Tourism has been an important economic industry for many countries, whose attributions and perceptions influence the decision making of the traveller (Mao & Huang, 2015). In this way, besides regions and cities, more and more is invested on their communication and public relations. Given this context, the tourism based on sporting purposes is growing (Kaplanidou, 2007). According to Chalip and McGuirty (2004), sporting events can influence on decision making of traveller, once in history sports idols built their results and achievements that gave attributes to the sporting events, important factor on decision making of someone who attend to the event or intend to attend (Kaplanidou, 2007).

Formula One (F1) is the main single-seater auto racing, sealed by the Fédération Internationale de l’Automobile (FIA). Brazilian F1 Grand Prix (GP) is organized since 1972. São Paulo's city circuit, named Interlagos, hosts the event from 1972 to 1977 and from 1979 to 1980. Rio de Janeiro’s circuit, Jacarepaguá, hosted in 1978 and from 1981 to 1989. From 1990 onwards, Formula 1 was back to São Paulo, Brazil's biggest city and its most important economic center. Brazil has a great tradition in F1 with great drivers in history, such as Nelson Piquet, Emerson Fittipaldi and Ayrton Senna. Due to this, motorsports are very popular in Brazil, and F1 is broadcasted live on the biggest national TV channel. As stated by São Paulo's municipality (2017), the Brazilian GP is the most important tourism event in the city. Hosting sports events can be explained by creating awareness and attract tourism business that generate future inbound travel (Dimanche, 2003).

Pitts and Stotlar (2002) state that sports are an industry, and sporting events are products (Fullerton & Merz, 2008). They are in a market and compete with other kind of products. Soon, they will have to work on their communication strategies to provide enough information about the event for potential consumers, and for a positive feedbacks of a sporting events, is necessary work on their images (Maluly, 2012). Image has been conceptualized as a perceptual phenomenon formed through a consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation, which has cognitive and affective components (Dobny & Zinkhan, 1990). Brand image is related to how consumers perceive the product brand (Aaker, 1996). Moreover, sports events can influence travel's choice on destination (Kim, N., & Chalip, L., 2004). Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules and Shammem (2003) discussed the importance of events on destination branding. Image on this work is considered in a subjective way (Parameswaran & Pisharodi, 1994). For Stern et al (2012), there are three the image concept approaches: as a mental representation, social representation and market perspective. The proposal of this work remains on the image of the sports and destination, the market perspective will be addressed.

Destination's favorable image is a key factor on marketing (Nenenzahl & Jaffe, 1991). Sports events tend to create long-term benefits, such as improving the brand identity as a city, enhancing a city’s global status (Balduck et al., 2011; Karadakis & Kaplanidou, 2012; Walton, Longo & Dawson, 2008). According to Bigne, Sanchez and Sanjic (2001), the more favorable the image perceptions of the destination are, the higher the probability tourists will return in the future.

The objectives of this research are perceive, among the consumers of the Brazilian GP of F1, (1) its destination’s image (São Paulo city), (2) F1 image and (3) the image of the Brazilian F1 GP and the city of São Paulo, associated, and (4) to what extent this sports event attracts tourists and influence São Paulo city's image.

The research method is mixed (qualitative and quantitative). Data were generated through a field research carried on Interlagos racing circuit surroundings, in São Paulo, on November 11th and 12th, 2016, before the practice and
qualifying sessions of the 45th Brazilian F1 GP. Field research was used to robustly capture the direct effects of the environment on behavior and psychological process (Veal & Simon, 2014). Sample was N=187. To avoid redundant responses the IP address was recorded. After data screening, 151 responses were deemed usable. A questionnaire was based on two main parts: the first, qualitative, by questions based on the Image Configuration Method, that identifies products’, products’ and brand’s images (Milan et al, 2013). Which attributes the respondents consider more important for the F1, São Paulo city and the F1 at São Paulo city. The second, quantitative, based on Mao and Huang (2015), with 22 items, included: the social positive impact of the event (12 items); the social negative impact of the event (6 items) and the relationship with the sports industry. Items were measured on a 5-point scale (from 1 = very low to 5 = very high). Moreover, the research instrument took into account some demographic issues as age, sex, schooling, family income and place of residence (Mao & Huang, 2015).

The majority of the attributes given to the F1 and São Paulo city are positive, but lots of negative mentions to São Paulo city and few negative to F1. When both are associated (“F1 at São Paulo city”), the positive mentions raise considerably in comparison with the attributes given to São Paulo city only. When associated, mentions to the circuit, history and F1 icons raise. Respondents consider F1 important to São Paulo city, contributes on the destination image and being worldwide known, what is consistent with the results found by Mao and Huang (2015). However, for the majority of the answers, the destination was not the reason to attend the event (Kaplanidou, 2007), neither the main event of the destination or it contributes for the pride of city residents, maybe because the great number of events hosted by the city, plus the more than four decades of F1 GPs in Brazil, and those organized in São Paulo. According to the respondents, the sport event does not provide sense of union and safety for São Paulo city residents, and the majority think that public resources spent on the event cannot be considered waste. According to the survey, the event impact on transit, what also is consistent with the results found by Mao and Huang (2015). This study was inspired on Mao and Huang (2015) research, but adapted and modified to the context of a traditional a sport event organized in Brazil, after FIFA World Cup 2014 and Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, in a city that despite being the biggest and the main economic center in Brazil, has little tradition on sports tourism. Is gap of this study not establish relations between the answers and age of the respondents, and the social impacts of the event with the respondents’ place of residence, close or not to the circuit. These gaps can be opportunities for future researches, that must take these points into account.