
The role of hosting sporting events in enhancing the image of domestic tourist destinations

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Abstract:

This research examines the role of sporting events in supporting and enhancing the image of a tourist destination, particularly in domestic tourism. The study focuses on highlighting how these events, with their public and organizational nature, can contribute to improving visitors' and citizens' perceptions of a destination's image.

The research is based on the premise that sporting events are not limited to their entertainment or competitive nature, but rather represent a strategic opportunity to highlight local identity, stimulate tourism, and increase interest in domestic destinations. These events also provide renewed opportunities for cultural communication, social interaction, and multi-level benefits, making them an influential tool within domestic tourism development policies.

Keywords: sporting events, image of a tourist destination, domestic destinations, strategic.

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1. Introduction:

One of the fastest growing tourism markets in recent times is sports tourism. Since people have more free time, sports and sporting events have become very important parts of current social life. Besides being an alternative option for holiday travel, the number of sports events, sports centers, and recreation centers is increasing incredibly. Since the tourism market constantly develops areas creating competition, it is a necessity to add new products to tourism varieties. Destination image is believed to serve as a crucial factor in shaping tourists' decision-making process. Influencing visitors repeatedly, it can directly affect the tourism demand of a destination. The image of the tourism destination is reflected in the image of the sporting event and vice versa. Furthermore, hosting a major sporting event provides an opportunity to promote the tourism destination, country or city as a destination.

sporting events are far beyond the content of sports simply as an entertainment event. By combining their global appeal and sophistication, successful sport tourism events receive worldwide attention on and off the field. In this wave of excitement, hosting sporting events to promote tourism traffic has become a worldwide phenomenon for most of the nations or regions. Sport for tourism, a win-win solution for both sectors, is used by destinations worldwide to promote their respective image or to reverse declining tourism destinations. They often amplify the current image of the place and keep it in the memory of potential tourists. In today's global world, destinations are in the process of continually improving their images and making it different from the other for gaining more market shares. Accomplished destinies have strong impacts and can get on other websites. Hence, in the participation of future planned events, destinations should conduct a comprehensive strategy for increasing the marketing opportunities. At times when promotion becomes more complex and yet more vital due to global competition, event hosting is beneficial when it is based on a pre-conceived image strategy.

To try to answer this, we raised this issue: **What is the role of embracing sporting events in enhancing the Image of domestic Tourist Destination?**

1.1 Research Objectives:

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the complex and multifaceted relationship between sporting events and the image of domestic tourism destinations. To achieve this goal, the study identified the following specific research objectives:

- Identify the basic concepts of sporting events and the image of a tourist destination.
- Identify the relationship between sporting events and the image of a tourist destination.
- Identify strategies for leveraging sporting events to support the tourism image.
- Identify the economic, social, cultural, and artistic benefits of sporting events.

- Identify the role of sporting events in supporting the image of a tourist destination.

Through this research endeavor, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and interrelationships between sporting events and the image of a tourist destination. Therefore, this study gains great importance not only in terms of its academic implications, but also in terms of its practical applications, which contributes to the sustainable development of the tourism sector in general.

2. Sporting events :

2.1 Definition of sporting events:

Hudson defined sporting events as those events that involve travel away from one's official residence to engage in sporting activity, either for recreation or competition, or to visit famous venues that host tournaments and sporting events, or to visit places for sporting purposes, such as sports museums and large sports facilities. (Elsheikh, Hassan, Zaki, & Badr Eldeen, 2022, p. 319)

2.2 Objectives of Sports Events:

Some sports events have different types and features that differ based on the event or occasion. Whether the event is deemed successful or not, is based on whether the intended goals are achieved. However, many different sports events will likely have the following goals (تريكي، 2017، صفحة 107):

- Such as during significant global events like the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, you can create substantial economic impact.
- The promotion of educational and health values and human development by organizing sports events.
- Improving the reputation of the host country and that of the organizing committee.
- Showcasing athletes' skills and competitive performance.
- Encouraging cultural exchange, tolerance, and unity among nations through sports.
- Inspiring enthusiasm and fostering a spirit of competition among participants.

2.3 Requirements for Organizing Sports Events:

According to the study, organizing sports events requires fulfilling several essential conditions to ensure their success. These requirements include (الصفحات 212-211، 2024، خير الله و بن عيسى):

- **State Support:** the state must provide the necessary services to facilitate the event's organization.
- **Sponsorship:** obtaining support from the country's president and head of government.
- **Marketing:** presenting the event's marketing plan, sponsorship opportunities, and rights related to broadcasting, advertising, and ticket sales.
- **Funding:** the financial plan must clarify the sources of funding, including governmental support for infrastructure, such as stadiums, hotels, and transportation, along with a detailed event budget.

- **Insurance:** ensuring comprehensive insurance coverage for all participants, including athletes, coaches, and administrators, through major insurance companies.
- **Security:** demonstrating the host country's security capabilities, outlining measures for securing athletes, spectators, and accommodations, and providing guarantees regarding safety and crime prevention.
- **Stadiums:** listing available sports stadiums, those under construction, and planned facilities, including features like electronic gates, numbered seats, and large screens, in addition to training venues.
- **Media:** showcasing the country's media capabilities, satellite coverage, and availability of local and international media correspondents.
- **Transportation:** highlighting the country's accessibility, international airports, and domestic and international transportation networks.
- **Information Technology:** showcasing the nation's digital infrastructure, internet capabilities, and mobile communication services, as well as the ability to offer online ticket sales and provide connectivity at venues and airports.
- **Previous Hosting Experience:** documenting past sporting events hosted by the country, emphasizing its experience and organizational expertise.
- **Health and Environment:** demonstrating the availability of medical infrastructure, specialized healthcare facilities, and measures ensuring a disease-free environment for participants and visitors.
- Highlighting environmental protection efforts, sustainability initiatives, and regulations ensuring eco-friendly practices during the event.
- **Energy:** ensuring the availability of stable energy supplies, including electricity and alternative energy sources.
- **Government Guarantees:** providing official guarantees for visa facilitation, work permits for foreign workers, transportation, healthcare, banking services, and currency exchange.
- **Tickets and Accreditation:** outlining the ticketing strategy, including pricing, sales channels, and accreditation for event attendees and officials.

3. Image of Tourist Destinations:

3.1 Definition of Image of Tourist Destinations:

Destinations are the central element of the tourism system and they need a favorable image to be considered as a choice for travel at all. Image is a sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions of someone towards something that has key influences on a variety of behaviors. (Maghrifani, Liu, & Sneddon, 2021, p.04)

Lawson and Baudbovy (1977) defined it as "the expression of knowledge, previous perceptions, prejudices, and emotional thoughts of an individual or a group about a specific place." Kotler and Gertner

(2004) further elaborated that it " represents the sum of all beliefs, ideas, and impressions individuals associate with a particular location (بريك، 2020، صفحة 86)."

Tourism image consists of three key components:

- **Cognitive Component:** This refers to the collection of thoughts and perceptions a tourist has about a destination, forming an internal mental image of its unique characteristics. This component depends on the amount of available information about the destination and may also be shaped by firsthand experiences from previous visits, influencing the cognitive image.
- **Affective Component:** This represents the emotions or feelings a tourist associates with a destination. According to Gartner, it encompasses either positive or negative sentiments, which play a critical role in shaping the tourist's evaluation of the destination. This component is particularly influential during the decision-making process of choosing a destination.
- **Conative Component (Behavioral Component):** This relates to the tourist's behavior and intention to visit a destination. It embodies the final stage in which the tourist decides to travel to a particular place. Mackay (2005) suggested that if the conative component is strong, it significantly increases the likelihood of the tourist proceeding with their travel plans within a specific timeframe. (بريك، 2020، صفحة 86)

4. The Relationship Between Sporting Events and Destination Image:

The relationship between sporting events and destination image has become an extensive field of study, hosting a sport event can represent a good opportunity to increase the attractiveness of a city, attract tourists, and enhance economic outcomes. Nonetheless, not all events are apt for fulfilling the optimistic predictions suggested by the tourism literature. Indeed, many sport events prove to be unable to improve city image and tourist attractiveness. However, other events are able to significantly enhance city visibility and to generate interest, at least in the short term. The success of these actions is mainly related to the branding and marketing strategies adopted in the event planning. Given the relevance of these actions, a number of scholarly and policy-relevant contributions draw attention to the selection and/or the development of the right strategies for destinations and event managers. The relative exposure of destinations after sport events is often highlighted by media coverage analysis. According to this perspective, the huge visibility generated by the global diffusion of the events is supposed to reach a strategic goal of the hosting cities. If properly organized, media exposure for a destination provides a unique opportunity to shape beliefs and perceptions of a city, remaining in the mind of a major international audience, at least in the short run (Guará Rocha Coelho, Guilherme Barbosa de Amorim, & Manoel Cunha de Almeida, 2019, p.07) (Piva, Cerutti, Prats, & Raj, 2017, p.101)

4.1 The Role of Sports Events in Supporting the Image of Domestic Tourism Destinations :

(بوشلخة و طبائية، 2024، صفحة 172)

Today, sports and tourism are deeply interconnected, with societal development contributing to the rise of "sports tourism." In the past, tourism was primarily associated with relaxation and leisure. However, as lifestyles have evolved and awareness of health and fitness has grown, sports activities have become an integral part of the tourism experience. Many recreational sports that were once practiced casually have transformed into professional competitions and even Olympic events.

Sports events play a crucial role in enhancing the image of domestic tourism destinations, as they help promote the cultural and historical heritage of the host country. They also contribute to making the destination more attractive by:

- Boosting the economy through increased investment and tourism spending.
- Strengthening the country's global reputation and positioning it as a more recognized destination.
- Developing infrastructure, including transportation, accommodation, and sports facilities.
- Attracting tourists who are interested in sports, either as participants or spectators.
- Creating a lasting positive impression of the destination among visitors.

4.2 Challenges and Risks Associated with Hosting Sporting Events:

Challenges and Risks Associated with Hosting Sporting Events There is growing literature on the challenges and risks of hosting sporting events, reflecting the increasing global competition among places to host such attractions.

• Sporting events, such as the staging of major competitions, are employed as policy tools for promoting tourist income and investment in infrastructure in the host site, and for enhancing the town's status and image. However, many destinations face financial burdens in addressing the challenges of hosting these events regarding the marketing, provision of safety and security, and the build-up and provision of sports facilities.

• Tensions may escalate against locals, especially when risks and uncertainties are imposed, such as by evicting local communities or by non-acknowledgement of the most affected populations facing the most serious impacts, or by denying the impacts themselves.

• As a result of the hosting of sports events, towns often pay little attention to their environmental impacts, such as the increased consumption of water, pertinent waste, as well as uncontrolled tourism growth.

• Currently, few destinations have conducted systematic assessments of hosting sports events, and there is a crucial need for risk management strategies and action plans in this area. Unaddressed issues will leave affected populations and the wider public with often-hostile views and may also have long-term severe impacts (Sun, Rodriguez, Wu, & Chuang, 2013, p.474).

Therefore, in order to provide protection to both the hosting locality and the community, sustainable planning together with a comprehensive risk assessment and management approach should be employed. (Faruque, Sharmin, Chowdhury, Talukder, & Abu Sufian, 2024)

4.3 Strategies for Leveraging Sporting Events for Destination Image Enhancement:

Leveraging a sporting event effectively to enhance destination image is highly sensitive, demanding, and skillful. To impress the audience, live, to create memorable and shared global experiences, to maximize the event TV coverage, to exploit the global sports audience, attract sponsorship, and partners ready to invest in event servicing and place branding, while encouraging public event funding, is not an easy task. Even large events are not easy in their decision of venue. All contestants, being ICT savvy, use several types of data and knowledge to compare alternative sites, no longer focusing only on costs. There is an institutionalized decision process with three types of mainstream players: event owners, cities, and regions with good candidates. As the expense of the participating viewers is considerable for smaller cities, many networks have become able to increase their event image while reducing their risk. An important service that future event organizers could develop is to sponsor the production of quality-of-life data sources in targeted scenic cities. With more information, decision support systems could even become a beneficiary of a public good that lets cities share this information. (Ziakas, 2022) (Azmi, Hanafiah, Zain, & Shariffuddin, 2024, p.376)

Marketing and Promotion

Concerning the marketing and promotion of important sports events, effective marketing of a product or an event is important and has the same weight as the preparation and organization itself, as any event depends on the financial success of its realization. Today, marketing strategies contribute significantly to the sponsorship advertisement sales successes, as the economic scale of the advertising sponsor's interest is to get fees through tickets or television commercials. Therefore, selling media rights is the biggest economic scale of the success of marketing and promotion of big sporting events. The total revenue obtained from the commercialization of media rights for the Universiade held at the Games in 1999 and 2001 in Palma de Mallorca was €8 million. The total television hours of broadcasting the event was 1,325, reaching an audience of 600 to 700 million spectators in a total of 140 countries. At the world level, especially in more protected European countries, these data are not the most important sources of financing for organizing sports events. In Europe, the most important sources are the main media channels, derived from betting houses, casinos, and the best sponsors, which, on many occasions, are also the main and most contributing investors. (Chen & Lin, 2021, p.03)

The maximum marketing and image potential of important sports events can be used in several areas. Among these are:

- The use of the spaces of the event,
- The notable reduction of environmental problems ,
- The contribution to humanizing the city,
- The support of cultural and sports activities in the city ,
- With the recovery of previous infrastructures and the creation of new sports infrastructures.

These supports are included in the concept of in-kind services, which includes police services for the control and organization of traffic or security areas, health services, telephones, radio or television

communication, positioning and sites for the installation of radio links, advance tests of roads, installation sites for plasma screens or loudspeakers, research and rescue services, street lighting, waste intervention services, disposal of rainwater, and street cleaning and maintenance of infrastructures in a common way, before and after the event. The in-kind services assumed by the city, when providing support for the accomplishment of the event, are eliminated from the direct cost of the event organization. (Kaplan, Szajnfarber, & Helveston, 2023, p.02)

Infrastructure Development

In their quest to provide better facilities and a better quality of life for residents and visitors, host cities have had to undertake substantial construction and development projects. One of the major physical legacies of a large international event is the infrastructure required when thousands of people come together to celebrate sporting events. Such international gatherings require not only those physical structures be built to house spectators, participants, and the media, but also that urban infrastructure such as transportation, waste removal, police and security services, telecommunications, and medical assistance be improved or expanded to satisfy the demand over a period of just a few weeks. (Lu & Lin, 2021)

There is a direct relationship between the hosting of major sports events and the investment in sports infrastructure. Hosting significant sports events provides new sports infrastructure, which may accordingly serve the sports development and health movement of the local population. (Ferris, Koo, Park, & Yi, 2023; p.03)

Community Engagement

Analysis of the results indicates that the factor related to the degree of appreciation and strengthening of the involvement of the local people in promoting and organizing future large-scale sports events, as well as in the legacy of these, supports the thinking that community acceptance and support depends on the interest involved in the organization. In fact, the creation of recreation zones desired for the duration of the event to capture the interest of the community in the stadium improves feelings of community identity and belonging, thus strengthening confidence in the creation of a system in an ongoing support and promotion program. The establishment of regional or national mega-events, driven but surrounded by local integration supported by a set of structural, spatial, and design factors, guarantees the increase in the sense of identity of the local population and the wider population, providing an understanding of reality that is a key identity factor in the local community. (Hoicka, Lwitzsch, Brisbois, Kumar, & Camargo, 2021, p.02)

Community enjoyment for creating an innovative local response cannot, however, overlook the economic hardship and the scarcity of available funds that limit opportunities. Both, other authors believe, must, however, be faced for the retention of an identity and a sense of belonging to the territory in the population that is integrally integrated with cultural and entertainment proposals, and not driven by competition limited to demand, but by production related to its specific temporary characteristics in any case:

- Through the construction of a community identity
- The ability to create events ad hoc to attract tourists.

Thus, to influence the enhancement of public buildings. (Kádá & Klaniczay, 2022, p.04)

4.4 Factors influencing the success of sporting events in enhancing destination image:

There are several factors that affect the success of sporting events in enhancing the image of a tourist destination.

- Factors that deal with event attributes such as the quality of the event organization, marketing strategies, and the cultural relevance of the sport receive attention.
- Event evaluation from attendees is monitored on the provision of infrastructure, accessibility, and amenities.
- Furthermore, engagement between event stakeholders such as the local community and sponsors is included in the discussion .
- Special attention is directed at the role played by timing and seasonality in enhancing a sporting event's destination image .
- Audience preferences and demographic profiles of the attendees are highlighted. Additionally, the examination of how wider external socio-political and global trends affect the relationship between the event and the place is reviewed.

Primarily, these factors are analyzed separately. However, the subsequent discussion outlines the complex interplay of these factors as they are understood by event attendees based on the context of a single event case study. it presents insights for event operators on the benefits that can be derived through hosting sports tourism events, understanding the needs and expectations of attending tourists. (Lu & Lin, 2021)

5. The Benefits of Hosting Sporting Events for Tourist Destinations:

5.1 The Economic Benefits of Hosting Sporting Events for Tourist Destinations

The economic benefits of hosting a major sporting event are widely considered one of the most important elements for cities and countries looking to attract them (WILSON, 1970). The revenue generated in terms of visitor spending, sponsorships, and media rights can far outweigh the costs connected with staging the event, particularly if the planning and execution are of a high quality. Visitor spending accounts for a major portion of governments' return on investment after direct costs have been met. Event organizers will typically advertise to this end, while support can also come from media partners, sponsors, and the broadcast. For participants and visitors, it is not only ticket sales, but also typically shopping, eating, drinking and accommodation while attending the event. Research has demonstrated that the in situ impacts on local businesses can be large, temporarily displacing consumer spending from elsewhere in the region or nation. (Gozgor, Lau, Zeng, Yan, & Lin, 2021, p.03).

5.2 The Social and Cultural Impacts of Sporting Events on Tourist Destinations

Sporting events today are no longer judged solely by the quality of the competition or uniqueness of the venue. They are widely seen as “an industry in their own right, and as a means to produce positive financial and non-financial, social and economic outcomes for many urban and regional areas.”.

- In addition it is believed the hosting of major sporting events will lead to a greater awareness of regional locations ,
- Promote job creation,
- And provide “enhanced image potential .”
- A major political aim for the hosting of such events is the boosting of a sense of national identity and pride.

In order to understand the social and cultural implications of hosting a sporting event on a tourist destination, the two constructs tourism and sport need to be examined. The potential for cultural exchange and a greater understanding arising from participating in sports is evident in all of these examples. The power of sport to transcend national or cultural boundaries has long been acknowledged. In a fragmented or torn world, sport can “engender positive change and dialogue, break down cultural walls and provide symbolic, demilitarized and neutralized zones in which to enact peaceful exchanges”. However, part of the value of these grand events is in the participatory nature of hosting them, the power to provoke people to celebrate en masse. (Isaac & Farkic, 2024, p.03).

5.3 Environmental Considerations in Hosting Sporting Events for Destination Image

Sporting events might well be described as the opium of the masses, to paraphrase Karl Marx, it is assumed that hosting a sporting event involves generating massive amounts of waste, consuming vast quantities of resources and leaving a series of spectlyarly overstated carbon footprints. Would the use of sustainable practices in hosting reduce the number of negative environmental impacts of sporting events on Destination Image? How do eco-friendly strategies employed in hosting assist in generating positive Destination Image? Would there be a greater public awareness of the environmental impacts from visiting sporting events and the environmental practices of hosts? Would the achievement of successful sustainable hosting practices assist in encouraging engagement with environmental issues among the public (Chernushenko, 1996)? Using the marketing of a destination through the showcasting of the local environment as a backdrop, would the implementation of environmentally responsible hosting practices allow event managers to increase the quality if the empirage- and its derivative image- rather than just focussing on quantity and the general economic benefits connected to hosting sporting events, is there a growing need to balance these with the need for environmentally sustainable practices? (Pourpakedfekar & Oboudi, 2022, p.216)

6. Conclusion:

This study highlights the importance of sporting events as an effective tool in enhancing a destination's image, through the opportunities they provide to promote a destination and enhance visitors' awareness of its organizational and cultural capabilities. The study demonstrated that the success of these events in achieving their objectives depends on a number of interconnected factors, It

begins with clarity of objectives and effectiveness of strategies, extends to the availability of regulatory and logistical requirements, and ends with the organizing body's ability to meet expected challenges, whether financial, administrative, or environmental.

The close relationship between these events and the image of a tourist destination is evident in the multidimensional impact they have, contributing to enhancing a positive impression of the destination and consolidating its cultural identity, in addition to the economic, social, and environmental benefits that can be capitalized on in the long term. Based on the findings, the study proposes a set of recommendations:

- Adopting a comprehensive approach to organizing sporting events that takes into account all dimensions affecting the destination's image (cultural, economic, social, and environmental).
- Sporting events must be used to carefully highlight the identity of the domestic tourism destination, focusing on unified and targeted communication messages.
- Working to overcome financial and logistical challenges by building lasting partnerships between public and private stakeholders.
- Investing in major events to develop tourism infrastructure and services, improving the quality of the visitor experience and establishing a positive long-term image.
- Involving various segments of the local community in the planning and implementation stages to ensure the desired social impact.

Therefore, the effectiveness of sporting events extends beyond the event itself, through the transformations they bring about in perception and the general impression they bring about about the destination. This makes them a strategic tool that must be intelligently and effectively utilized within national tourism policies.

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