study

Location of Interviews	Informants
Åre National Arena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO Åre 2019 AB • Coordinator Åre 2019 AB • CEO World Cup Åre AB • Arena manager, Skistar AB
Åre Skistar Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board member Åre 2019 AB (Skistar Åre Destination Manager)
Åre, Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO Destination Östersund*
<p>* CEO Destination Östersund – Works as CEO for Destination Östersund and its affiliate with the main objective to get more commerce, tourism and events to Östersund. Have 15 years of working experience from Skistar AB in Åre, as event manager, marketing manager and marketing- sales manager. Was responsible for one of the side-events, Skistar Invitational, during 2007 AWC and worked closely with Åre 2007 AB (the former hosting organisation). However not involved in the organisational work process towards the 2019 AWC.</p>	

3.4.2 Secondary Data

Several sources of secondary data was collected and analysed in order to get a further understanding about the research area. The data was collected before and after the gathering of primary data, which gave an initial apprehension before conducting the interviews. After the interviews were made, the secondary data gave a better understanding of the empirical findings, which facilitated the analysis process. The secondary data primarily consists of books, journals, research papers and articles. After examining the material, several success factors for hosting major sporting events, were identified and could be related to the empirical data, which helped to structure the work. Furthermore, the initial contact of the interviewees gave access to the Bid Book used by Åre 2019 AB in their application for the 2019 AWC. This material gave support to the information gathered in the primary data, and complemented it with figures and information that was not brought up in the interviews.

3.5 Analysis Process

The analysis is based on the empirical findings with continuous interrelated connections to the theoretical chapter. After the interviews were conducted and carefully transcribed, a number of different factors and external stakeholders were identified as important in the planning process for a sporting event. These factors along with the structure of the internal organisation, was the foundation for the analytical process, which relates to both an inductive- and deductive thematic analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). An inductive approach tends to let the primary data lead the emergence of theory, whether as a deductive approach lets theory lead to defining the relevant data (Yin, 2012). The analysis was constructed primarily from the empirical data leading the relation to the theoretical framework. This was done by structuring the analysis through reviewing the findings regarding the internal organisation and its relations to external stakeholders, and thereafter connecting it to the theoretical framework. Furthermore, theoretical aspects such as the key success factors of hosting a sporting event were used to lead the empirical data, which also led to the emergence of the analysis. By working on the theoretical chapter before and after the primary data was gathered, the process of making connections between the theory and empirical findings was facilitated. This helped to structure the empirical chapter as well as the analysis, which ultimately results in the study's conclusion and findings.

3.6 Quality of the Study

In the field of methodology there are different measurements in order to evaluate the research, in which the study is based upon. In order to assess the quality of qualitative research, the trustworthiness of the study will be discussed through a number of criteria (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Trustworthiness is made up out of four criteria: credibility; transferability; dependability and confirmability.

The credibility criterion is especially directed to the multiple possibilities in the aspect of social reality (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Having credibility gives confidence in the truth of the findings. In the study, the assessment of credibility can be related to the triangulation technique. Different interviewees and researchers can provide different views on the social reality. Credibility is evident by having all the members of the hosting organisation as respondents in the case study, facilitating the process of triangulation. The referred Bid Book is a public document which was developed by members of the hosting organisation and includes commitments towards the international authority FIS, thereby ensuring its credibility. By looking on material from researchers within the different fields of sports management, project management and knowledge-based research, and cross-checking these findings with each other as well as the empirical findings of the primary data, the findings therefore have validity and reliability in their standpoint.

Trustworthiness in form of external validity *“is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations”* (Shenton, 2004, p.69). Transferability centres on showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts beside the chosen study. Yin (2011) argues for the process of analytic generalisation in single-case qualitative studies. In order to generalize the findings of a single study, there needs to be applicable theory and logical arguments to support the generalisation. It is also important to have a detailed description of the studied subject, which enables the reader to evaluate the transferability (Shenton, 2004). Studying how a sports hosting organisation utilize and adapt experienced learning in the planning process for an AWC, makes the findings applicable for other sports hosting organisation in the planning process for other types of sporting events, that can be hosted periodically.

Dependability refers to that the findings are consistent and therefore could be repeated. With the above description of the research- and analytic process, an explanation for the reader is made in order to track the working process, which relates to Shenton (2004) statement that “...*the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work...*”(Shenton, 2004, p 71). The data in the study, in form of recordings, transcribed interviews and secondary material is also saved, which allows for further auditing and examinations of the findings.

Confirmability concerns the researcher's objectivity in the study. It convinces the reader of the investigator's objectivity in their research, by ensuring that the findings in the study is the result of the empirical data and not the researcher's own characteristics and preferences (Shenton, 2004). The use of systematic combining as well as triangulation in the process of constructing the study, reduces potential bias of the researchers. This is evident by the continuous alterations in the structure of the chapters, which in turn has changed and redirected the focus, and understanding of the researchers. The measures taken to describe the research process enables the reader to conduct trail auditing i.e. enable the reader to trace the step-by-step work of the researchers (Shenton, 2004).

3.7 Limitations & Ethical Issues

This study has been limited due to certain aspects related to the case study, empirical data collection and the theoretical framework. First, the study focuses on the planning process of hosting a hallmark event and not the implementation stage. This limits the findings to be applicable in planning for an event but not in implementing it. Second, hosting an Alpine World Championship is restricted to relatively few locations in the world compared to, for example, a World Championships in Athletics. Because an AWC is restricted to a few places, this enables the possibility to host the event periodically, whilst a hosting organisation of an World Championships in Athletics, could be forced to wait decades before hosting it again. Being able to have an event periodically gives a better opportunity to retain the experienced learning in the workers from previous events. Therefore, the case study may not be applicable to organisations hosting events with very long intervals. Finally, the time limitations have restricted the possibility to conduct a longitudinal case study. Since conducting a longitudinal study requires the researchers to be

involved and see how the situation changes over a longer period of time. Even though there is a limited time period for this particular study, the research presented still holds value, enabling other researchers to continue the work progress in future studies.

Ethical issues revolves around concerns such as how to treat the people involved in conducting research and certain activities that should or should not be engaged in (Bryman & Bell, 2011)

It has been important throughout to avoid any unethical practices and to be honest and courteous when interacting with the respondents. The informants have been informed about the study and its purpose. Participation in the interviews has been voluntary and the respondents have been kept anonymous in the thesis.

4. Case Study - The AWC in Åre 2019

This section presents a description of the chosen case study, the Åre Alpine World Championships. Thereafter, the empirical findings collected from the qualitative research conducted with the members of the Åre host organisation are presented. The primary data is the basis of the empirical findings, and secondary sources such as Bid Book Åre 2019 are used to complement the findings.

4.1 Case description

The FIS Alpine World Championships is organised every uneven year. It is a major sporting event, at an international scale, and involves millions of people worldwide (FIS, 2014). The organisation and the carrying out of the World Championship are delegated by FIS to a National Ski Association, and is elected by the FIS Council at least five years ahead of when the World Championship takes place (FIS, 2014). The event is usually held in February in order to have the best possible snow conditions for the alpine events, which includes six disciplines: Downhill, Super-G, Alpine Combined, Giant Slalom, Slalom and Nations Team Event (FIS, 2014). Hosting a FIS Alpine World Championships is catalysing for the destination. Historically, it is proven to bring an increase in the number of foreign and domestic guests, along with an increasing employment in the area (Bid Book Åre 2019).

4.1.1 Åre 2007

Åre is one of the largest ski-resorts in Scandinavia and has over 60 years experience of organising international alpine events. The resort has been the host of the Alpine World Championship on two previous occasions, 1954 and 2007 (Åre 2019a, n.d). The Alpine World Championships in 2007 was considered a great success from organisers, athletes and visitors, and the hosting location was accredited by international media of delivering what was called the "winter fairy tale" of Åre (Destination manager, Skistar Åre, 2015). Successful impacts that came from the 2007 hosting, was a surplus of 35 million SEK for the hosting organisation. Furthermore, 3 billion SEK was invested in the resort between 2002, when Åre was selected as host, until two years after the event (for further successful impacts and figures, see appendix 2). The event contributed to Åre, being viewed as one of Europe's top ski-resorts, and the village saw a clear increase in the number of international guests after the event. The CEO of Skistar (the group that owns and operates Åre as a ski-resort) stated in a press release that the event had been a home-run due to the extensive Rasmus Bergentz

investments made along with the international marketing campaigns (Skistar, 2007). A study was also made on the effects of the 2007 AWC by the Mid Swedish University (*Swe: Mittuniversitetet*), financed by the municipality of Jämtland. It was made in order to review different factors such as tourism and social effects, and the study came to the conclusion that these factors had a positive impact on the area. The inhabitants of Åre also gave the Alpine World Championships very good reviews (Pettersson, 2007) These combined positive effects resulted in Åre running as candidate towards a new AWC.

4.1.2 Åre 2019

The Alpine World Championship 2019 will be the third time Åre stands host for the event. After winning over Cortina in the FIS election process in Barcelona, 2014, the decision was official. It was greatly celebrated by the bidding team, the national ski association as well as other authorities. The Swedish Minister of Trade, Ewa Björling stated that “...entire Sweden is backing the candidacy and that we have very good fundamental conditions to carry out the Alpine World Championship” (Åre 2019b, n.d). Towards the 2019 AWC, the hosting organisation, Åre 2019 AB, declares that they want to make it extraordinary, more impressive and innovative than ever before. As an organiser, they aim for an overall improvement, going from “good to great”, revitalising the organisation as a whole (Bid Book Åre 2019), and an important aspect in achieving this is the experienced learning gained from 2007.

“We should be very proud of what we accomplished 2007, but there is of course room for improvement” CEO Åre 2019 AB

The vision of Åre 2019 AB is long-term and is shared by the municipality of Åre and Åre’s business community. Besides having sporting successes, this shared vision focus on four main aspects: unique all-around experiences; environmental responsibility; a boundless welcome; attractive living environment (Bid Book Åre 2019). With four years left until the event, the organisation is currently in the planning phase, and ever since the decision was finalized in 2014, the process of developing Åre as a hosting location has been ongoing.

4.2 Organisational Structure

The organisation around hosting an AWC consists of a network of interests (*Swe: Intressenter*) that interact with each other. In the bid phase of the hosting process, a bid team was created to run the candidacy and bring the 2019 AWC to Åre. This team consisted of people with great experience and expertise regarding different areas within the ski business (see table 2). The hosting organisation, Åre 2019 AB, furthermore consists of five board members, including one chairman, represented by the Swedish Ski association, Skistar AB and Ski Team Sweden Alpine AB.

Table 2 - People Involved in the Work Process Towards the 2019 AWC in Åre

<p>CEO Åre 2019 AB – Was assigned to the position of CEO for Åre 2019 AB in October 2014. Currently works part-time, 20-30 percent, with the planning and preparing for Åre 2019 AWC. Main job is as president of the Swedish Ski Association. Have a lifetime of experience in working within the skiing-community. Was involved in the project organisation around 2007 AWC, and also has experience from working in the International Ski Federation. Worked in a key position for the hosting of other winter-sport World Championships such as, snowboard, freestyle and alpine. Has also been involved in other winter-sport World Championships with the function as board member.</p>
<p>Board member Åre 2019 AB – Works as the destination manager (<i>Swe: Destinationschef</i>), the head position for Skistar AB's work in Åre. Is sitting as board member in Åre 2019 AB and has the main responsibility of making sure that Skistar AB fulfils its commitment towards AWC 2019. Had, fore the 2007 AWC, the same work function with Skistar AB and its related work to the AWC, but was not a board member of the 2007 organisation.</p>
<p>Coordinator Åre 2019 AB – Has ten years of experience in this line of work. Been involved with the work around many WC-events and the candidacies for 2017 and 2019. Had the role of event- and marketing coordinator in 2007. Is the “right-hand man” to the CEO, and coordinates various tasks in the current planning and preparation process.</p>
<p>CEO World Cup Åre AB – Primary works as the CEO for the World Cup company. Worked with media and communication during the 2007 AWC. Is, in Åre 2019 AB, not assigned to a specific work title yet, but is likely to have a similar key position regarding media and communication.</p>
<p>Arena manager, Skistar AB – Main responsibility regarding the arena-area, and related investments that are needed. Involved in the organisation around 2007 AWC. ~35 years of experience in working with arena management.</p>

After the candidacy was over and the decision was finalized, the bidding team split up and went back to focus more on their respective main jobs, involving the work for Åre World Cup, Skistar AB, Swedish Ski Association and other assignments. The organisation around the bidding team

split up due to the time period, there is usually five years between the decision and the actual hosting of the AWC, and because the people involved have other commitments to tend to. During this period, Åre also hosts other events that are necessary for the process of hosting the AWC 2019, such as the Junior World Championships (JWC) and World Cup competitions, in which the bidding team members have various commitments. Thus, there are several organisations that have ongoing work around the ski business that are essential for the skiing community in Åre as a whole. An aspect of this collaboration of people and organisations is that all organisation members mentioned above, except the board members, are located in the same building in their daily work for the different organisations, the Åre National Arena. Events such as the World Cup enables the people in the organisation to work with each other, even when not working specifically on the AWC. Due to the organisation members, that are involved in the work towards the 2019 AWC, have not been assigned formal titles in Åre 2019 AB yet, there are currently no formal meetings for Åre 2019 AB. Such meetings were about to be initiated as the interviews were conducted. The continuous work until this stage, has instead been through informal meetings and communication within the building, in order to help each other in their respective work areas.

Once the hosting of the event draws closer, a hosting organisation is developed. This is the group of people that plan, prepare and overlook the whole process of hosting the AWC. For the 2019 AWC, the assembly of this group looks different than it did in 2007, due to the experienced learning taken from 2007 hosting and the change in FIS payouts. The payouts provided by FIS counts for the majority of the hosting organisation's budget. In 2007, these payouts were continuously distributed throughout the work process up to the start of the event. This has changed towards 2019. The hosting organisation now receive the payouts in form of two lump sums (*Swe: Klumpsummor*), one smaller sum that was received in December 2014 and the second one, a year before the event i.e. 2018. This has affected the financial situation for the organisation and thereby the different phases in the work process. The structure of the management organisation has been affected, both by the financial changes but also due to the experienced learning that they now possess. The 2019 organisation will consist of a core team with around 5-10 people with a more significant increase in staff during the last year. This can be compared with the organisation fore 2007, where it was a management team of nine people and about 20 employees that was assigned 2,5 years ahead of the start.

“...that difference (FIS payouts) will have a significant effect on the organisation... more people were employed longer in forehand (2007), so I believe that the organisation around 2019 AWC will be smaller” CEO World Cup Åre AB

This change in the organisational structure is a result of the above mentioned financial change, but also due to the experienced learning that the members now possess. Even though a majority of the management members had worked on large events, like the WC, prior to the 2007 AWC, there was still a great amount of uncertainty on how to manage an international event of this magnitude. With the lack of experienced learning fore the 2007 AWC, the introduction period of the people involved was longer. The great organisational outcome of the 2007 AWC, and by maintaining a majority of the management involved, has lead to a comfort in the planning and preparation process fore the 2019 AWC. Therefore, the knowledge, both tacit and explicit, gained from the 2007 AWC have lead to less people are needed at an early stage, and the changes made in the management structure.

4.2.1 External Consultants

There is a continuous development in the ski-circuit and the demands on the host area are changing over time. Demands on, for example, delivery, security and snow conditions are tougher. These changes, along with that there will be a decimated number of people involved at the earlier stages of the process, and the changes in financial payouts, has lead to the question of bringing in external consultants fore the 2019 AWC, something that was not done fore the 2007 AWC. There are beneficial aspects of hiring less people with specific competence, compared to bringing in more people with less competence, that require more supervision and time. Having more people with less competence can lead to higher cost in terms of social security contributions (*Swe: Sociala avgifter*) and holiday pay (*Swe: Semesterersättning*). Thus, making it more advantageous both financially and time-wise to bring in external consultants. Chances are that Åre 2019 AB will bring in external consultants in order to perform specific tasks related to the delivery of a sporting event in the in the implementation stage. These discussions are, however, currently in an initial phase. It is also important to find the right mixture between external and local competence. According to the CEO of Åre 2019 AB, having different types of competence in a group is often strengthening, and mixing the village culture and local knowledge, with external experience, is valuable for the organisation.

4.3 The Work of the Organisation

With the experienced learning from a successful hosting in 2007, and the strength of keeping the majority of the same management from that time, beneficial advantages have been provided in many aspects for the 2019 planning and preparations.

”The hosting organisation received a great deal of competence and experience from delivering an event of that scale ...” CEO Åre 2019 AB

2007 was the first time for the majority of the people involved to host this type of large-scale sporting event, and it was hard to predict the outcome due to lack of experience. The organisation involved in the work around the 2007 AWC could only hope that it would end up a success, and now with the result in hand they can see that their course of action was the right way to conduct their work. According to the Board Member of Åre 2019 AB, this has led to a sense of confidence and security in the management's work process towards the 2019 AWC, that makes planning and preparing easier than it was for the hosting in 2007.

4.3.1 Applying for 2017 - Strategic Positioning Towards 2019

An example of how the organisation works with experience and strategy can be seen when the application was made for the 2017 AWC, with intentions to position themselves towards 2019. Åre saw an uninterrupted development from the decision of being a host for the 2007 AWC until approximately two years after the event, and “...3 billion SEK were invested in the resort during these years...” (Arena Manager Skistar AB). However, a couple of years post an Alpine World Championship, this type of development generally stagnates and ends up in a plateau phase (*Swe: Platåfas*) (Board Member of Åre 2019 AB). An important aspect in ensuring that the strong development continues is to apply for a new AWC, and thereby see a new boost of self confidence and an overall injection into the area (Board Member of Åre 2019 AB). The hosting organisation therefore thought, not long after the 2007 event, about wanting to candidate for a new Alpine World Championships.

Something very distinguishing about the Alpine World Championships in 2007, was that Åre got elected to host on their first candidacy, which had not happened since FIS changed their voting

system in the 1980's. According to the Board Member Åre 2019 AB, this was a known fact, and in order to not be ignorant and believe that Åre would have the same fortune again, they in 2011 began with their candidacy for the 2017 AWC. This was done despite knowing that a competitor at the time, St. Moritz, would most probably win due to better preparations at the time. The candidacy was instead constructed as a strategy, in order to position Åre towards 2019, showing FIS and other hosting locations that Åre wanted to host another AWC. The hosting organisation openly stated that they supported St- Moritz in their candidacy for 2017. Åre was realistically not ready to host the 2017 AWC, and therefore did not fully commit.

"... we positioned ourselves for the 2019 candidacy, by applying for the 2017 AWC" Board Member Åre 2019 AB.

As expected, St. Moritz got elected to host the 2017 AWC and Åre began their candidacy for the 2019 event, with high hopes of receiving it. The application itself was not very different from 2017, except for minor aspects, but Åre was now fully committed. An important factor to keep in mind when looking at these candidacies is that the deciding factors have a lot to do with international relationships and positioning. It is also a lot about politics and about dividing events fairly between different countries, as stated by the CEO World Cup Åre. The reason why Åre received the 2019 AWC comes down to the fact that FIS has a great deal of trust for the resort and that the organisation is reliable in keeping its promises. Åre 2019 AB states that the upcoming AWC is done in order to push Swedish alpine skiing forward, to do it for Åre's guests and inhabitants as well as wanting to reach out on a international market.

Henceforth, different factors and stakeholders, that are important in the bidding and planning process for the 2019 AWC in Åre, will be presented.

4.4 The Importance of FIS Relationships

In order to organise the work and not fall behind, and for FIS to keep track on how the organisation process is going, Åre 2019 AB uses a form of to-do list from FIS, called a "master tool". The hosting organisation reports to FIS thoroughly twice a year during mandatory coordination group meetings, in which the FIS general secretary, race directors and marketing-, media- and

communication managers attend. These reports are required to cover certain areas, such as security, which are strictly regulated. As the organisation comes closer to the event, FIS requires more and more detailed reports. FIS also sends an inspection group to check on the progress of the planning process and how far investments have gone, etc. A positive aspect from the 2007 event, was that Åre developed a strong relationship with FIS because of the success of the event, but also because Åre stuck to their promises regarding investments and the delivery of the Championship (Coordinator Åre 2019 AB). The event was at the time considered by FIS, to be the best AWC yet. This means that the preparation for 2019 will be a less complicated process due to the trust FIS has for Åre as a host. Even if something would not be completely finished before a meeting, FIS will have faith that it will be delivered, which was not the case before the 2007 AWC. An example of the importance of trust can be seen in how FIS' relationship was with Cortina in Italy, Åre's main competitor for the 2019 candidacy. FIS did not have the same faith in the Italian resort, due to promises that they had not honoured. *"They have a bad reputation for not keeping their promises"* (CEO World Cup Åre AB). The cultural aspect plays a role in the way that FIS knows that Swedes have a reputation of being punctual and organised. They know that Åre will do everything necessary to complete preparations and not compromise their promises, and that they value the trust given by FIS. Having trust, however, does not imply that the requirements are not strict, and there are still updates that will need attendance in order to meet the requirements, such as the net specifications in the slopes regarding the security of the event.

4.4.1 Learning from World Cup Events and Keeping Competence within the Organisation

Another important aspect in order to meet FIS' requirements is to hold annual FIS World Cup events. It is crucial in order to continuously keep staff and volunteers updated on the ongoing development in the ski-community, on features such as snowmaking. The staff and volunteers are kept updated by involvement in these events. It is also important to keep the competence within the organisation, which is what ensures that an AWC can be properly delivered. Not hosting World Cup events regularly will lead to the resort falling out of the ski-circuit, making it very difficult to receive an Alpine World Championship (Arena Manager, Skistar AB). World Cup events are furthermore a good way to maintain a strong relationship with FIS and by doing them successfully, FIS will have more trust towards the resort in hosting an AWC, which is the case with Åre.

In the preparations for the 2019 AWC, Åre will host two major skiing events: The JWC and WC-final. According to the Arena Manager, Skistar AB, competence, in form of prior experience in the work tasks, people skills, skiing experience, etc., in the people involved is essential, but it takes time to build a stab with the right experience. Thus, it is crucial to host these types of events so that the management and volunteers can gain the experienced learning needed. Åre works in a long-term perspective in order to build up the competence and train the people involved. There are three main areas when it comes to the work tasks of the volunteers: sport & competition, media & information, and service. Based on the volunteers' prior skills, they are selected into the different categories. For example, there is a certain level of skiing ability required for the people in the sport & competition category, since these volunteers perform tasks like slope maintenance. In order for Åre to have properly educated personnel that attend the 2019 AWC, they have set the requirement of their volunteers to be involved and work with the upcoming events, like the WC competitions, JWC and the WC-final, before the 2019 AWC (CEO World Cup Åre). Åre 2007 AB had to bring in volunteers and other employees at an earlier stage, in their preparations fore the 2007 AWC, due to that many were in need of a longer introduction period to their various work assignments. Since Åre works with a long-term perspective and tries to keep the same working crew, the introduction period for the 2019 AWC will be greatly reduced. Volunteers and other employees will be brought in at a later stage, as a result of the built up competence, documentation from 2007 as well as the financial change.

4.4.2 Learning from Other Hosting Locations

A tool administered by FIS in learning from other hosting locations, is a database where all documentation from every Alpine World Championship is included. This allows every hosting organisation to review how different task has been carried out and how problems have been solved. Every host is required to report into this database, which also allows for a stronger cooperation and transparency between the organisers. A good example of how learning between resorts takes place is the regular invitation to the AWC from the current host organisation to the organisation that are next in line to host. Before the 2007 AWC, the Åre host organisation visited “*all kinds of World Championships and the Olympic Games*”. A lot of resources was put into these kind of field studies, in order to obtain knowledge that was needed fore the 2007 hosting. Due to the experienced learning gained from 2007 hosting, less of these field studies will be made fore the 2019 AWC.

Although, one example of the learning between resorts that has been made for the 2019 AWC, is when Åre visited Vail during the 2015 AWC. A struggle that Åre had during the 2007 event was to attract enough spectators onto the arena in the finish area. A lot of time and money was spent on a ticket system that did not generate a lot of money in return (Coordinator Åre 2019 AB). Vail had the same struggle for their 2015 event, but they came up with the solution of not charging the audience in the finish area. This was very effective and the arena was often full an hour before the races began. A problem with this solution was not knowing beforehand how many people would attend the arena. It is, however, a solution that Åre might want to implement in order to attract as much audience as possible to 2019.

4.5 Broadcasting Rights and Sponsors

One of the major tasks orchestrated by FIS, in the organisation of an AWC, is the selling of broadcasting rights. FIS owns the selling rights to the broadcasting of the AWC and sells it to external sports marketing companies. In 2007, the broadcasting rights were sold to the sports marketing company APF, and for the 2017 and 2019 AWC the Italian company Infront have bought the rights. In the agreement, the rights to everything seen in television, from banners to logos on the bibs, is sold by the sports marketing company i.e. Infront for the 2019 AWC. Therefore, Åre 2019 AB does not own the commercial rights to attract international or national sponsors to be seen, either in the slopes or in the finish area. The Board member Åre 2019 AB states that it is a *"pretty comfortable position"* because the organisation receives money from international and national sponsors, but it is not their job to attract them. With the revenue from the selling of the broadcasting rights made by FIS, the majority of the money is given to Åre as funds to organise the event. This FIS payout currently accounts for 75 percent of the 2019 AWC budget (Coordinator Åre 2019 AB).

The hosting organisation for the 2007 AWC were more independent in attracting sponsor deals, as they were able to sell sponsor packages separated from everything seen in television. These sponsor packages included exposure in a temporary sponsor village, displaying several products and brands. Another example is the Skistar celebrity skiing competition that was held in 2007, where several former world champions competed. A selection of the sponsors was also incorporated on the billboard seen before the broadcast of the event on Swedish Television. This made the packages

quite expensive and the organisation sold national sponsors for 40 million SEK (Coordinator Åre 2019 AB). Because of different broadcasting agreements towards the 2019 event, Åre 2019 AB are now in negotiations with the new owner of the rights, the Italian company Infront. They have tougher demands by wanting a percentage of the sales of sponsors outside the tv-zone. Therefore, the work put into attracting national sponsors outside the tv-zone, makes the agreement with Infront less profitable for Åre. *"It is a give and take relationship"*, Coordinator Åre 2019 AB.

What Åre does, however, is working with regional partners that do not compete with the larger sponsors. Working with regional sponsors was a positive aspect in 2007 and it was part of the work towards sustainability, which is something that Åre 2019 AB will continue working for. Larger companies with a lot of capital can easily oust smaller, local firms but the hosting organisation wants to create collaborations with companies in Åre and Jämtland. This is in order to generate work opportunities because of the fact that Åre is a town on the countryside and the municipality of Jämtland sees the Alpine World Championships as a good opportunity to advance the region (Bid Book Åre 2019).

"...it is about getting their commitment rather than their money" Coordinator Åre 2019 AB.

4.6 Agreements with External Stakeholders

The experience of having had the AWC before facilitates the current work progress. External stakeholders such as media, hotel- and restaurant owners, the general public, etc., are more positive about the 2019 AWC than they were before the hosting in 2007. The work process before the 2007 AWC required more anchoring work (*Swe: Förankringsarbete*) in form of café-meetings and other arrangements to get local business owners more involved and in belief of the effects a successful hosting could bring. Now when local business owners have seen the positive feedback and impact that the 2007 AWC resulted in, it has made the negotiations and agreements much easier to conduct (Coordinator Åre 2019 AB).

"Everyone is more positive than they were before 2007" Coordinator Åre 2019 AB

More businesses want to be involved, and it is simpler to come to agreements with the hotels, restaurants etc., since they know that the AWC will be managed in a good way, and they will have a satisfying number of customers, and see a return on the agreements that they have made. The prior AWC hosting has also led to an increased reputational capital (*Swe: Förtroendekapital*) between the hosting organisation and the external stakeholders. To have this reputational capital has been beneficial in their relationship, by keeping it on good terms even when things have not turned out as planned.

4.7 Media

According to CEO World Cup Åre AB, there is great importance in creating and maintaining a positive relationship with the media. In the preparations for the 2007 AWC, the Åre host organisation had two management members that tended to the media relations. Their work involved building relations and making sure no resentments were created towards Åre and the organisation around the AWC. Therefore, the two management members frequently attended various winter sporting events, like cross-country skiing, snowboarding, biathlon, etc., where they knew that a vast majority of the sporting journalistic community would be. Since many of the same journalists were covering these different sporting events, it provided better conditions to the two management members to be recognizable and create proper relations with the journalists. It also gave them the opportunity to map out the journalistic environment and see which ones that are the formal leaders among the journalists.

In regards to maintaining a good relationship, CEO World Cup Åre AB, pushes on the importance of honesty, reliability and a certain degree of transparency. In their work towards media in 2007 it was important to handle matters in the right way, and provide media with updated and reliable information. When the weather was bad, and races needed to be cancelled, the organisation had four trustworthy and recognizable meteorologists in place, to give the journalists reliable information and continuous updates on the situation. The same goes for when athletes got injured. The journalists want access to that information as fast as possible but it is important that the host organisation follows the right procedures.

There have been significant changes in the media landscape from 2007 till today, which has affected the work process of the media management. The primary change is due to the technical development. The trend is that the cyber-journalists are replacing the newspaper reporters to a greater extent, and a new and younger generation of journalists are attending the event. In 2007 AWC, Åre had around 1500 journalists reporting from the event. With the change towards more web-focused editorials, this number of attending journalists is believed to be reduced in the 2019 AWC. To establish and develop a good relation to this “new” type of journalist, it is important to understand and tend to their needs (CEO World Cup Åre AB). Modern day reporters are in need of quick and easy, high-speed Internet access in order to write, update and send their articles to their editorials. Thus, making it crucial for Åre to be technically updated. Åre has been doing many recent developments and investments in their technical infrastructure, both as a resort and in the competition area (Bid Book Åre 2019). One of the major investments is the building of a media centre. To ensure a good working environment for the journalists, developments have been made by improving and investing in high-speed internet, ADSL and free Wi-Fi. The fiber-optic network, CATV and 4G mobile network remains in place and is updated (Bid Book Åre 2019). The Åre organisation have put great effort in maintaining good international relations with the media and understanding that technology is a very complex and important area, with no room for downtime. To provide the best working conditions, the organisation intend to maintain already established partnerships with leading providers and developers, ensuring that Åre provide the most up-to-date technology in 2019 (Bid Book Åre 2019).

“The organisation and efficiency of Åre has always impressed me. There is a winning mix of expertise in the organisation ... I always look forward to coming to Åre in my role as TV director to work with the great people on the organising committee and with the alpine races” Johan Bernhagen, TV Director NCP (Bid Book Åre 2019).

The AWC in 2007 was seen as a success from many point of views, one of them being media. Experience that can be drawn from previous hosted AWC’s is the importance of the domestic sporting success. If Vail/Beaver Creek did not have Ted Ligety and Lindsey Vonn in 2015, Schladming did not have Marcel Hirscher in 2013 or if Åre did not have Anja Pärson in 2007, the AWC’s would not have been as successful as they were (Board Member Åre 2019 AB). Having a

major domestic profile and medal competitor(s) brings a lot of additional attention to the event in form of greater audience and extensive media coverage. With this in mind, Åre has created Team Åre 2019, which involves Sweden's most promising boys and girls, with hopes of securing domestic sporting success in the 2019 AWC.

Another experience that Åre brings from 2007, is the value of managing the expectations, especially towards media. It is an ongoing work throughout the whole process and is something that needs to be tended to before, during and after the event. To present realistic expectations and goals is something that Åre management worked very hard with for the 2007 AWC. Journalists often want to highlight the downside that goes with the postlude (*Swe:Efterspel*) of a major sporting event, but with the hard work from Åre management there was no extensive writings about the 2007 AWC in that regard. In their work for AWC 2007, Åre launched their vision towards 2020 in order for media to know that they were working with a long-term perspective. It was essential to talk about the long-term and the positive impacts the hosting could bring to Åre society as a whole.

4.8 Investments

The hosting organisation stood before many large investments in 2007 that were required in order to deliver an Alpine World Championships, many of them were demanded by FIS (Arena Manager Skistar AB). These for example included a new downhill slope for women and a new tunnel in order to hold the slalom events over the village main road. Another major investment for 2007 was the finish arena building, which could host audience, media and staff. This arena later received much praise from the media and it has later on served as a "plug-and-play" facility, meaning that Åre is now able to host World Cup event on short notice (CEO Åre 2019 AB). This was proven in December of 2014 when Åre overtook four races from other resorts due to their poor snow conditions. Beside the large investments that were made specifically for the 2007 AWC, there were several other external investments made. Holiday Club was built (Hotel and Multi Sport-arena) and several other superstructures including retail stores and hotel beds, which provided to Åre becoming a year-around destination. According to the Coordinator Åre 2019 AB, many of the investments prior to the event would not have happened if it was not for the 2007 AWC.

Looking into the 2019 AWC, Åre has a very good infrastructure because of the 2007 event and therefore an AWC would be possible to arrange within a relatively short period of time. The

challenge the organisers stand before now is to improve on what is already a strong foundation. There are less requirements from FIS going in to the new AWC, because of the investments from 2007. Therefore, the majority of the investments that are being made now, comes from the organisation's own desire to improve (CEO Åre 2019 AB). The investments being made for 2019 are mainly for snowmaking, in order to secure proper snow conditions for the six disciplines. There are also a new lightning-system in the slopes, for better possibilities to broadcast at night, and the tunnel under the ladies downhill was lengthened, so the audience would better be able to spectate in the slopes. Another change for 2019 is that the previous temporary tent village that was built for 2007 for 35 million SEK will not be seen again. The hosting organisation instead aims at better taking advantage of already existing facilities such as hotels and restaurants and give them money, around 10 million SEK, in order to market and improve themselves for the event (Board Member Åre 2019 AB). This is to reduce costs, but also because of the sustainability aspect and ensuring that the inhabitants and tourist of Åre can have use of these types of investments after the event is over.

“ ... the purpose is to see benefits before, during and after the event” Board Member Åre 2019 AB

Regarding external investments for the 2019 AWC, there is a possibility that a similar amount of capital will be invested as for the 2007 event. The event works, as a catalyst for external investments, and right after the decision was made that Åre received the 2007 World Championships, market and house prices rose and it gave a strong and positive belief for the future (Arena Manager Skistar AB).

4.9 The Environment

The importance of environmental management is an issue that cannot be overlooked (Bid Book Åre 2019), and has to be considered. Åre's overall goal for 2019, in regard to the environmental aspect, is to minimise and neutralise the event's environmental impact (Bid Book Åre 2019). The organisation around the 2007 AWC received all in all good criticism for their work, in an environmental point of view. One matter that resulted in negative critic towards the Åre 2007 organisation was the use of diesel generators. The generators function was to heat up the temporary sponsor village that was set up close to the Holiday Club. Since it was 25-30 degrees Celsius below

zero, the generators worked full-time in order to keep the sponsor village warm, spewing out emission in the process. In the work to improve from good to great, this is a matter that needs to be looked into, finding greener solutions to these types of establishments fore the 2019 AWC.

“... it may be hard to be completely environmentally friendly, but it is important to strive for improvement” CEO World Cup Åre AB

With the hosting of the 2019 AWC, Åre has adopted an ambitious environmental programme, which include prioritising climate-friendly alternatives (Bid Book Åre 2019). A step in environmental improvements for 2019 is that only green electricity such as wind- and hydropower will be used in the competition area and the entire ski field. Another step is the completion of getting ISO-certificates 14001 and 9001. These certificates include the environment in the entire ski area, such as lifts, snowmaking, piste preparation and provide an quality assurance to the visitors, along with ensuring that right expertise is in the right place at all times (Bid Book Åre 2019).

In the environmental aspect, it is important to consider the overall perspective: before- during and after the event (Board Member Åre 2019 AB). Usually, the AWC is referred to as a two week period. However, the Åre organisation does not see this as a sustainable way of thinking. It is crucial to have a long-term reasoning with the investments that are made for such a large-scale event. For instance, like the new lighting-system, which has already resulted in positive effects such as increased number of tourist, improved quality of night skiing and more opportunities for evening practices. This is an investment for the AWC 2019 but also provides and generates positive effects on the community as a whole and will do so after the event itself is finished (Board Member Åre 2019 AB). Another example, in which Åre 2019 will strive to have a more sustainable long-term perspective then in 2007, is the changes made in the earlier mentioned tent village. For Åre, both as an resort and municipality, it is essential that everything that is built and invested in, not only benefits the major events, but that it also results in making Åre a more attractive tourist destination and a better living environment for the inhabitants (Bid Book Åre 2019).

“... I would not like to work and live here in Åre, if I knew that our work had a negative impact on the community as a whole.” CEO World Cup Åre AB

5. Analysis - Planning for a Major Sporting Event

This analysis will relate the theoretical framework to the empirical findings in order to see and examine how experienced learning is applied to the case study. It will commence by analysing the internal organisation i.e. the factors that has affected the structure of the hosting organisation. Thereafter the bidding phase and its different components: the organisation around the bidding team and the key success factors in becoming a host for a large scale sporting event, is reviewed. External factors and stakeholders will thereafter be presented, focusing on the importance of good relations and experience with the hosting organisation. Finally, the importance of having a long-term vision will be analysed.

5.1 The Structure of the Internal Organisation

2007 was the first occasion in modern time that Åre hosted the AWC. The management responsible of organising had prior experience from hosting WC-events and other large-scale alpine events, but nothing at the magnitude of an AWC. When organising a hallmark event like the AWC there is, according to Shone & Parry (2004), a need for experienced staff and professional expertise in order to make the event successful. The 2007 AWC turned out to be a very successful event from many different aspects. Despite this great success, the organisational structure is changing in the work towards 2019.

The management involved with planning and preparation for the 2007 AWC may not have had the previous experience of hosting an AWC, but all of them could be considered experienced professionals with years of working within the ski-business. Due to the uncertainty about how to conduct an AWC, and the introduction period needed for people to get acclimatized to their respective assignment, the size of the organisation was larger at an earlier stage than it will be at a respective stage fore the 2019 AWC. With the experienced learning gained from the 2007 hosting, along with it being a success, the management has declared a certain sense of confidence and security when it comes to what needs to be done and when, in the process of planning and hosting 2019 AWC. The more experience the members of the organisation have, the greater it ultimately is for the success of the event (Westerbeek & Ingerson, 2000), and since all of the current

organisation members have experience from the 2007 AWC, as well as hosting other major events like the WC-finals, the respondent's feeling of confidence and security is understandable.

Another aspect that has changed since the 2007 planning process is the payouts that the hosting organisation receives from FIS. Fore the 2019 AWC, the Åre hosting organisation will obtain two major lump-sums from FIS, whilst fore the 2007 AWC the Åre hosting organisation got several payouts during the planning process. This change has had an impact on the current organisational structure, forcing the hosting organisation to reduce its members and the period of time in which they are employed. Since the FIS payouts accounts for roughly 75 percent of the organisation's budget, their budget at an early stage is limited. Staying on budget is necessary in event planning, and overrunning the budget and not keeping it continuously revised will likely lead to event failure (Getz, 2013; Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013).

From a financial perspective, it is reasonable to state that the organisational structure has been forced into its current changes due to the different approach in FIS payouts. On the other hand, the experienced learning that the current Åre organisation management now possess, have enabled them to work in a lesser workforce, and for a shorter time period than what was possible in the 2007 work process. This, in turn, will lead to reduced costs for the organisation by having less personnel, employed for a shorter amount of time.

5.1.1 External consultants

In 2007, the Alpine World Championships was done from scratch by people with limited experience of hosting an AWC. A change in the internal organisation that Åre 2019 AB looks to implement towards 2019, is bringing in external consultants to help with the delivery of the event. With the experienced learning from 2007, the management have acknowledged that there might be necessary to bring in external knowledge in specific areas, during the implementation stage of the event lifecycle. Parent & Smith-Swan (2013) discusses the phenomena of game gypsies as an attractive resource for hosting organisations, due to their experience and networks of delivering major sporting events. Åre 2019 discuss hiring consultants mainly from a cost perspective, meaning that the consultants can be brought in relatively close to the event due to their expertise, and therefore the introduction cost is reduced. It is also because of the time perspective, where the

hosting organisation will receive a large lump sum close to 2019. Thus, that there may not be enough time to introduce new staff to the AWC, after that money is received. A risk, however, with relying too much on external consultants is the fact that they do not possess any local knowledge of Åre. Being able to understand the local culture and to communicate with inhabitants and local stakeholders is important in order to gain their trust and support. Thus, it is important to have the mixture of local and external knowledge that Åre 2019 AB currently discuss (CEO Åre 2019 AB). Simply hiring people from a cost perspective can result in losing quality in the staff, which will impair the delivery of the event.

5.1.2 Volunteers

Something that the 2007 Åre hosting organisation realized, was that building up a competent stab of volunteers takes time. There was a long introduction period in order to get all of the volunteers ready for the 2007 AWC, but it paid off because of the success of the event. Keeping the majority of these volunteers is a large advantage in the planning process towards 2019, since they will not be in need of the long introduction period. Thus saving the hosting organisation both time and money. It is also beneficial due to the earlier mentioned differences in payouts. An important aspect in keeping the competence of the volunteers is the requirement of participation in test events such as the JWC and World Cup. Turner, Keegan & Crawford (2000) states that it is crucial that project-based organisations support the experiential learning of their project personnel in order to achieve the desired outcome. Thus, having the volunteers participating in several events, means that they can stay updated and improve their competence.

5.2 Bidding Phase - Key Success Factors and Strategy

The bidding team has a vital part in their role of running the candidacy and being responsible for the success or failure in the hosting election. There are several features of the bidding team that matters in the bidding process. How the bidding team manage and utilize these different features will affect the final result of the bidding process. Research, made by Westerbeek & Ingerson (2000), has sorted the different factors into categories, depending on their respective degree of importance for the bidding process. The Åre management organisation, where the majority was involved in the bidding team for AWC 2019, highlights the importance of having continuous WC competitions. This gives a foundation to the candidacy, and proves that the location and

organisation are able to handle and conduct a large-scale sporting event. Having well developed infrastructure, financial stability of the city, technical expertise and a good image of the city are some of the essential factors in the primary criteria, presented by Westerbeek & Ingerson (2000). Since FIS, which is the deciding authority, is involved and present at the WC competitions, this gives an opportunity for the organisation to build and improve the relationship with them. Thus, establishing and maintaining a good relationship to FIS is key in the bidding process, and having experience in the bid process enables the members in the bid team to build relations to the deciding authority over time, as stated by Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson, (2002). An example of the good relationship that is established between Åre and FIS is the hosting organisation's increased freedom to operate, in form of fewer demands, due to the successful result of the 2007 event. Furthermore, there is an rather unexposed side to the decision-making of the hosting location. According to the Åre management organisation, with this sort of decision in sports in general, politics are becoming more essential. To get a further advantage against the competitors, there is a need to tend to the business aspect of the bidding process by working on the international relationship with people in influential positions. Thus, the political aspect of the bidding proposal is getting more and more valuable compared to the actual bidding proposal and the presentation itself.

5.2.2 Strategy in the Bidding Process

A unique aspect of the 2007 AWC, was that Åre received the event on their first candidacy. Up until that time, candidates were always rejected on their first bid and had to apply a second time in order to get chosen as a host by FIS. After the 2007 event was considered successful, the hosting organisation wanted to apply again, but they did not want to be naive. They realized that they had been fortunate in their previous bid and needed to have a more elaborated strategy towards bidding for 2019. Crockett (1994) argues that organisation needs to improve their strategy due to the increased competition for major sporting events, and this was the case for Åre as well. There was a more positive attitude among inhabitants and external stakeholders towards hosting an AWC, after the 2007 event had been successful. Åre had seen a large boost in investments and international guests and did not want to see a decline. It was therefore a strategic move when the hosting organisation decided to apply for the 2017 AWC, with intentions of not getting it. They wanted to be in a position where FIS, other hosting locations and external stakeholders, saw that they wanted to host a new event. Åre would realistically not be ready until two years after 2017, but Åre still

wanted to show their interest. Beside the political aspect in the bidding proposal, it also has a clear impact in the selection process. An example of this is from FIS' side, by dividing the number of events among the different locations, but if Åre had only applied for the 2019 AWC, chances are that they would not have gotten it until 2021. According to Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson (2002), the event bidding process requires well-planned strategies and competitive positioning tactics, in order to create and establish a successful bidding proposal, which is what the Åre hosting organisation managed to accomplish with their 2017 application.

A facilitating aspect in applying for a new Alpine World Championships relatively soon after the last one, is the already existing experienced learning in the hosting organisation. An AWC cannot be held in many places in the world compared to, for example, a summer Olympics. The chances of receiving two Olympic games within a decade are practically none, which means that the experience in the working staff will most likely be lost. Parent & Smith-Swan (2013) claim that having knowledge and sharing it is a key resource in sustaining a competitive advantage when hosting new events. If Åre can host Alpine World Championships periodically, the chance of retaining knowledge within the organisation is high. Parent & Smith-Swan (2013) discusses that the complexity of hosting hallmark events has increased awareness of the benefits of having prior experience. An important tool in retaining and keeping the working staff updated, are the annual WC competitions, which allows the organisation members and volunteers to maintain and improve their skills. Taking advantage of the fact that Åre now possesses experience in hosting major events, facilitates the process of hosting future Alpine World Championships. Hence, the organisation and the area in general can draw benefits of the effects of an AWC for many years to come because of gained experienced learning.

5.3 The Importance of Positive Experience and Relations to External Stakeholders

The case study in the thesis shows that trust and positive experience between stakeholders can facilitate accomplishments for the event, but also for external agreements. This relates to the research of Westerbeek, Turner & Ingerson (2002), who argue for the importance of building and enhancing relations to external stakeholders, in order to develop long-term beneficial partnerships for a hosting organisation in the planning process for a sporting event. Different stakeholders and the importance of relations to them will henceforth be presented.

5.3.1 Hotels and Restaurants

The hosting organisation of the 2019 AWC, wants to take better advantage of already existing facilities such as hotels and restaurants. This is because of the sustainability aspect, wanting to be more economically rational and environmental friendly. Another aspect to this, however, is that these establishments are now more open and positive towards negotiations and agreements with the hosting organisation. Essex & Chalkley (1998) state that by seeing the increase of popularity in hosting major sporting events, the cities now better understand what major benefits can be drawn. By watching the success of the 2007 Alpine World Championships in form of number of international guests and money spent in the resort, the local businesses saw the potential for good returns on their own investments. When the decision came that Åre was selected host for the second time, there was a more positive response from these establishments. Thus, hosting a successful sporting event is not only profitable for the hosting organisation, but it facilitates negotiations and agreements with parties outside of the event. Creating agreements between the hosting organisation and hotels and restaurants to cooperate, generates a win-win situation financially but also from a sustainability perspective. It ensures good business for these facilities, thereby creating positivity around hosting an Alpine World Championships and thus making it greater for the hosting organisation, and for the resort.

5.3.2 Media

There is a great importance in creating and maintaining positive relationship with the media (CEO World Cup Åre AB). The research presented by Westerbeek and Ingerson (2000) shows that there is areas within the media field that are vital for the hosting organisation to tend to, and even though Westerbeek & Ingerson's findings are focused on the bidding phase there is a clear importance of these areas for an overall success. Having local media support, global media exposure and establish a positive image is crucial for the event. This is an experienced learning that is gained by the Åre hosting organisation, and they put a lot of effort and emphasis in establishing good relations to the journalistic community and implement a positive image of the event. The foundation of the relationship to the local/national journalists was established in the media- and marketing managements work before the 2007 AWC, by having media- and marketing management attend various sporting events where the same journalists would be (CEO World Cup Åre AB). The major change from 2007, which has been taken into consideration in the planning for the 2019 AWC, is

the transformation of the media landscape. Towards 2019, more focus is directed on being technologically updated. To tend to the needs and demands of the national and global journalistic community, that is becoming more web-based than before, it is essential to provide quick and easy web access in order to give the journalists good working conditions and a good working experience. The work of building and establishing good relations to the journalistic community helps promote and expose the positive image of the event. Positive media exposure is essential in the work of hosting. It affects several factors, like the number of visitors, investors, sponsors and the general public opinion. A mean to support the positive image of Åre 2019, is the launching of the long-term vision for Åre. This shows the media, investors, inhabitants, et al., that the investments made and resources spent for hosting the AWC have a long-term purpose for the sustainability of the community as a whole, which is supported by Parent & Smith-Swan's (2013) statement that there is an increased importance for the organisers and event owners to justify the large investments that are made for events in regard to sustainability

5.3.3 Environment

Environmental management is an important topic that is becoming more and more relevant in modern day society. It is a field with constant change and development. When hosting an international large-scale event, it is crucial not to underestimate the importance of environmental management, and always consider the environmental impacts the event may cause. Besides having the direct goals of the event, it is getting more common that event producers have a vision and a strategic goal for the long-run (Getz, 2013).

The Åre host organisation have taken experience from their prior hosting of sporting events by keeping updated in more sustainable solutions. In the 2007 AWC hosting, Åre received mainly good feedback regarding the environment aspect. The negative critic they got, due to the usage of diesel generators, is a critic the hosting organisation has brought with them towards the 2019 AWC hosting. It is an experienced learning they took from their previous hosting, and it is now a subject of discussion for the current organisation group to find a more suitable option. It is of great importance to Åre that the investments, building and overall changes that are made in order to host the AWC, are made with a sustainable long-term perspective. The importance of this aspect is supported by Parent & Smith-Swan (2013), stating that organisers and event owners need to justify

the large investments and resources used for a major sporting event, in regards to sustainability and the long term perspective. Many hosting locations of major events get a negative aftermath from the event. With a more long-term orientation, Åre are able to build a positive feeling about the money spent on the event, making sure they will prove beneficial for the Åre community in the long run. To have the understanding and experience of how the environmental management affects the general opinion about the hosting of the event is crucial for the upcoming work of the Åre hosting organisation 2019.

5.3.4 How to Learn From other Hosting Locations

A primary example of gained explicit knowledge (Grant, 1996), is the database that FIS administers and facilitates, where all documentation from every AWC is included. Hence, learning from other's failure or success is something that FIS encourages. Documenting into this database is mandatory, whether an aspect has failed or been successful, which relates to the statement that learning from failure or success is equally important (Ellis, Mendel, Nir, 2006). This is because, like the hosting organisation, FIS wants every AWC to be great and because performance can always improve. By giving different locations a tool of sharing experience, FIS creates transparency and an opportunity to be a better host. The database also supports Kötser's (2010) claim that an approach aiming for knowledge needs to have the right information and communication technology in order to make knowledge accessible for others. Hence, it is beneficial for every party and could be a mean to reduce competition between the hosting organisations and open up for collaboration. By visiting other AWC's, like the Åre host organisation did in Vail, there is opportunity for learning about features such as ticket sales. There is also opportunity to create and maintain relationships between organisations, and thereby establishing networks of people with knowledge in the skiing industry. Having access to such networks allows for more available help outside of the internal organisation, thus increasing the hosting organisation's capability to organise a successful Alpine World Championship.

A change that the hosting organisation made from 2007 towards 2019 was the reduced number of field studies to other events. With the increased experienced learning in management, the field studies have become more focus-oriented on specific matters, rather than the overall knowledge gathering. Fore 2007, they visited several different events, not just AWC's, in order to establish

relationships with journalist etc. Thus, networks and relationships were created, something that has been taken advantage of in the planning process for the 2019 AWC. Turner, Keegan & Crawford, (2000) states that experiential learning is considered to be the primary element in the work of project management to develop competence of individuals and organisations. Having established experienced learning from studies of other events and organisation for the 2007 event, the 2019 hosting organisation could focus on more specific aspect of where they wanted to improve, such as ticket sales. Thus improving their competence even further.

5.3 Long-Term Vision

The hosting organisation emphasizes the importance of having a sustainable perspective for investments and partnerships with external stakeholders. One of the objectives of hosting the AWC 2019 is to see benefits before, during and after the event, where aspects such as the environment and relationships with the media are important. One of the reasons for this is to reduce the negative aftermath that can be seen after major sporting events, by making sure that the investments that have been made are useful many years after the AWC. Another reason is to develop the community as a whole. Getz (2013) claims that there is no clear evidence that having long term strategic plans results in better events. While this might be true, the case study of Åre 2019 shows that having positive experiences with external stakeholders and working together towards a better community facilitates the planning process towards the AWC. Negotiations and agreements with external stakeholders are easier when there are benefits to be seen from both parties, which in turn generate a more positive attitude from the local businesses for Åre to host an Alpine World Championship. The positive effects of the Åre 2007 AWC, was also shown in the study made by the Mid Swedish University, helping both the hosting organisation and the Jämtland municipality to evaluate the impacts of the event. This relates to Ellis, Mendel & Nir (2006), who stresses the importance of after event reviews in order to learn from events. The hosting organisation's work with regional partners was a positive aspect in 2007 and something that the current hosting organisation sees value in and aims to improve for the 2019 event. The work with regional partners is part of the sustainability aspect and long-term vision. The Coordinator Åre 2019 AB states that it is about getting the regional partners commitment rather than their money, thereby emphasizing the importance of developing regional growth in form of work opportunities and long term relationships.

6. Conclusion

This conclusive chapter commence with the main findings of the study. Thereafter the discussion section, followed by managerial impacts is presented. Lastly, the potential future research is discussed.

6.1 Main Findings of the Study

The study shows that experienced learning is utilized and adapted through a range of different aspects in the planning phase for hosting an international large-scale sporting event. Two primary aspects of experienced learning are found to facilitate the work of the hosting organisation, in the planning process for a sporting event. These aspects are: reducing the time-cost perspective; and the interconnections between the hosting organisation and external stakeholders.

Having gained experienced learning from previous hosting's enables a reduction in time and cost, in the process of establishing the hosting organisation. The study shows that previous experienced learning from hosting other successful events, leads up to a feeling of confidence and security for the management in their work of planning for an upcoming event. The feeling of confidence and security exists on both an individual level as well as in the organisation as a whole. It comes from knowing what needs to be done and when, in the planning process. This, in turn enables for recruiting management and volunteers at a later stage in the planning process than if the organisation would host the event for the first time, thus reducing the time- and cost aspect in the establishment of the organisation. The feeling of confidence within the hosting organisation gives a further advantage by transferring the confidence to external stakeholders involved in the event. By emitting confidence to external stakeholders, the hosting organisation instils the feeling of knowing how to execute a successful sporting event, which allows external stakeholder to have more reliance in their future collaborations. Moreover, the management, in the planning process of the event, is not in need of general knowledge gathering about the overall structure of hosting, i.e. everything from the lift-system to the schedule of the volunteers. Instead they can narrow down their scope and focus on more specific details of the event that are in need of attention. In the case study this is seen in how the management focuses on improving aspects such as diesel generators and ticket sales. Another distinctive change was that the Åre host organisation positioned themselves in form of applying for the 2017 AWC. Positioning was deemed necessary in order to Rasmus Bergentz

obtain the 2019 hosting. This was a strategic move that displayed the management's development and ability in order to improve their chances of being selected to host.

The other aspect that facilitates the planning process for the hosting organisation, is positive experienced learning gained by external stakeholders from previous events. The relation between the hosting organisation and external actors such as FIS, local businesses, media etc., improves due to positive experiences from previous events. Findings from the study shows that experienced learning is not exclusively gained by the host organisation after a sporting event, but it is also attained by external stakeholders. By having external stakeholders experience the positive impacts of a successful event, they get more prone to develop the relation with the hosting organisation. With more extensive relations, the possibilities of mutual benefits increases in the matter of facilitating the process of negotiating terms and agreements. This can be seen through collaborations between the hosting organisation and local hotels and restaurants, as well as other local businesses. Thus the common strive, of creating an even better event by attracting more tourists and creating more exposure, generates increased income for the local businesses and facilitates the planning process for the management. Furthermore, the improved interconnection between the host organisation and external stakeholders leads to the possibility of a better event, which ultimately results a more positive image of the hosting area.

6.1 Discussion

During the process of making this study, questions of discussion have arisen regarding the structure and work of the internal organisation of Åre 2019 AB. With the change in the two aspects, FIS payouts and experienced learning, that have affected the structure and work process of Åre 2019 AB, questions arise whether or not the current organisational structure would be composed the way it is, even if the payouts were the same as they were back in 2007? Or having the experienced learning, and the confidence and security that goes along, would have lead up to this current structure even if they had the financial support from FIS at earlier stage in the process? Looking back at 2007 hosting, there is also the question whether or not Åre would have been able to construct and perform a successful AWC if the payouts would have been applied like they are now for the 2019 hosting.

6.2 Managerial Implications

Through the research process, findings were made about the use of project management tools in planning sporting events. The Åre hosting organisation utilizes the master tool from FIS. However, with the structure of an AWC, which consists of a variety of factors like different disciplines, starting times, event locations etc., the appliance of other project management tools such as Critical Path Analysis (CPA) or Program Evaluating and Review Technique (PERT) can be beneficial (for further explanation of CPA and PERT see Lock, 2013). Parent & Smith-Swan (2013) claim that not all events use project management tools, but should. A further aspect that may facilitate and improve the planning process for the Åre AWC 2019 could therefore be the use of a more extensive range of project management tools.

6.3 Future Research

Due to the limited research currently existing within the field of intangible assets regarding sporting events, there is a need for more extensive future research. By reviewing the impacts of the 2019 AWC, there is an interest in comparing the impacts with the 2007 AWC in order to see the effects of the experienced learning in actual figures. Further suggestions include how experienced learning is utilized when planning for other types of sporting events, along with examine any similarities and differences in their execution. There is also an interest in seeing how experienced learning affects the implementation- and wrap-up stage of hosting a major sporting event, in order to understand how the use of experienced learning affects the later stages of the event life cycle. Finally, a suggestion is to compare the findings of this study to larger events, such as the Olympics, in order to see whether the earlier reasoning regarding the findings generalizability to events with longer intervals, is correct or not.

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Appendix 1 - Key Success Factors

<i>Primary criteria</i>	
Political	Processes, policies and government infrastructures Government support for bid
Economic	Political stability of city Potential economic impact Financial stability of the city
Media	Ability to fund event (public and private) Local media support Global media exposure access
Infrastructure	Portray positive image Location and accessibility Transport system
Technical	Existence of facilities Communication system Technical expertise
Socio-cultural	Image of the city Community support
<i>New primary criteria</i>	
Building relations T ^a	Identifying the individual needs of voting members or important influencers Invest time and effort in human contact Access to people in key positions
Bidding brand equity T	Having established facilities, key target markets and visible power brokers Have a presence in the marketplace as a bidding organization
Commitment T	Part-time versus full-time bidders Ability to start construction early (before announcement of the winning bid)
Guarantee added value T	Great product knowledge in order to show how value can be increased Ability to do primary and secondary research (viability, attitudes, characteristics)
Legacy	Ability to show where the tax money went Ability to generate goodwill for the event owner by showing the legacy
Bidding experience T	Having the established networks (internal) Having the established networks (external) Know what is considered important Awareness of timing and event-specific issues
Bid team composition T	Mix of youth and experience Personal selling skills of the team (bidding people are marketers)
Creative statistics	To present those statistics the event owner wants to see Provide correct information but in a bid-favorable fashion
<i>Secondary criteria</i>	
Business environment	Ability to attract other businesses to the area
Competitive environment	Other city bid strategies Other events previously bid for Global competitors

Note: ^a T = critically time-dependent

Source: Ingerson and Westerbeek (2000)

Appendix 2 - Effects of the AWC in Åre 2007

During the period, from the bidding decision 2002 until the period closely after the event 2007, the following can be concluded:

Increase of new companies +32%
New hotel beds +20%
New retail space +112%
Guest nights +22%
Population increase +4%
Turnover generated by visitors 328 million SEK
Surplus of 35 million SEK for Åre 2007 AB
Export value 77.3 million SEK
Local investment volume 3 billion SEK
TV broadcasts in 24 countries with 563 million viewers

Sources:

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Appendix 3 - Interviews - Topics Covered

Interview Topics - Hosting Organisation

1. Informants' Background
2. Informants' Position and Daily Concerns
3. Involvement and Experience from the 2007 Alpine World Championships
4. Effects
5. The Bid for the 2017 AWC
6. The Planning Process for the 2019 AWC

Interview Topics - CEO Destination Östersund

1. Informants' Background
2. Informants' Position and Daily Concerns
3. Involvement and Experience from the 2007 Alpine World Championships
4. Effects
5. The Bid for the 2017 AWC
6. Regional Development