

# The sport tourism and regional economic development: A systematic review

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## ABSTRACT

The main aim of this systematic review is to analyse the most recent literature regarding the relationship between sports tourism and its economic impact on a specific region. This research employed a systematic literature review methodology following PRISMA guidelines. A total of 64 relevant articles were identified through comprehensive searches across databases, resulting in the selection of 14 articles that met the established inclusion criteria for the study. The studies were analysed and synthesized to identify the key economic benefits and challenges of hosting sporting events. The review identified that sports tourism positively impacts regions by attracting tourists, creating job opportunities, and generating revenue for local businesses. Both small-scale and major sports events can potentially contribute to regional economic development. However, proper planning and management are essential to ensure that the benefits are maximized and that any negative impacts are minimized. There is need for further research to identify best practices for maximizing the economic benefits of sport tourism and to explore its potential for sustainable economic development.

**Keywords:** Sport tourism, Economic impact, Regional development, Small-scale sports events, Major sports events, Revenue generation, Sustainability, Planning, Management.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, sports tourism has attracted significant attention from researchers due to its status as one of the fastest-growing sectors in the tourism industry. An increasing number of tourists are venturing to new destinations to observe and engage in sporting events or activities. As the phenomenon of sports tourism has grown enormously in contemporary times, it has necessitated the need to analyse and evaluate its economic value and understand the community's perception regarding its socio-economic impact. Therefore, this article deepens the understanding of sports tourism and its economic influence on a host region by examining the most relevant research conducted on the topic.

According to Rómulo Jacobo et al. (2022), sports tourism is a type of travel that involves individuals or groups temporarily leaving their place of residence to engage in, observe, or participate in sports-related activities or events. It encompasses a wide range of activities, including attending major sporting events, participating in recreational sports, or visiting destinations associated with sports. As per Hinch & Higham (2001), sports tourism can significantly impact local economies, with the potential to generate revenue for businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation companies. Moreover, they emphasize on the importance gaining a deeper understanding of residents' perspectives as these insights into residents' perceptions can be invaluable in shaping tourism policies and strategies. This information can help gain residents' support for sport tourism and support its sustainable growth.

A number of researchers explore two main types of sport tourism: active sport tourism and event sport tourism. Cheung et al. (2016) differentiate the two as; active sports tourism involves travelling outside one's usual environment to participate in sports activities, whereas event sports tourism involves travelling away from home to attend and spectate sporting events. Several studies (Romolo Jacobo et al., 2022; Tomino et al., 2020; Perić, 2018; Cheung et al., 2016) have suggested that in contrast to mega sports events, small-scale events yield more significant positive impacts on the host community. Indeed, the smallest events generally utilize pre-existing infrastructure, require fewer investments from the government, and generate more controllable crowds and traffic.

The main aim of this systematic review is to analyse the most recent literature regarding the relationship between sports tourism and its economic impact on a specific region. This study takes a big dive into the information presented by scholarly analysts including Hinch and Higham (2021), Tomino et al. (2020), Romolo Jacobo et al. (2022), Perić (2018) among others. These scholars have consistently directed their focus towards the intersection of sports tourism and regional economic development, contributing valuable perspectives that hold significance in this field. Given its rapid growth and increasing popularity, it is imperative to address the potential challenges and concerns related to the thriving sports tourism sector.

Amidst the rapid growth of sports tourism and its acknowledged potential for generating economic and community advantages, a critical knowledge gap exists concerning the relationship between sports tourism and regional economies. Thorough research is essential to address the following inquiries: What is the true impact of sports tourism on the economic landscape of host regions? What is the residents' perception of the economic impact of sport tourism? And what economic benefits come from hosting small-scale events as well as major sporting events?

The urgency for comprehensive research becomes evident when considering the pressing questions that remain unanswered. Firstly, determining the true impact of sports tourism on the economic landscape of host regions is crucial, as it holds the key to understanding the extent of its contribution to regional development

and sustainability. Secondly, delving into residents' perceptions of the economic impact of sports tourism provides valuable insights into the social dimension of this phenomenon, shedding light on the community's views and concerns. Lastly, the study of economic benefits arising from hosting both small-scale and major sporting events is pivotal, as it aids in assessing the cost-benefit analysis of such endeavours and informs future decision-making processes. This research endeavour is not only timely but also essential for policymakers, businesses, and communities to maximize the positive aspects of sports tourism while addressing potential challenges.

### **Aim of study**

To comprehensively examine the relationship between sport tourism and economic effects on a host region, the phenomenon was analysed based on four different aspects listed below;

1. Explore the perceptions of local residents regarding the economic impact of sports tourism on their region.
2. Investigate the economic impact of small-scale sports events on the host region, considering factors such as infrastructure utilization and government investments.
3. Assess the economic impact of large-scale or mega-sport events on the host region, taking into account the scale, investments, and crowd management.
4. Examine the actual tourism influx numbers during the FIFA World Cup 2010 and identify the factors contributing to deviations from expected values, offering insights into event-specific challenges and opportunities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology for this literature review was designed following the guidelines of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). A comprehensive search was conducted across various reputable databases, including Google Scholar, SCOPUS, and ProQuest. These databases were selected for their extensive coverage of academic literature across multiple disciplines, ensuring the retrieval of relevant studies regarding the objective of this review.

To identify pertinent literature, a systematic search strategy was employed using the following keywords: "*sports tourism*," "*sports events*," "*economic impact*," "*small-scale events*," and "*major sports events*." Boolean operators "OR" and "AND" were used to refine the search. The search terms were selected to capture a broad range of articles related to sports tourism and its economic effects on regions. The inclusion criteria were established to determine the eligibility of articles for this review and are indicated below;

- Articles published in English.
- Peer-reviewed studies.
- Publication date between 2000 and 2023.
- Articles containing information related to the economic impact of sports tourism or sports events on specific regions.

Upon implementing the search strategy, the initial results provided 126 articles. After eliminating 66 duplicate references, a total of 60 unique articles remained. Subsequently, a manual search was performed by scrutinizing the references of selected articles, and the Cited Reference tool was used to identify studies citing the initially retrieved articles. This supplementary search yielded an additional 4 articles. The combined results, comprising 64 articles, formed the basis for the review.

Each article's title was meticulously assessed to determine its potential relevance to the literature review. Titles deemed relevant were further examined by reviewing their abstracts to ascertain their suitability for inclusion in this study. Following the rigorous screening process, a total of 16 articles were initially identified as meeting the inclusion criteria. However, upon a comprehensive review of these articles, two were excluded as they primarily focused on the behaviour of sports tourists rather than the impact on the host region. Consequently, 14 articles were selected as they aligned with the established inclusion criteria and were deemed suitable for the study. The reasons for the exclusion of articles were based on consideration of the following aspects:

Certain publication types, such as conference abstracts, book reviews, editorials, and commentaries, were excluded to prioritize peer-reviewed research articles, ensuring a higher level of academic rigor.

- To capture the most recent developments and trends in the field of sport tourism, older publications falling outside the specified date range (2000-2023) were excluded.
- Duplicate articles were systematically removed to prevent redundancy and maintain a concise and clear representation of the selected literature.
- Articles not published in English were excluded to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the selected literature.
- Articles from sources lacking academic credibility were excluded to ensure the reliability of the selected literature.
- Articles that did not directly address the core themes of the study, particularly the economic impact of sports tourism on host regions, were excluded to maintain focus and relevance to the research objectives.

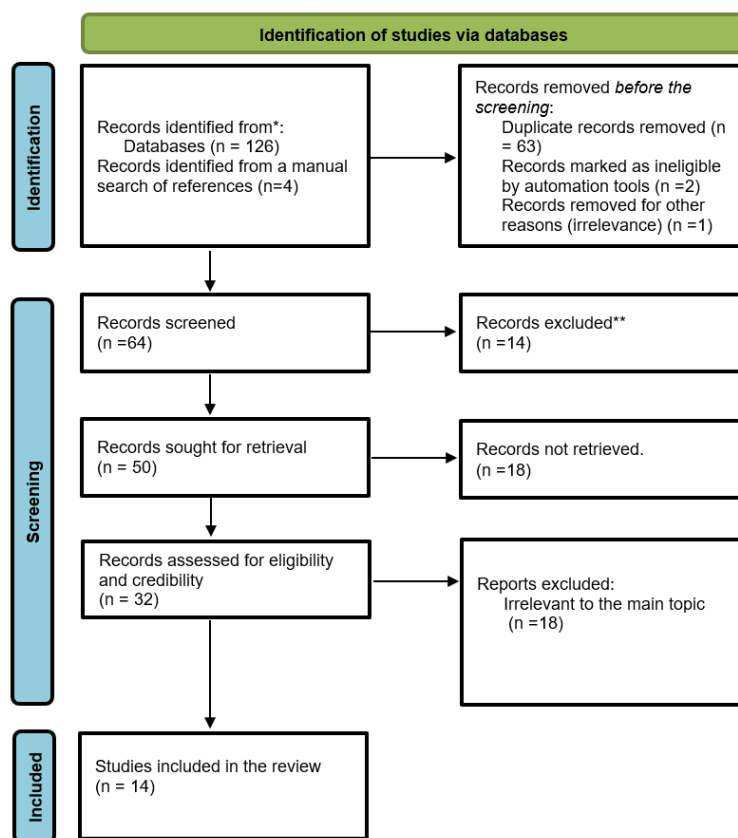


Figure 1:PLASMA diagram showing the search strategy.

The PLASMA flowchart, depicted in Figure 1 provides a clear and concise visual representation of the search strategy, screening process, and article selection.

The articles selected for their relevance to the research are shown in Table 1 which summarizes their content.

Table 1. Summary of the chosen studies pertinent to the topic and the various aspects they address.

Reference	Objective	Methodology	Results
Rómulo Jacobo et al, 2022	To analyse the perception and predisposition toward the support of citizens on the impact of sport tourism from a multidimensional perspective	Descriptive study, Survey	the study variables are significant except for social impact.
Cheung et al., 2016	Provide an analysis of tourist athlete expenditures and their subsequent economic impact, as well as their perception of the venue hosting the small-scale international sporting event	Experimental study	There is a positive impact on the destination's image and economic benefits for the community to host an international small-scale sport event.
Morfoulaki et al., 2023	To analyse the current and future potentials of sport tourism in the area's sustainable growth.	Case study and review	Sports tourism is estimated to help build a unique identity closely linked to sustainability goals.
Tomino et al., 2020	To review and systematize a broad spectrum of social impacts that outdoor sport-tourism events create from the perspective of key stakeholders and address strategic planning elements necessary for achieving event sustainability.	Systematic review	The previous assertions that most of the focus was on positive and economic impacts.
Perić, 2018	To understand the legacy of the 13th EHF European Handball Championship, held in Croatia in January 2018, by assessing the event's economic and social benefits and costs	Exploratory factor analysis	Community development and pride, security risks, traffic problems, economic benefits, environmental concerns, and economic costs are the primary impact dimensions.
Diederling, & Kwiatkowski (2015)	The main objective of this article is to review the international literature on the economic impact of sports events, and, in particular, to examine the key features of primary economic impact studies and potential sources of bias.	A systematic review of the literature	This paper provides an overview of studies on the economic impact of events and serves as a reference guide for further studies, including empirical ones.
Nyikana & Tichaawa (2018)	This paper explores sports tourism and its contribution to local economic development (LED) in an emerging destination context.	Mixed-method research design	Data reveal that by and large, sports tourism contributes significantly to LED and plays a vital role in the promotion of the region.
Poczta et al. (2020)	To investigate the influence of non-mega sporting events on the perception of negative externalities of host residents	Case study	The elite equestrian sporting event is less burdensome for its residents and gives them more satisfaction.
Kozhokulov et al. (2019)	To examine the socio-economic impact of tourism in the region	Quantitative assessment methodology	The study showed that the impact of tourism on economic and social growth in the Issyk-Kul region is positive.
González-García et al. (2018)	To develop a valid scale to measure residents' perceptions of the impacts generated by sport tourism activities	Descriptive study	The analysis results obtained a five-factor model with 16 items divided into (1) economic impacts, (2) cultural impacts, (3) environmental impacts, (4) social impacts and (5) political impacts.
Njoroge et al. (2017)	To evaluate the role of devolution in promoting sports tourism in Kenya and how sports tourism has contributed to social and economic development in the region.	Case study and survey	sports tourism has both positive and negative impacts on the destination

Tsekouropoulos et al. (2022)	To connect the local, sustainable tourism development with the sporting events and to come up with relevant proposals for the reference area and their generalization in the whole tourist areas.	Quantitative study	Several variables, such as the economic impact, can predict the acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports.
Tzoumaka et al. (2022)	To explore direct spending profiles of sport event tourists in a small rural destination as an alternative to the economic impact of the multiplier effect studies.	Online survey method	The participants who responded to the survey spent, on average, about EUR 163 for accommodation, EUR 205 for meals, and EUR 38 for other tourist spending, such as souvenirs.
Peeters et al. (2014)	To use monthly country-by-country arrival data to assess the impact of organizing the FIFA 2010 World Cup on tourism in South Africa	Data analysis	South Africa attracted around 220,000 extra arrivals from non-Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries during the event, and 300,000 over the entire year. These numbers are less than the predictions made by the organizers prior to the event

In order to extract information from the articles, a categorisation table was drawn up based on the following dimensions: Line of search and the study references.

Table 2. Line of research covered by the studies reviewed for this paper.

Line of Research	Study
Explore the perceptions of local residents regarding the economic impact of sports tourism on their region	Rómulo Jacobo et al. (2022), Cheung et al. (2016), Bazzanella (2019), Kozhokulov et al. (2019), Peric, (2018)
To determine the relationship between sports tourism and the economic impact on a region.	Tsekouropoulos et al. (2022), Tzoumaka et al. (2022), and Kozhokulov et al. (2019), Perić (2018), and González-García et al. (2018)
Investigate the economic impact of small-scale sports events on the host region, considering factors such as infrastructure utilization and government investments.	Duglio & Beltramo (2017), Morfoulaki et al. (2023), Duglio & Beltramo (2017), Gibson et al., 2003, Fernández-Martínez et al. (2022), Gibson et al., 2003.
Assess the economic impact of large-scale or mega-sport events on the host region, taking into account the scale, investments, and crowd management.	Tomino et al., 2020, Vilakazi et al. (2014), Emery, 2002, Preuss, 2006
Examine the actual tourism influx numbers during the FIFA World Cup 2010 and identify the factors contributing to deviations from expected values, offering insights into event-specific challenges and opportunities.	Peeters et al. (2014), Ferreira, S. (2011). Briedenhann 2011, Knott, Brendon & Allen(2012) and Maennig & du Plessis, (2010).

## RESULTS

The review of the selected studies provides valuable insights into the multifaceted relationship between sports tourism and regional economies. Rómulo Jacobo et al. (2022), Cheung et al. (2016), González-García et al. (2018), Tsekouropoulos et al. (2022), Bazzanella (2019), Kozhokulov et al. (2019), and Peric (2018) contribute to the understanding of residents' perceptions of sports tourism, revealing a range of viewpoints. Someone highlight the positive effects of sport tourism on community engagement, while others express concerns about resource allocation and disruption. Additionally, Tsekouropoulos et al. (2022), Tzoumaka et al. (2022), Kozhokulov et al. (2019), and Perić (2018) establish a clear link between sports tourism and economic impact, showcasing the potential for revenue generation, job creation, and infrastructure development in host regions. Furthermore, Duglio & Beltramo (2017), Morfoulaki et al. (2023), Gibson et al.

(2003), and Fernández-Martínez et al. (2022) illustrate that even small-scale sport events can significantly boost local business activity and tourism, emphasizing their economic significance. Conversely, Tomino et al. (2020), Vilakazi et al. (2014), Emery (2002), and Preuss (2006) shed light on the economic impact of mega sports events, such as the FIFA World Cup, which, while offering substantial economic benefits, also pose challenges such as high infrastructure costs and long-term sustainability concerns. Finally, Peeters et al. (2014), Ferreira, S. (2011), Briedenhann (2011), Knott, Brendon & Allen (2012), and Maennig & du Plessis (2010) delve into the specifics of tourism influx during the FIFA World Cup 2010 and the factors contributing to deviations from expected values, emphasizing the role of global economic conditions, host country perceptions, and event logistics. These findings collectively underscore the necessity for a nuanced approach to sports tourism management, taking into account the scale of events, residents' perspectives, and the intricate economic dynamics at play to maximize the positive impacts while addressing potential challenges.

## DISCUSSION

The objective of this review is to critically analyse recent literature regarding the relationship between sports tourism and its economic impact on specific regions. In this discussion, we will examine how various studies address the phenomenon of sports tourism and its impact on the regional economy, emphasizing comparisons and contrasts between them.

### ***Residents' perception of the economic impact of sport tourism***

Several studies have explored residents' attitudes towards sports tourism, particularly when they perceive it as beneficial for the community, aligning with the social exchange theory. To begin with, Bazzanella's (2019) post-event analysis approach is recognized as a valuable tool for evaluating these perceptions. The objective of their research is to explore the perspectives of event stakeholders regarding sports events, with a specific emphasis on the involvement of residents in a tourist destination. In their finding from a qualitative analysis, the survey results indicate an overall sense of contentment among both residents and other stakeholders regarding the tourist destination.

Similarly, Kozhokulov et al. (2019) emphasize the significance of securing residents' support for the tourism industry by thoroughly comprehending their viewpoints, a pivotal element for the sector's long-term viability. In their research, the results suggest that residents who feel engaged and informed about tourism developments in their area are more likely to be supportive of the industry's growth and sustainability. Additionally, their study highlights that involving residents in decision-making processes related to tourism planning can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to a more harmonious coexistence between tourism and the local community.

Furthermore, Rómulo-Jacobo et al. (2022) introduces a new perspective that assessing residents' perceptions promotes social engagement and inclusivity, fostering a more favourable disposition toward sports tourism and inclusive sports. According to their findings, they conclude that analysing the social perception of citizens and assessing the impact of sport tourism on their support for tourism development can prove highly valuable in shaping policies geared toward fostering social cohesion and local development.

However, Peric (2018) points out a significant gap in the approach to sports event tourism in his discussion, he argue that while much attention has been given to the events themselves, relatively less focus has been placed on the tangible benefits that local communities can derive. This perspective highlights the need to prioritize the interests and advantages that residents gain from hosting sports events. The success of such

events, as Peric suggests, is intricately linked to the degree of support and perceived benefits from the local community's perspective.

In contrast to the prevailing residents' positive views on the impact of sports tourism, Cheung et al. (2016) presents a dissenting perspective. They argue that while sports tourism may bring economic benefits to a destination, it often comes at the expense of local residents' quality of life. They contend that increased tourist traffic can lead to overcrowding, environmental degradation, and a rise in the cost of living, which can negatively affect the well-being of the host community. Cheung et al.'s research emphasizes the importance of carefully assessing the trade-offs between economic gains and potential social and environmental drawbacks when considering the promotion of sports tourism. This perspective urges a more cautious and balanced approach to ensure the sustainable development of both the tourism industry and the local community.

### **Contribution of sport tourism to the economy of a region**

In the context of sports tourism, the term "*economic impact*" encompasses the wide-ranging economic transformations occurring within a local economy due to the expenditures associated with specific activities, as outlined by Andreff in 2006. Notably, several researchers, including Tsekouropoulos et al. (2022), Tzoumaka et al. (2022), Kozhokulov et al. (2019), Perić (2018), and González-García et al. (2018), have explored these impacts, categorizing them as either positive or negative.

Perić's 2018 study, for instance, primarily focuses on the positive aspects of these impacts, particularly honing in on the concept of "*direct spending*." Direct spending is a widely recognized metric used to gauge the contribution of sports tourism to the local economy. Perić's research elucidates that direct spending translates into tangible benefits, such as revenue generation and job creation, thereby bolstering the overall economic vitality of the region in question. This underscores the pivotal role that sports tourism can play in not only enhancing a destination's financial well-being but also in fostering employment opportunities within the community.

Another crucial focus on sport's contribution to the economy is the study carried out by Nyikana & Tichaawa (2018) "*Sport Tourism as a Local Economic Development Enhancer for Emerging Destinations*". The study imparts essential insights for local government bodies and pertinent stakeholders in the tourism and sports sectors regarding the development of policies and strategic planning for sport tourism events. It underscores the importance of local authorities taking proactive measures to harness sport tourism events to their fullest potential, thereby expanding the array of economic benefits that accrue to the community.

Another noteworthy contribution of sports tourism to the host region lies in infrastructure development. Tomino et al. (2020) concur that hosting sports events often necessitates investments in infrastructure, encompassing new or upgraded stadiums, arenas, transportation networks, and accommodations. These investments can yield long-term economic benefits by enhancing the region's appeal to both visitors and businesses. Job creation is another substantial economic impact of sports tourism, as emphasized by Njoroge et al. (2017), hosting sports events generates employment opportunities across various sectors, including hospitality, tourism, transportation, and construction, thereby contributing to the overall economic growth of the region. Crompton (2006) further supports the idea that sports tourism significantly enhances the region's visibility, fostering media coverage and publicity that promote the region's image, attract future visitors and businesses, and subsequently boost tax revenue—making tax revenue a key metric for quantifying the economic impact of sports tourism in a host region.



In contrast, Tzoumaka et al. (2022) introduce a distinct perspective in their research, underscoring the importance of considering various factors when evaluating the overall financial impact on the host destination. They emphasize the significance of accounting for elements such as leakages from the local economy, opportunity costs, and the multiplier effect. This viewpoint aligns with the findings of Njoroge et al. (2017), who also shed light on the potential negative repercussions linked to tourism development. In their study titled "*Sports Tourism and Perceived Socio-Economic Impact in Kenya: The Case of Machakos County*," they highlight some of the adverse economic consequences associated with hosting sports events, including increased living costs, potential fluctuations in temporary employment, and inflationary pressures.

### ***The economic impact of hosting small-scale sports events***

The study of the economic impact of hosting small-scale sports events is a pivotal focus area within sport tourism research. Gibson et al. (2003), explain that small-scale sports events encompass sporting competitions or activities characterized by a limited number of participants and spectators, often taking place at the local or regional level. These events, such as community fun runs, local soccer tournaments, or regional youth sports leagues, typically foster an intimate and community-centred atmosphere. According to Gibson et al. (2003), They often attract less media attention and involve lower financial investments compared to large-scale sports events. Nevertheless, despite their smaller scale, small-scale sports events can exert significant social and cultural influences on local communities and offer athletes valuable opportunities for competition and skill development (Parra-Camacho et al. (2021).

Numerous studies, including works by Duglio & Beltramo (2017), Morfoulaki et al. (2023), Duglio & Beltramo (2017), Gibson et al., 2003, Fernández-Martínez et al. (2022), have conducted comprehensive analyses of the potential benefits that small-scale sports events bring to host destinations.

To begin with, a study by Gibson et al., (2003) involves comparisons of the economic impacts between large and small-scale events. In their study, "*Small-scale event sport tourism: fans as tourists*", they discuss extensively how sports events serve as major tourist attractions for destinations, and how the cancellation of such events can result in substantial financial losses. Once crucial aspect covered by this study is the comparison between small-scale and large-scale events. Gibson et al. (2003) provide data and analysis showcasing how even smaller, niche sports events can have a considerable impact on tourism and the local economy. This finding suggests that smaller communities could maximize their tourism advantages by capitalizing on the events to attract fans of the visiting team.

A study by Morfoulaki et al. (2023) shifted its focus towards sustainability concerns pertaining to small-scale sports events and their implications for host destinations, with particular attention to rural or peripheral areas, as opposed to urbanized regions. In their study Morfoulaki et al. (2023) have illuminated how small-scale sports events can create sustainable tourism opportunities for communities, particularly in smaller locales where event stakeholders frequently comprise members of the local community itself. Further, their findings reveal that sport tourism plays a significant role in shaping a distinctive identity closely aligned with sustainability objectives of a given region, with a focus on small-scale sport events.

The findings of Duglio & Beltramo (2017) are situated among the studies indicating that hosting international small-scale sports events can enhance the reputation of the destination and yield economic benefits for the local community. This perspective finds further support from Fernández-Martínez et al. (2022), who contend that organizing small- and medium-sized sports events, such as the Media Maratón Ciudad de Granada (Granada Half Marathon), can serve as an effective strategy for promoting sustainable tourism within the local community. Sustainable tourism, as espoused by the authors, takes into account a range of factors,

including economic, social, and environmental aspects, while considering the needs of residents, visitors, and the industry, both in the present and for the future.

Gibson et al. (2003) and Parra-Camacho et al. (2021) propose that the definition of small-scale events should be approached relatively, as current definitions encompass both local sporting competitions with community support and those that attract participants and audiences at the national or even international level. Moreover, smaller events typically demand fewer public resources, rendering them an appealing option for communities seeking to host sports events within limited budgets.

An opposing perspective questions the unquestionable positive influence of such events, as argued by Fernández-Martínez et al. (2022). One pressing issue raised by this study pertains to the costs incurred when hosting small-scale sporting events. They argued that, despite their smaller scale compared to mega-events, these occasions demand resources for infrastructure, security, and organization. In certain instances, these costs may outweigh the economic benefits. An instance this study uses is when a local community invests in constructing or renovating facilities for a small-scale event, the return on investment may not be favourable, particularly if these facilities remain underutilized outside of the event, leading to an unfavourable cost-benefit imbalance that can strain local budgets.

Moreover, concerns have been expressed regarding the displacement effect. Duglio & Beltramo (2017) further argue that small-scale events can divert resources and attention away from other sectors that may offer more substantial and sustainable economic contributions to the community. Funds allocated to host a small-scale sporting event could have been potentially channelled into long-term infrastructure improvements or investments in industries capable of generating consistent economic benefits beyond the event's duration.

Additionally, critics by Gibson et al. (2003) contend that the economic benefits of small-scale events may not consistently benefit the local community in a meaningful way. In instances where these events predominantly draw participants and spectators from outside the host community, economic gains may flow out of the area rather than bolstering local businesses and residents. As they point out in their study, this phenomenon, often referred to as "*leakage*," can limit the positive economic impact on the host community.

### ***The economic impact of hosting major sporting events***

Major sporting events, often referred to as mega sports events, are characterized by their global reach, substantial revenue generation, and significant infrastructure investments. Examples include the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, the Super Bowl, and the Tour de France. These events span multiple sports, occur over extended periods, and attract athletes from around the world.

One critical aspect highlighted in the literature is the dual nature of major sporting events. While they offer the potential for significant economic benefits to a region, they also come with immense resource consumption and exposure to substantial risks, this according to a study by Emery, (2002) "*Bidding to host a major sports event: The local organizing committee perspective*." He further argue that the cost of hosting such events is considerable and necessitates a thorough examination of their economic impact. Preuss, (2006) is also in the agreement that the allocation of substantial public funds to major sports events underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of their impact on a region's economy.

A study conducted by Vilakazi (2014) aimed to compare the economic impacts of small-scale sports events with those of major sporting events. The research revealed intriguing findings highlighting the unique dynamics of these two categories of events. Major sporting events, while indeed delivering significant

economic benefits, also came with immense resource consumption and higher costs of organization. The study emphasized that the choice between hosting a small-scale event or a major one should be based on a careful consideration of the specific goals and resources of the host region, as each type of event offers distinct advantages and challenges in terms of their economic impact.

According to a recent study by Tomino et al., (2020), it is important to recognize the expenses associated with organizing major sporting events, which can place a significant financial burden on the host country's government. And Vilakazi (2014) strongly supports this notion by pointing out further that these major sporting events' expenses include infrastructure development for transportation, venue design, and accommodation for players and spectators.

While major sporting events offer international recognition and popularity (Peric 2018), they also present complex economic dynamics. Despite potential adverse outcomes, the anticipated positive impacts continue to drive demand for hosting such events (Peric, 2018). Consequently, a substantial body of research has concentrated on major sporting events due to their significance and influence on the global stage.

Here is a case of the FIFA World Cup 2021 and its economic outcomes to South Africa.

**Case study: Assessing the tourism industry and economic outcomes of the FIFA World Cup 2010**

Several studies, such as Peeters et al. (2014), Ferreira, S. (2011) and Du Plessis and Maennig (2010) have conducted investigations to assess the achievement of tourism industry and economic goals during the FIFA World Cup 2010. These studies present evidence suggesting positive outcomes.

To begin with, Peeters et al. (2014) conducted a comparative analysis of national monthly tourist inflows in South Africa and other countries worldwide. Their findings indicate that the World Cup played a significant role in attracting an additional 294,804 tourist arrivals in 2010, representing a 12% increase compared to previous years. This increase in tourist arrivals contributed to additional revenue generated in the tourism sector.

Du Plessis and Maennig (2010) estimated a net increase of 40,000 to 80,000 tourist arrivals. These findings were in agreement with that of Peeters et al. (2014) which highlights the substantial discrepancy between the anticipated and realized levels of tourist arrivals during the FIFA World Cup 2010.

In 2010, South Africa hosted the World Cup and witnessed a total of approximately 360,000 domestic and foreign tourists, as reported by Knott, Allen, and Swart (2012). However, it is important to note that the actual number of tourist arrivals fell short of the original expectations, as mentioned by Briedenhann (2011) and Peeters et al. (2014). Among the foreign tourists, the FIFA (n.d.) reported that 176,000 individuals travelled from participant countries to support their national teams and participate in the World Cup. Additionally, there were approximately 46,000 visitors from non-participant nations, further contributing to the tourism influx during the event.

The deviations in the number of tourists during the FIFA World Cup 2010 can be attributed to various factors. Economic conditions, including global recessions and financial constraints, may have impacted individuals' travel decisions Briedenhann (2011). Concerns over safety and security, along with the perceived safety of South Africa as a destination, could have influenced tourists' choices. Travel costs and accessibility, such as high expenses and limited transportation options, may have deterred potential visitors. The presence of competing events or attractive destinations could have drawn tourists away from South Africa.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the reviewed studies collectively support the notion that sports tourism holds substantial positive economic potential for regions. Hosting sporting events not only lures tourists but also paves the way for job creation and local business revenue. Importantly, these economic advantages are not confined to the short term but can extend their influence over the long run by elevating the region's reputation and fostering sustained tourism growth.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that there are also authors who have pointed out the potential negative impacts of sports tourism. Thus, it becomes evident that both small-scale and major sports events have the potential to significantly influence a region's economy. Small-scale events may have a more localized impact, whereas major events can draw a larger number of tourists and generate greater revenue. Yet, the successful realization of these benefits relies heavily on careful planning and management to maximize economic advantages while minimizing any potential drawbacks.

Furthermore, ongoing research remains pivotal in fostering a deeper understanding of and management strategies for potential adverse consequences, ensuring that regions can harness the full potential of sports tourism while effectively addressing its challenges in this ever-evolving landscape. Continued exploration and knowledge-sharing will undoubtedly play a vital role in guiding regions towards realizing the benefits of sports tourism while mitigating its potential downsides.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The collaborative effort of the authors in this publication was characterized by distinct and complementary contributions, showcasing a well-coordinated team effort. Each author played a crucial role in different aspects of the research and development process.

Giovanni Raso played a pivotal role in conceptualizing the research framework. His expertise in Sport Science and management shaped the overarching research questions and guided the study's direction. Additionally, Raso Giovanni led the design of the study methodology and oversaw the data collection process in the field. His hands-on involvement ensured the robustness of the data gathered.

Dr. Cherubini took the lead in drafting the manuscript, synthesizing contributions from all authors into a cohesive narrative. His expertise in research write-up ensured clarity and precision in communicating our research methods, results, and conclusions. Additionally, Dr. Domenico played a crucial role in the review and editing process, incorporating feedback from all authors to refine the final manuscript.

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## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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