

Exploring residents' perceptions of the socioeconomic impact of sport tourism

 **Giovanni Raso**  . San Antonio Catholic University of Murcia (UCAM). Murcia, Spain.
 **Domenico Cherubini**. San Antonio Catholic University of Murcia (UCAM). Murcia, Spain.

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to investigate and assess critical factors related to the socioeconomic impact of sports tourism on territorial growth. The study highlights the significance of residents' perceptions regarding the economic and social consequences of hosting sporting events in gaining public support for such endeavours. This research relies on primary data collected from diverse regions throughout Italy via a specialized Google Module, with a particular focus on the intersection of sports and tourism. Notably, 84% of the sampled population expresses support for the idea that hosting sporting events can yield potential economic benefits for the hosting region. While these initial findings are preliminary, they strongly indicate that the population is inclined towards organizing sporting events in their own regions. This inclination creates opportunities to consider long-term investments in hosting sporting events, which can stimulate tourist influx and subsequent economic growth in the involved territories.

Keywords: Sport Management, Socioeconomic impact, Sports tourism, Territorial growth, Residents' perception, Economic impact, Social impact, Sporting events.

Cite this article as:

Raso, G., & Cherubini, D. (2024). Exploring residents' perceptions of the socioeconomic impact of sport tourism. *Sustainability and Sports Science Journal*, 2(2), 73-86. <https://doi.org/10.61486/QWDZ4905>

 **Corresponding author.** San Antonio Catholic University of Murcia (UCAM). Murcia, Spain.

E-mail: graso@alu.ucam.edu

Submitted for publication January 19, 2024.

Accepted for publication February 21, 2024.

Published March 01, 2024.

[Sustainability and Sports Science Journal](#). ISSN 2990-2975.

©Kinetic Editorial. Alicante. Spain.

Identifier: <https://doi.org/10.61486/QWDZ4905>

INTRODUCTION

Sporting events have evolved beyond mere competitions to become powerful drivers of economic and social change, with tourism emerging as a key beneficiary of this symbiotic relationship. As regions increasingly recognize the potential for leveraging sports as a tool for development, the connection of sporting events and tourism has garnered substantial attention. This research seeks to explore the profound socioeconomic impact that hosting a sporting event can have on the tourism sector of a region, the research bases its studies on the host perceptions, asking the question on what the host think about the relationship between sport tourism and socio-economic growth of their territory. As proposed by Mao et al. (2016), successfully organizing a major sporting event necessitates a concerted effort from various stakeholders within the host communities, owing to its inherently complex nature. Notably, the inclusion of the host community's perspectives in the event planning process is indispensable for the sustainable execution of major sports competitions (Prayag et al., 2013).

Although sport tourism is not a recent phenomenon, it has garnered increased attention in recent years as a catalyst for socioeconomic development (Lee & Taylor, 2005). Despite this growing interest, the financial impacts of active sports events remain an area of limited study, as suggested by Gibson et al. (2018). Both public and private entities are increasingly intrigued by integrating the business aspect of sports into their promotional strategies, viewing it as a means to enhance economic growth, spanning from the cities to remote rural regions (Achilleos et al., 2021).

Communities often host sporting events with the intentions of providing entertainment, enhancing local pride, and stimulating economic growth. However, it's often the economic implications that take centre stage, serving as a primary justification for sporting events and a central focus when evaluating the feasibility of tourism development on a broader scale (Yuan, 2001). Nonetheless, not all regions are equally positioned to effectively host sporting events, games, or teams, due to the substantial public expenditures and a need for substantial flexibility, which may not necessarily translate into long-term economic benefits for the local populace, as articulated by Porter (1999).

Concurrently, research indicates that most communities gain limited economic advantages from owning professional sports teams, primarily witnessing a boost in local pride, especially when the construction of stadiums is financed through taxpayers' money (Calhoun & Gorman, 1994). Territorial growth encompasses economic development and social progress within a given region or nation. Sporting events have the potential to significantly impact territorial growth, extending beyond immediate economic gains. Investments in infrastructure, the promotion of tourism, and the development of sports facilities have enduring implications for the areas that host such events. Understanding the depth of the contribution of sporting events to territorial growth is essential for policymakers, event organizers, and local communities.

Italy, a country renowned for its rich sporting tradition and thriving tourism sector, serves as the focal point for this study. The diverse regions of Italy provide a unique context for understanding the impact of sports tourism on territorial growth. From the scenic landscapes of Tuscany to the bustling urban centres of Milan and Rome, Italy's varied economic landscapes and cultural diversity offer a rich tapestry for exploring the relationship between sports tourism and territorial development. Italy has a deep-rooted history of sports, with events like the Giro d'Italia in cycling, Serie A in football, and the Italian Open in tennis attracting a global audience. The cultural significance of sports in Italy is intertwined with its historical heritage, making it a compelling location to examine the interplay between sports tourism and territorial growth. Italy's diverse

geography and cities have hosted numerous international sporting events, which have left a lasting impact on local communities and economies.

Statement of the problem

While there is a growing body of literature on sports tourism and its impact on local economies, there exists a noticeable gap in our understanding of the specific socioeconomic implications of sports tourism for the territorial growth of Italy. The current literature lacks a detailed exploration of the economic, social, and cultural dimensions influenced by sports tourism in different regions of the country. This gap hinders our ability to formulate targeted strategies for harnessing the positive impacts of sports tourism while mitigating potential challenges.

Additionally, there is an insufficient focus on the perspectives of local residents regarding the socioeconomic influence of hosting sporting events. While previous studies acknowledge the importance of community engagement, there is a lack of in-depth exploration into residents' views on economic changes, job opportunities, and social and cultural transformations brought about by hosting sporting events. This gap limits our understanding of the holistic impact of sports tourism on the communities directly affected.

Furthermore, the existing literature falls short in providing comprehensive strategies and policies to enhance the positive effects of sports tourism on territorial growth. While some studies touch upon the general benefits and challenges, there is a dearth of practical recommendations based on empirical findings and best practices. This gap impedes the development of effective policies that could optimize the benefits of sports tourism while addressing any associated challenges, hindering the sustainable growth of regions hosting sporting events.

In light of these existing gaps, there is a critical need for research that systematically investigates the specific socioeconomic impacts, incorporates the perspectives of local residents, and formulates practical strategies and policies to enhance the positive effects of sports tourism on the territorial growth of Italy. Addressing these gaps will not only contribute to academic knowledge but also provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders involved in the planning and management of sports tourism events in the country.

Research questions

- What specific socioeconomic impacts does sports tourism have on the territorial growth of Italy?
- How do local residents perceive the socioeconomic influence of hosting sporting events?
- What strategies and policies can enhance the positive effects of sports tourism on territorial growth?

Research objectives

- To examine the specific socioeconomic impacts of sports tourism on the territorial growth of Italy.
- To explore local residents' perceptions of the socioeconomic influence of hosting sporting events.
- To propose strategies and policies to enhance the positive effects of sports tourism on territorial growth.

Literature review

Sports tourism has become a global phenomenon, with host regions increasingly recognizing its potential to stimulate territorial growth. Early studies in this field predominantly concentrated on the economic aspects of sports tourism, particularly revenue generation, job creation, and the economic benefits of hosting sports events. Numerous studies highlight the substantial economic benefits associated with hosting sporting events. Ritchie and Adair (2002) argue that sports tourism can significantly contribute to the economic growth

of regions through increased spending on accommodations, dining, transportation, and entertainment. For instance, Preuss (2007) notes the positive impact of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games on the Greek economy, emphasizing the potential for sports events to attract international visitors and boost local businesses. Ritchie et al.'s (2003) work in New Zealand studied the social impacts of hosting the 2000 America's Cup. This research illuminated the influence of such events on social capital, community development, and cultural enrichment. These findings emphasize that sports tourism is not solely an economic endeavour but also an avenue for social and cultural development within host regions.

While Higham (1999) claims that there are no gains to hosting big events, studies by Swindell and Rosentaub (1998) fail to demonstrate any substantial socioeconomic advantages for local areas fielding professional sports facilities and teams. Organizing small-scale sports events might benefit the local community in which they are organized as compared to a large-scale sports event since they don't need a massive infrastructure and input but instead functions within society's predetermined limits. If so, since the extra spending is not offset by capital spending, net financial advantages are simpler to manifest as "*accumulative expenditure in excess of what would be anticipated in the region if the event were not in place*".

A conceptual model is offered by Eiji and Higham (2020) that maximizes the advantages of sport tourism by recognizing the connections between event sports and ancillary tourist destinations. A destination's resources, attractions, and activities may see increased use as a result of effective sports find programs. The idea of a central place helps identify the kind of area that will gain from the growth of sport tourism. As per (Parra et al., 2017; Parra-Camacho et al., 2015), it is possible to consider any issue to have a social influence if it has the potential to change how well local residents are able to live their lives.

Several researches have attempted to comprehend and justify why locals support sporting events and how they view the benefits connected with them. The theory of social exchange has been employed as an effective structure theory in these investigations (Gursoy, 2014). Residents' perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of hosting events vary. The likelihood of supporting the staging of the event is therefore higher if the benefits surpass the costs than it is if the opposite is true (Rua, 2020). This theory can explain how locals perceive the economic, sociocultural and environmental effects of the tourism phenomenon (Nguyen & Coca-Stefaniak, 2020), for instance, hosting a sporting event. The perceived consequences of a sporting event have been found to affect interest (Gursoy et al., 2017). However, one of the topics most focused on in this field of research is examining the process through which citizens' support is altered by perceptions of consequences (Kim and Kaplanidou, 2019). Analysing local community' impressions of the sport's effects is crucial to the sport's effectiveness because they are a crucial group stakeholder for the event's long and short-term viability (Prayag et al., 2013). A major sporting event's potential socioeconomic positive and negative effects on a community are two of the most crucial factors in determining whether residents support or oppose hosting the event, according to the majority of studies analysing the social perception of impacts of sporting events (Sánchez-Sáez et al., 2018). The association between the host community's perceptions of the effects and support for sporting events has been demonstrated by research (Gursoy et al., 2017). Similarly, recent studies have confirmed the mediating role of a number of factors, including life satisfaction (Kim and Kaplanidou, 2019), general attitudes toward the event (Prayag et al., 2013), sports participation (Kim and Kaplanidou, 2019), community engagement, and positive and negative emotions, in residents' perceptions of the effects and public support for the event's celebrations (Ouyang et al., 2017). One of the main aims of this study is to discover and examine important features of the social impact of sports tourism and territorial growth.

Scholarly discussions have underlined the critical role of local residents in the success and impact of sports tourism. Rómulo Jacobo González-García et al. (2022) have contributed significantly to this topic by highlighting the importance of community engagement in the context of sports events. Their work emphasized the need to consider the impact of these events on local communities, including the potential for community cohesion, cultural enrichment, and a sense of shared identity. Additionally, Sánchez-Fernández & Cardona (2016) argue that Community engagement and local residents' perceptions and expectations have increasingly become focal points of sports tourism research, acknowledging the significance of resident support for the success of sporting events.

While there exists a substantial body of international research on sports tourism, studies specific to Italy are relatively scarce. Italy, renowned for its rich sporting tradition, diverse geography, and thriving tourism sector, represents a compelling and unique context for exploring the interplay between sports tourism and territorial growth. Italy's historical significance in the world of sports, from football to cycling to tennis, makes it an intriguing case for understanding how sports tourism can contribute to its territorial development.

While there is a substantial body of research focused on understanding the motivations behind travel and sports engagement, the process of profiling sport tourists remains relatively underdeveloped in the literature. This deficiency, especially when approached from an organic methodological standpoint, is primarily attributed to the challenges associated with integrating various databases and analytical methods. For instance, Morfoulaki et al. (2023) proposed the creation of an interactive platform to facilitate the generation of value for each participant in a sporting event. This platform could also serve as a means for effective communication between sports event organizers and institutional tourism offices, thereby enhancing the profiling of sport tourists from both a synchronous and diachronic perspective.

METHODOLOGY

Study area: Italy

Italy, located in southern Europe, is a captivating study area for exploring the impact of sports tourism on territorial growth. Several key factors make Italy an ideal setting for this research. To begin with, Italy boasts an astonishing range of geographical features, from the stunning coastlines along the Mediterranean Sea to the towering peaks of the Alps and the rolling hills of Tuscany. This diverse landscape enables a wide array of sports and recreational activities, making it an attractive destination for sports tourism. Water sports, skiing, hiking, and cycling are just a few examples of the activities that tourists and locals alike engage in. Italy has an enduring and passionate sporting tradition that has left an indelible mark on the global sporting landscape. Football (known as soccer in some regions) is deeply ingrained in Italian culture, with Serie A, the top-tier football league, attracting fans from around the world. The country also has a strong presence in cycling, with prestigious events like the Giro d'Italia. Tennis, motorsports, and various other sports hold significant importance, contributing to Italy's status as a sporting hub.

Sports events often intertwine with Italy's rich cultural history. Iconic venues like the Colosseum in Rome, which once hosted ancient gladiator contests, are symbolic of this connection. Italy's passion for sports is evident in the fervent support for local teams and international competitions. This cultural significance extends to the fan experience, as sporting events offer unique opportunities for travellers to engage with Italian culture.

Italy's tourism sector plays a pivotal role in its economy. The country's rich historical heritage, iconic cities, world-class cuisine, and natural beauty make it a top global tourist destination. The merging of sports events with Italy's existing tourist infrastructure creates substantial potential for enhancing the tourism sector and its

associated economic benefits. Sporting events can serve as magnets, drawing visitors to experience Italy's cultural and culinary offerings.



Note. Retrieved from [Accessed February 25, 2024]: <https://www.railpass.com/plan-your-trip/maps/italy>

Figure 1. Map of Italy.

Understanding Italy as the study area is crucial for contextualizing the research findings. The cultural, historical, and geographical nuances of Italy contribute to its potential for harnessing the benefits of sports tourism. This research aims to delve into the multifaceted relationship between sports tourism and territorial development within the diverse regions of Italy, offering insights and recommendations that can contribute to sustainable growth and development. Italy, with its rich sporting heritage and diverse territories, offers a unique opportunity to explore the broader implications of sports tourism on a national scale.

Materials and method

A comprehensive approach was employed to collect data through a questionnaire disseminated via a dedicated Google Module, specifically tailored to the intersection of sports and tourism. The initial sample consisted of 510 participants from diverse regions across Italy, emphasizing the socioeconomic impact of sports tourism on a territory or region. The questionnaire, strategically designed to explore residents' perspectives on the intricate relationship between sports tourism and socioeconomic aspects, was administered and collected during the period spanning November 2021 to January 2022. This method ensured a thorough representation of diverse viewpoints, providing valuable insights into the multifaceted dynamics of sports tourism and its effects on the economic and social fabric of the surveyed regions in Italy.

Table 1. A summary of sociodemographic characteristics of the 510 participants in the study.

Gender		Age bracket		Employment status	
Female	45%	12-20	42%	Students	46.9%
Male	55%	21-30	7%	Working-students	3.7%
		31-40	12%	Full-time	40.4%
		41-50	23%	Unemployed	3.3%
		51-60	11%	Others	5.7%
		Over 60	5%		
Total	100%	Total	100%	Total	100%

The sociodemographic characteristics of the 510 participants in this study, who were surveyed using the Google module, are succinctly outlined in Table 1.

A questionnaire comprising of factors relating to social interests, negative and positive effects, the economic advantage of sporting events, and tourism in a region was used to gather the data. The three scale options used to evaluate data indicators includes; 1 = Yes; 2 = No; 3 = Maybe. There are numerous justifications for using this kind of sampling. First, there is no appropriate sampling frame that is distinct from the respondents that are now accessible. To avoid this bias in the collection of data, an effort was made to balance the composition of the clusters bestowing to age and sex. The questionnaires were self-administered using a google module. It was divided into three sections; Part 1: Social-personal data, containing 9 questions (for example sex, gender, etc.) Part 2: Candidate interest, containing 9 questions; (for example question number 10: Do you play sports throughout the year?) Part 3: Economic benefit of sporting events and tourism in a region, containing 16 questions (for example question number 19: Is there any potential economic benefit to your region from hosting the sporting event?).

Data analysis

Upon completion of the data collection phase, the dataset was exported from Google Forms and imported into JASP, a statistical software known for its user-friendly interface and robust analytical capabilities. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were calculated using JASP. These statistics provided a preliminary overview of the respondents' perspectives on the socioeconomic impact of sports tourism across the regions in Italy. JASP's built-in functions for correlation and regression analysis were employed to examine relationships between variables.

Hypotheses

- Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant association between hosting sporting events and economic benefit.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant association between hosting sporting events and economic benefit.

Table 2. Contingency tables showing the percentage of the Potential economic benefit of hosting sports.

		Total	
Yes	Count	428.000	428.000
	% of total	84%	84%
No	Count	15.000	15.000
	% of total	3.000%	3.000 %
Maybe	Count	66.000	66.000
	% of total	13.000 %	13.000 %

Table 3. Chi-Squared test results.

	Value	df	p
X ²	1.037	1	>.001
N	510		

Notably, the *p*-value is less than the significant level of .005, this study rejects the null hypothesis because there is a relationship between hosting a sporting event and the potential economic impact of a region.

RESULTS

The first part of the questionnaire reflects the social-personal data of the interviewees. This is important because it gives the author a clear idea of who is taking part in the interview and if the author is using the right population for the research study. The second section of the questionnaire addresses the candidate's interest in sporting activities. This section is important because it provides the author with a way of building a basis for the socio-economic impact of sport tourism in the region. Observing the results of the descriptive statistical data analysis, it is possible to detect that as many as 84% of the sample populace supports the hypothesis that there is a potential economic benefit to the region hosting a sporting event. The third part of the research allows the researcher to understand how a large number of respondents are aware that their home region can obtain socioeconomic benefits by hosting sports events; the results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. A summary of the results from the questionnaires.

Will holding a sporting event help the recreational infrastructure of your region and stimulate the construction of new sporting facilities?	Is there a potential economic benefit to their region from hosting a sporting event?	Do you practice sports or physical activity during your holidays?	Do you choose their holiday destination based on the possibility of carrying out physical and sporting activities	Do you play sports throughout the year?
Yes 72%	Yes 84%	Yes 36%	Yes 10%	Yes 41%
No 4%	No 3%	No 39%	No 64%	No 29%
Maybe 24%	Maybe 13%	Sometimes 26%	Sometimes 26%	Maybe 30%
Total 100%	Total 100%	Total 100%	Total 100%	Total 100%

DISCUSSION

According to the data analysis, residents are generally in favour of holding sporting events on their own territory. The study's results demonstrate how local residents view the impact of sporting events on a region's or nation's economic development favourably. A large percentage of the populace agree that there is a potential economic benefit of hosting a sporting event in their region.

Socioeconomic impacts of sports tourism on the territorial growth of Italy

Sport-related tourism has received a lot of attention lately, both as a topic for academic research and as a steadily popular tourist option. According to the findings of the study, these sporting events serve as the cornerstone of resilience in terms of the social consequences of sport tourism. The results of this research agree with Higham (1999, p. 85) are supported by this research, including the benefits of organizing sporting events the following: *"local community more likely to share the favourable economic gains connected with sport," "greater levels of local access to athletic activities," and "facilities typically in existence."* In a study focused on the Italian context, sports tourism is defined as an increase of leisure sporting events (Coni - Censis, 2008). Sport tourism has developed into a key element for the expansion of the regional tourism sector (Coni - Censis, 2008). In order to promote stronger links and local and regional development, sports tourism can be used as a tool. Chris Gratton claims that in this sense, economic revival refers to a rise in local income and employment as a result of a sport-related economic production (Gratton et al., 2007). According to Ejarque (2003), there is a range of tourist value for events. The Olympic Sports Events, the FIFA World Cup of football, and sailing competitions are all part of the first level. Tennis, golf, and athletics

are all part of the second level. Skiing, swimming, and team sports like basketball or baseball are all part of the third level (Ejarque, 2003). For a modern traveller who enjoys event sport tourism—defined as traveling to witness a sporting event—doing physical activity has become essential in Italy. While smaller-scale athletic events may have greater positive effects on host towns, the majority of the existing event sport tourism literature concentrates on major or signature events based on the Italian context (Gibson et al., 2012). Any athletic event, no matter how big or small, generates a flow of tourists that can lead to cultural changes, the revival of regional customs, an improvement in quality of life, and the enhancement of a community's reputation. The event might be used to meet the needs of the people on a daily basis because of its distinctiveness and potential to bring tourists. At the research level, more multidisciplinary research is required, particularly research that builds on the knowledge bases currently present in the sports and tourism industries.

Questions about evaluating a few direct economic effects of sporting events were included in the research questionnaire. In accordance with the required answers, the respondents were asked to express their ideas by selecting one of the following values: 1 (Yes), 2 (No), or 3 (Perhaps). According to prior research that, on the one hand, affirm the significance of this type of sport tourism event in giving more social benefits, several of the questionnaire's fields focused on the perception of social components of sporting event and economic platforms on the tourism of a region (Taks, 2013), than on the other hand, recommend that sporting events have economic effects (Gibson et al., 2012). Residents' perceptions of the socioeconomic effects of sporting events and economic growth are moderated by a number of factors. Some of these factors are subjective, such as age, closeness to tourism destinations, or employment prospects in the tourism industry, while others are universal values, such as a sense of place and community as well as other sociocultural, political, and ecological beliefs. The results of this study show that there is an economic benefit to hosting a sporting event. 84% of respondents said there is economic benefit in hosting a sporting event compared to 3% who were on the contrary and 13% who did not have any idea whether hosting a sporting event has economic benefits. However, various characteristics of the location, such the season of the number of visitors, their life stage, and the type of tourism, are important. When it comes to holiday possibilities, location attachment, a strong connection to a particular location, inspires incredible dedication.

Residents' perception on the socioeconomic influence of hosting sporting events

Local residents are often the primary stakeholders in the hosting of sporting events, and their perceptions play a pivotal role in determining the overall success of such initiatives. Community engagement programs that actively involve residents in the planning and execution of events foster a sense of ownership. When residents feel that their voices are heard and their perspectives valued, it positively influences their perception of the socioeconomic impact of sporting events. Similarly, Kozhokulov et al. (2019) emphasize the pivotal role of securing residents' support for the tourism industry through a comprehensive understanding of their viewpoints. Their research indicates that engaged and informed residents are more likely to support the industry's growth and sustainability. Furthermore, involving residents in decision-making processes related to tourism planning fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, contributing to a more harmonious coexistence between tourism and the local community.

Bazzanella's (2019) post-event analysis methodology is widely acknowledged as a valuable tool for evaluating stakeholder perceptions. The research focuses on exploring the perspectives of event stakeholders, particularly residents in tourist destinations, regarding sports events. Qualitative analysis reveals a general sense of contentment among residents and other stakeholders regarding the tourist destination.

Rómulo-Jacobo et al. (2022) introduce a novel perspective, highlighting the importance of assessing residents' perceptions for promoting social engagement and inclusivity in the context of sports tourism. Their findings underscore the value of analysing citizens' social perception and evaluating the impact of sports tourism on their support for tourism development in shaping policies for social cohesion and local development.

However, Peric (2018) identifies a significant gap in the approach to sports event tourism, emphasizing the need to shift focus from the events themselves to the tangible benefits that local communities can derive. The discussion underscores the importance of prioritizing the interests and advantages that residents gain from hosting sports events, emphasizing that the success of such events is closely linked to the level of support and perceived benefits from the local community's perspective.

In contrast to the prevalent positive views of residents on the impact of sports tourism, Cheung et al. (2016) present a dissenting perspective. They argue that while sports tourism may bring economic benefits, it often comes at the cost of local residents' quality of life. Increased tourist traffic, according to their research, can lead to overcrowding, environmental degradation, and a rise in the cost of living, negatively affecting the well-being of the host community. Cheng et al.'s research urges a cautious and balanced approach, emphasizing the need to carefully assess the trade-offs between economic gains and potential social and environmental drawbacks when promoting sports tourism for sustainable development.

Strategies and policies to enhance positive effects of sports tourism on territorial growth

Effective strategies for enhancing the positive effects of sports tourism on territorial growth begin with integrated planning and collaboration. In this approach, various stakeholders, including government bodies, tourism boards, local communities, and event organizers, work in tandem to develop comprehensive strategic plans. This collaborative effort ensures that all facets of sports tourism are considered, from infrastructure development to community engagement. A coordinated approach maximizes the impact of sporting events on territorial growth, leveraging the strengths of each stakeholder group.

Secondly, critical to the success of sports tourism is the investment in infrastructure. Allocating resources to develop and enhance sports facilities, transportation, accommodation, and entertainment venues is paramount. Upgraded infrastructure not only improves the overall experience for visitors but also contributes to the long-term growth and attractiveness of the region. Well-planned investments create a positive feedback loop, attracting more significant events and fostering sustained economic development.

Furthermore, the active involvement of local communities in the planning and execution of sports events is a key strategy for ensuring a positive impact on territorial growth. Establishing community engagement programs allows residents to participate and benefit directly from the events. Beyond economic benefits, this approach fosters a sense of community ownership and pride. In turn, a more engaged local population becomes a crucial element in the sustained success of sports tourism initiatives.

Commitment to sustainability in the organization of sports events is not only an ethical consideration but also a strategic one. Implementing sustainable practices, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and eco-friendly transportation, aligns with global trends and enhances the region's appeal as a responsible tourism destination. By minimizing environmental impact, regions can attract environmentally conscious visitors and position themselves as leaders in sustainable sports tourism. Additionally, strategic marketing and branding efforts play a pivotal role in maximizing the positive effects of sports tourism on territorial growth. Beyond promoting the sporting events, regions should highlight unique selling points, such as cultural attractions,

natural landscapes, and local experiences. Crafting a compelling and multifaceted image of the region attracts a broader audience and contributes to sustained growth by creating a memorable destination beyond the sporting arena.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study establishes a clear correlation between sports tourism and the socioeconomic impact of a region, as perceived by its residents. The descriptive analysis results indicate a positive judgment from residents regarding the economic growth attributed to sports events within their region or country. The primary focus of this study was on residents, recognized as pivotal determinants and witnesses of the impact associated with hosting sports events. The implications of this research suggest the potential for longer-term investments in organizing sporting events, which can subsequently stimulate tourist movements and contribute to the sustained economic growth of the involved territory. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing understanding of residents' attitudes toward the impact of sporting events on regional tourism and economic platforms.

The findings highlight that these sporting events play a crucial role as a cornerstone of resilience, mitigating the social and economic consequences associated with sport tourism. Leveraging sports tourism as a strategic tool can foster stronger connections and drive local and regional development. As a suggestion for future research, it would be beneficial to explore whether hosting sporting events in one's home territory has effects that are linked to other sports achievements, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of the broader impact of sports on a community.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The publication reflects a collaborative endeavor marked by unique and complementary contributions from the authors, illustrating a well-coordinated team dynamic. Each author played a vital role in various facets of the research and development process.

Giovanni Raso was instrumental in shaping the research framework, leveraging his expertise in Sport Science and management to formulate key research questions and guide the study's trajectory. Moreover, Raso Giovanni spearheaded the design of the study methodology and supervised the field data collection, ensuring the robustness of the gathered data through hands-on involvement.

Dr. Cherubini assumed the lead role in crafting the manuscript, skillfully synthesizing contributions from all authors into a coherent narrative. His proficiency in research write-up guaranteed clarity and precision in communicating the research methods, results, and conclusions. Additionally, Dr. Domenico played a pivotal role in the review and editing process, incorporating feedback from all authors to refine the final manuscript.

SUPPORTING AGENCIES

No funding agencies were reported by the authors.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

REFERENCES

- Achilleos, A., Makrominas, M., Markides, C., Alexandrou, R., Konstantinidis, A., Papacosta, E., ... & Tselepos, L. (2021). Promoting active sports tourism through technology and evaluating its economic impact: experiences from Cyprus. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 25(4), 297-315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2021.1965009>
- Bazzanella, F. (2019). Perceptions and Role of Tourist Destination Residents Compared to Other Event Stakeholders in a Small-Scale Sports Event. The Case of the FIS World Junior Alpine Ski Championships 2019 in Val di Fassa. *Sustainability*, 11(24), 6909. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11246909>
- Bull C. & Lovell J. (2007). The impact of hosting major sporting events on local residents: an analysis of the views and perceptions of Canterbury residents in relation to the Tour de France 2007, *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 12, 229-248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775080701736973>
- Cheung, S. Y., Mak, J. Y., & Dixon, A. W. (2016). Elite Active Sport Tourists: Economic Impacts And Perceptions of Destination Image. *Event Management*, 20(1), 99-108. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599516X14538326025198>
- CONI – Censis. (2008). 1° Rapporto Sport e Società. Roma, CONI.
- Daniels, M., and W. Norman. (2003). Estimating the Economic Impacts of Seven Regular Sport Tourism Events. *Journal of Sport Tourism* 8:214-222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1477508032000161528>
- Eiji, I., Higham, J., & Cheer, J. (2022). Carbon emission reduction and the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. *Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights*.
- Ejarque, J. (2003). La destinazione turistica di successo. Milano, Hoepli.
- Freshwater, D. (2000). Rural America at the Turn of the Century: One Analyst's Perspective. *Rural America* 15(3):2-7.
- Garruti, C., Claval, P., Pagnini, M. P., & Scaini, M. (2003). The farm-holidays: a diversification attempt of the tourist supply. Calabria event. Paper presented at the Part VI: Tourism, Sustainable Development and Culture Turn.
- Getz, D. (2008). Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research. *Tourism management*, 29(3), 403-428. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.07.017>
- Gibson, H., Lamont, M., Kennelly, M., & Buning, R. (2018). Introduction to the special Issue active sport tourism. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 22(2), 83-91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2018.1466350>
- Gibson, H.J.; Kaplanidou, K.; Kang, S.J. (2012). Small-scale event sport tourism: A case study in sustainable tourism. *Sport Manag. Rev.* 15, 160-170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2011.08.013>
- González-García, R. J., Añó-Sanz, V., Parra-Camacho, D., & Calabuig-Moreno, F. (2018). Perception of residents about the impact of sports tourism on the community: Analysis and scale-validation. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 18(1), 149-156. <https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2018.01019>
- Gorman, J., Calhoun, K. (1994). *The Name of the Game: The Business of Sports*. New York: Wiley.
- Gratton, C., Shibli, S., & Coleman, R. (2007). The economics of sport tourism at major sports events. *Sport tourism destinations*, 233-247. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-7506-5937-6.50024-9>
- Gursoy, D.; Milito, M.C.; Nunkoo, R. (2017). Residents' support for a mega-event: The case of the 2014 FIFA World Cup, Natal, Brazil. *J. Destin. Mark. Manag.* 6, 344-352. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.09.003>
- Higham, J. (1999) Commentary - Sports as an Avenue of Tourism Development: An Analysis of Positive and Negative Impacts of Sports Tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism* 2:82-90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683509908667845>

- Higham, J., Hinch, T. (2002). Tourism, Sport and Seasons: The Challenges and Potential of Overcoming Seasonality in the Sport and Tourism Sectors. *Tourism Management* 23:175-185. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(01\)00046-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(01)00046-2)
- Homafar F, Honari H, Heidary A, Heidary T. & Emami A. (2011). The role of sport tourism in employment, income and economic development *J Hosp Manag Tourism*, 2 (3), 34-37.
- Kim W. & Walker M. (2012). Measuring the social impacts associated with Super Bowl XLIII: preliminary development of a psychic income scale, *Sport Management Review*, 15, 91-108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2011.05.007>
- Kim, C.; Kaplanidou, K. (2019). The Effect of Sport Involvement on Support for Mega Sport Events: Why Does It Matter. *Sustainability*, 11, 5687. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11205687>
- Kim, N., Chalip, L. (2004). Why Travel to the FIFA World Cup? Effects of Motives, Background, Interest, and Constraints. *Tourism Management* 25:695-707. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2003.08.011>
- Konstantaki, M., & Wickens, E. (2010). Residents' perceptions of environmental and security issues at the 2012 London Olympic Games. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 15(4), 337-357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2010.533921>
- Kozhokulov, S., Chen, X., Yang, D., Issanova, G., Samarkhanov, K., & Aliyeva, S. (2019). Assessment of Tourism Impact on the Socio-Economic Spheres of the Issyk-Kul Region (Kyrgyzstan). *Sustainability*, 11(14), 3886. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11143886>
- Lee, C., Taylor, T. (2005). Critical Reflections on the Economic Impact Assessment of a Mega-event: The Case of 2002 FIFA World Cup. *Tourism Management* 26:595-603. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.03.002>
- Li, J., Nguyen, T. H. H., & Coca-Stefaniak, J. A. (2020). Coronavirus impacts on post-pandemic planned travel behaviours. *Annals of Tourism Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.102964>
- Mao, L.L.; Huang, H. (2016). Social impact of Formula One Chinese Grand Prix: A comparison of local residents' perceptions based on the intrinsic dimension. *Sport Manag. Rev.* 19, 306-318. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2015.08.007>
- Mazza, B. (2022). Introduction. Interpretive Categories for the Study of Local Development Prospects for Active Sport Tourism. In *Sport Tourism and Its Territorial Development and Opportunities* (pp. 1-18). Cambridge Scholars Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-91341-6.00002-1>
- Morfoulaki, M., Myrovali, G., Kornilia-Maria Kotoula, Karagiorgos, T., & Alexandris, K. (2023). Sport Tourism as Driving Force for Destinations' Sustainability. *Sustainability*, 15(3), 2445. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15032445>
- Nunkoo, R. and So, K.K.F. (2016), "Residents' support for tourism: Testing alternative structural models", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 55 No. 7, pp. 847-861. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287515592972>
- Ouyang, Z.; Gursoy, D.; Sharma, B. (2017). Role of trust, emotions and event attachment on residents' attitudes toward tourism. *Tour. Manag.* 63, 426-438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.06.026>
- Parra, D.; Calabuig, F.; Núñez, J.M.; Crespo, J. (2017). The Relevance of the Social Impact of Sports Events in the Context of Public Financing of Sport. In *Sport Entrepreneurship and Innovation*; Alonso Dos Santos, M., Ed.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, pp. 117-140.
- Parra-Camacho, D., Ano Sanz, V., Ayora Perez, D., & González-García, R. J. (2020). Applying importance-performance analysis to residents' perceptions of large sporting events. *Sport in Society*, 23(2), 249-263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2019.1627330>
- Parra-Camacho, D.; Aguado-Berenguer, S.; Núñez-Pomar, J.M. (2015). Costs of holding a sporting event: The host community perception. *J. Sports Econ. Manag.* 5, 17-36.
- Perić, M. (2018). Estimating the Perceived Socio-Economic Impacts of Hosting Large-Scale Sport Tourism Events. *Social Sciences*, 7(10). <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7100176>

- Porter, M. (1990). *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. New York: The Free Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-11336-1>
- Porter, P. (1999) Mega-sports Events as Municipal Investments: A Critique of Impact Analysis. In *Sports Economics: Current Research*, J. Fizel, E. Gustafson and L. Hadley, eds., pp. 61-74. Westport: Praeger.
- Prayag, G.; Hosany, S.; Nunkoo, R.; Alders, T. (2013). London residents' support for the 2012 Olympic Games: The mediating effect of overall attitude. *Tour. Manag.* 36, 629-640.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.08.003>
- Ritchie, B., & Adair, D. (2002). The growing recognition of sport tourism.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500208667903>
- Rómulo Jacobo González-García, Martínez-Rico, G., Bañuls-Lapuerta, F., & Calabuig, F. (2022). Residents' Perception of the Impact of Sports Tourism on Sustainable Social Development. *Sustainability*, 14(3), 1232. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031232>
- Rua, S. V. (2020). Perceptions of tourism: a study of residents' attitudes towards tourism in the city of Girona. *Journal of Tourism Analysis: Revista de Análisis Turístico*.
- Sánchez-Fernández, M. D., & Cardona, J. R. (2016). Impacto De Las Actitudes De Los Residentes Sobre El Grado De Aceptación Del Turismo De Playa, El Turismo De Deportes, El Turismo De Naturaleza Y El Turismo Cultural/Impact of Residents Attitudes on the Acceptance Degree of Beach Tourism, Sports Tourism, Nature Tourism and Cultural Tourism. *Podium*, 5(2), 56-75.
<https://doi.org/10.5585/podium.v5i2.162>
- Sánchez-Sáez, J.A.; Segado-Segado, F.; Vidal, A. (2018). Sports events socially responsible as the engine for local development. *J. Sports Econ. Manag.* 8, 172-186.
- Swindell, D.E., & Rosentraub, M.S. (1998). Who Benefits from the Presence of Professional Sports Teams? The Implications for Public Funding of Stadiums and Arenas. *Public Administration Review*, 58, 11-20. <https://doi.org/10.2307/976884>
- Taks, M. (2013). Social sustainability of non-mega sports events in a global world. *Eur. J. Sport Soc.* 10, 121-141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16138171.2013.11687915>
- Yuan, M. (2001). Reoperationalizing Economic Data Collection. *Annals of Tourism Research* 28:727-737.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(00\)00085-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(00)00085-2)

