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Editorial of the special issue on “Sports and Tourism: Economic Impacts”

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Editorial of the special issue on “Sports and Tourism: Economic Impacts”

The fusion of sports and tourism gives rise to one of the fastest growing special interest tourism to take place until 2020 (Jiménez-García et al., 2020). Sports tourism is where people “participate in a sports activity, recreationally or competitively, travel to observe sport at grassroots or elite level, and travel to visit a sports attraction” (Delpy-Neirotti, 2003, p. 2), and is considered to be a very profitable business (Tassiopoulos and Haydam, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that destinations have attempted to include sports events in their strategic plans. Certainly, destination management organizations have benefited from the economic impact on a destination and the accomplishment of positioning strategies.

Concurrent to this progression in business, research interest in the analysis of sports tourism has also grown with a broad range of topics that include not only the traditional economic impact (Wood and Meng, 2020) and resident perceptions (Ritchie et al., 2019) but also the impact on the environment (Jiménez-García et al., 2020), potential increase in the number of tourists after the events (Meurer and Lins, 2018), and brand knowledge-related issues such as the effect of sports on the image of the destination hosting the event (Kim and Morrison, 2005) or the economic impact of winning athletes on the market value of their own country’s tourism industry (Nicolau, 2012; Nicolau and Santa-María, 2017).

This special issue presents a diversity of topics applied not only to hallmark sports events but also to small ones in various countries such as China, Finland, Greece, South Korea, Spain, and the United States. Several different methodologies are used, such as discrete choice models, quantile regression, and structural equation modeling.

While an inverse relationship exists between tourism development and property crime (Bianchi and Chen, 2021), tourists first need to feel safe and visit the destination for the tourism development to occur. Uncertain and unsafe environments diminish people’s willingness to visit a place, let alone extreme situations such as during pandemics or terrorism attacks (Krajňák, 2020). In the framework of sports tourism, the study of Kim, Choi, and Leopkey analyzes risk-related factors that have a negative influence on people’s intentions to travel to a mega sporting event. Although the perceptions of terrorism risk have a notable effect, interestingly, political instability does not appear to be a deterrent factor.

The literature that analyzes the economic impact of mega events largely focuses on sporting events (Raad et al., 2021); however, the strategic design of a series of smaller sporting events seems to be an appropriate means to attract tourism to destinations and control their peak- and off-season unbalances (Deng et al., 2021). Salgado-Barandela, Barajas, and Sánchez-Fernández focus on sports-event portfolios through which cities, rather than organizing mega events, schedule a series of small and medium-sized sports events throughout the year. These authors propose a method to quantify the injection of sports-tourism money into a city from this portfolio of events, and provide subsequent fundamental managerial implications.

Apart from the revenue that destinations obtain from taxes, policy makers tend to argue that taxes not only benefit locals by shifting payments to non-resident visitors (Sharma et al., 2020) but also that the extra funds can generate greater demand (Hudson et al., 2021). The article of Kim has an eminent practical approach and analyzes the economic and fiscal impacts derived from the construction of a sports complex and the consequent increase in attractiveness as a sports tourism destination.

Destination image has been profusely investigated in literature, and proven to be a key determinant in a destination's success. With the use of today's technology, mass customization might make a difference to increase customer satisfaction and in turn enhance the destination image (Rašovská et al., 2020). Zouni, Markogiannaki, and Georgaki examine the triangular relationship among destination image, event image, and satisfaction in the context of mega events, specifically in the "34th Authentic Marathon of Athens". These authors analyze the influence of evaluations of a destination and event on satisfaction and intention to revisit the destination, and the way that satisfaction, in turn, influences the revisit intention.

Capturing taste heterogeneity when modeling tourists' decision is fundamental to truly reflect the market reality (Boto-García et al., 2020). In the context of preference heterogeneity, the study of Lyu analyzes individual decisions regarding sports tourism—specifically, the Winter Olympic travel products—with the purpose of identifying the key attributes and the trade-offs that tourists make among these attributes.

Buning and Lamont focus on mountain biking—which had a popularity that considerably increased its practice in the last 20 years—to carry out a critical review of its tourism economic impact. These authors provide relevant theoretical implications and interesting recommendations for future research.

Within the context of golf tourism and its associated premium (Lévi et al., 2020), Song, Chen, and Chen examine the individual perceptions and revisit intentions. These authors find that place identity mediates the relationship between attractiveness and travel intentions and that disposable income moderates the influences of destination attractiveness, destination identity, and revisit intention.

The economic impact of active sports tourism has been scarcely addressed in literature, and when analyzed, the focus has been on one single sport. Drakakis, Papadaskalopoulos, and Lagos attempt to fill this gap by looking at the multipliers and impacts of golf, windsurfing, horse riding, and scuba diving on income and employment generation.

Bundling strategies are prevalent in the tourism industry (Van Sandt and McFadden, 2020), and Kim, Baek, and Choe look into the optimal bundling package strategy for a mega-sporting event by considering the effect of the life cycle stage of customers, thereby determining the distinct levels of sensitivity to each package attribute.

Falk and Vieru apply a difference-in-difference analysis to analyze the short-term price effects of eight sporting events and find that, while different price effects occur in the pre- and post-event periods, discrepancies among the different types of sporting events and the effects vary according to price levels.

The different approaches followed by the articles in this special issue show a sample of the diversity of topics that the combination of sports and tourism gives rise. The results of the empirical applications should help develop new lines of research to advance the knowledge of this area of research.

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