

Article

Innovative Sustainable Tourism Development and Entrepreneurship through Sports Events

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Abstract: Innovation and the development of new services are important strategic features to ensure the growth and sustainable wealth for industries where customers have many choices, as is the case in tourism sector. In this context, the present research comes to connect the local sustainable tourism development with the sporting events, and to come up with relevant proposals for the reference area, but also for their generalization in the whole tourist areas. Based on the research purpose, a quantitative research was conducted on a sample of 448 residents, randomly selected from a sampling frame. Several scales from previous studies were used to collect primary data, and they were adapted according to the research purpose. Research findings indicate that the acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports can be predicted by several variables, such as the economic impact ($b = 0.343$), residents' attitude towards sports events ($b = 0.287$), and citizens' tendency to entrepreneurship ($b = 0.113$). Additionally, sports events affect the tendency of citizens towards entrepreneurship ($r = 0.519$, $p < 0.01$). In conclusion, the impact of sports events is multiple, and it affects many aspects of a tourism destination, and the effect of sports events on the destination is connected with the tendency of citizens towards entrepreneurship related to sports events.



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Keywords: sustainable tourism development; entrepreneurship; innovation; sports events

1. Introduction

In recent years, much emphasis has been placed on the impact of tourism activities at the local level, both from the perspective of destination development and from the attitudes of residents towards a tourism-based event. In the past, the majority of research focused on the financial impact of an event or tourism as a whole, concluding that tourism is a key development tool for a destination, at all levels [1]. A sporting event is characterized by a specific determination of the type of sport, location, duration, and date of performance. In the context of tourism, sports tourism is an ever-growing sector [2]. More generally, sporting events attract the interest of athletes, residents, and tourists [3–5]. Subsequently, such events provide the opportunity for tourism development at the local level, multiple opportunities for development at the business level, and economic benefits for society as a whole [6]. The benefits to the local community from holding a sporting event can be manifold. The small events offer the possibility of developing relationships between visitors and residents on top of the economic influence, the new jobs, and the added value for the tourism product [7]. However, beyond the clear economic benefits of tourism, there are also significant cultural and environmental influences over the quality of life of the inhabitants of a destination [8]. Cultural differences between destinations also lead to significant differences in the acceptance of tourism events, the attitude of residents towards them, their participation in the conduct, and implementation of an event [4]. Finally, the benefits that a sporting event may have for a region can both positively and negatively affect the behavior and attitude of the inhabitants, giving another dimension to a sporting event, magnifying its influence in a local and social level [9].

Now, the efforts of all stakeholders for the development of the tourism product have a clear orientation towards sustainable development [10]. The participation of residents, and their influence in the implementation of a tourism development plan, is vital [11]. The participation and behavior of the inhabitants of a destination towards a sporting event is determined by a number of factors [12]. Therefore, investigating the attitudes, acceptance, and behavior of the inhabitants of a destination towards a sporting event is an important factor of success. In this context, the present study aims to investigate the attitudes and behavior of residents towards a sporting event—taking it as a pole of attraction for tourists—combined with the influence at the local level, and the acceptance of sustainable tourism development through it.

1.1. The Impact of Tourism

The impact of tourism on a destination has been an important discussion topic over the recent decades, approaching the research subject from various aspects. In particular, several research efforts have shown the great impact of tourism on a destination, whether it is positive (economic and cultural) or negative (resource consumption, crime, environmental pollution) [13,14]. Criticism of the influence of tourism at the local level is usually based on the visible results and the changes it brings to a destination. Available studies on the impact of tourism focus on three main categories: economic, environmental, and social influences [15–17]. The positive influence of tourism is visible in all three categories. At the economic level, it creates new jobs, and contributes to the development of the destination [3]; at the social level, it offers opportunities for the revival of traditional cultural activities and local customs [18]; whereas at the environmental level, the existence of resources generated by tourism activity contributes to the preservation and restoration of the tourist attractions of a destination [14]. It is also a fact that many countries and destinations rely almost entirely on tourism for their sustainability [19].

On the contrary, much attention and discussion has been given to the negative effects of tourism both locally and globally, with particular emphasis on the environment. A typical example is mass tourism and its connection with the pollution of areas, the effects on the natural environment, and the existence of a tourist environmental footprint [20]. At the social and cultural level, tourism activity alters local cultures, identity, and traditions [21]. At the economic level, there are also negative effects, such as rising prices for real estate and living [14]. According to Siyabulela [21], the magnitude and impact of these negative influences can be mitigated through the creation of a sustainable development plan, and management of tourism activities. Venice is a typical example of destination alteration as an impact of tourism activity, with a simultaneous lack of planning and preventive measures to manage tourism flows and development [22].

1.2. Tourism, Innovation and Local Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a dynamic and constantly evolving concept, and refers to meeting the needs of the current generation without jeopardizing the future of the next [23]. At the tourism level, sustainable development forms the basis for the development of the tourism product, with special emphasis on the local community and the management of the natural environment [24]. In this sense, sustainable tourism can be characterized as a form of tourism that is associated with the quality of life of residents, and the quality of experience of visitors [11]. Tourism activity significantly affects a destination economically, environmentally, and socially. Bearing in mind that sustainable development is now the dominant mode of development worldwide, its connection to tourism is of particular importance [25]. The technological, economic, and social change, regardless of the sector, is continuous, and therefore, the sustainable development of tourism should be harmonized with these changes [26]. It is a fact that innovation as a concept is linked to the competitiveness of any type of businesses, and therefore, sustainable tourism development and entrepreneurship should integrate any new innovative application in such a way as to

ensure sustainable development [27]. Nevertheless, any action in support of sustainable tourism development should be an ongoing process [25].

Tourism planning and research on it often refers to the cases of large cities or mass tourist destinations, whereas corresponding research at the local and regional level is limited, despite their importance in local development [28]. As a result, tourism development at the local–regional level is usually not based on organized efforts and planning, but on individual actions that, in some cases, create additional problems rather than lead to the sustainable development of the destination [29]. In addition, the application of tourism planning and management in the respective regions is influenced by the rapidly changing nature of the tourist environment [3]. Therefore, the planning and management of regional tourism should consider all these changes.

The reference to tourism activity in combination with local development has usually been omitted in public policy. Therefore, the combination of tourism and local development is usually a consequence of the strategy, and not its main goal and pursuit. Also, the absence of targeted tourism planning at the local level leads to the difficulty of measuring the efficiency of the plan, and also to management problems, as no one is clearly responsible for the implementation and control of each development plan [14]. Therefore, tourism planning at the local and regional level is a research object with considerable scope for development, with the present study covering the influence of tourism at the local level by correlating it with the acceptance of sustainability that comes through sporting events. Moreover, sustainable development is inextricably linked to the involvement of the local community, giving particular importance to determining the attitudes and behavior of residents [30,31]. Tourism as a form of development is often associated with improving the living standards of the inhabitants of a community by focusing on a community development model, or by basing its success on the participation of the community as a whole in every collective action [32]. Therefore, the consent and trust of the local community is of great importance in decision making, and in combination with the local development, as well as the sustainable use of available resources, it is the focus of any tourism development plan. On the contrary, organizational barriers can arise in cases where the short-term and long-term needs of the local community are not taken into account. In this context, sustainable development is associated with continuous social change, and, in many cases, leads to the creation of new, alternative models of tourism development.

Innovation and the development of new products or services offered are very important elements for the differentiation and competitiveness of a tourist destination [33]. According to Bramwell and Lane [34], innovation refers to the application of new processes and methods of organization and planning, as well as the provision of new services or ways of offering these services to a destination. Numerous studies have highlighted the lack of innovation in the tourism industry or the existence of low rates, especially compared to other sectors of the economy where technology and the innovative approach are common practice [35]. The fact is that both added value and sustainable development can result from the use of innovative practices. In particular, in the tourism industry, the processes of creating innovative applications is a complex practice. Similarly, research on tourism innovation in general remains incomplete, both theoretically and empirically. In tourism destinations, social and sustainable innovations also require new structures of planning, management and organization, unlimited local resources, collective interests of the local community, and practices oriented towards sustainable development [34]. To achieve this, tourism management and development organizations should engage in processes where society is called upon to play an active role in planning the future of the destination, and also to implement the necessary actions to ensure that residents and businesses benefit from tourism. Therefore, tourism development and planning strategies should seek innovation in managing relationships between regional tourism destinations and local actors [36].

Some authors seem to believe that, globally, the tourism industry lacks innovation [37], possibly due to the fact that radical innovations (which are more noticeable) are unusual. Additionally, processes and organizational innovations are more common than product

innovation, and thus, can be considered as an innovative practice [38]. Camison and Monfort-Mir [39] argue that there are specific reasons for the low rates of innovation in the tourism industry. A primary explanation may be related to the demand side, where mass tourists consume simple and similar products, which may undermine the business orientation towards innovation. Another issue concerns the size of tourism enterprises, which are mainly small- and medium-sized enterprises, which increases the cost and risk of a potential investment on innovation [40]. As a result, the tendency for innovation is positively related to the size of the business. The size of the business also affects the type of innovation, and is often limited to the acquisition of goods and services in order to increase efficiency [41]. Moreover, an important issue arises from the characteristics of human resources employed in tourism companies. Managers and employees often have low levels of education and training, or have a degree in non-tourism related fields [34]. This can lead to a lack of capacity and skills to create and use knowledge for tourism innovation. In tourism (as well as in services in general), innovations are very visible and rather simple, as they do not include advanced technology [42]. Finally, many tourism companies do not participate in networks, partnerships, or alliances, presenting low levels of cooperation. This behavior impedes the transfer of knowledge and collective learning, which are the necessary conditions for the development of innovation [35]. When tourism organizations engage with collaborative structures such as local networks, the efficiency and performance in innovation increases [43].

1.3. Sports Events' Impact

Sports tourism is characterized by the movement of individuals or groups in order to participate in a sporting event [44]. Sports events can be classified as mega sporting events (e.g., The Olympic Games); or medium, which include events at the regional and national level; and finally, small, which refer to small-sized local sports competitions [45]. In the past, several research efforts have focused on the management of major sporting events by analyzing their impact on the local community during, before, and after the event [46]. The success of a sporting event depends to a large extent on the cooperation and coexistence of tourism actors, the local community, and the organizers of the sporting event [47]. At the local level, a small sports organization can bring equal or more significant benefits to the local community by promoting sustainable development [48,49]. According to Hall [50], organizing events involves preparing, implementing, analyzing, and evaluating, considering all the factors that can influence the event. Specifically, the management of sporting events includes aspects such as planning, implementation of selected actions, and controlling their effectiveness, and with the aim of offering sporting activities to participants and the local community [51]. Support from the local community and all stakeholders is an important factor in the success of managing and organizing sporting events. Factors such as facilities, accommodation, climate, access to the destination, the image of the destination, and its promotion are also factors of success [51].

In a number of studies, sustainable development has been linked to the realization of a sporting event that takes into account the needs of the local community and the conservation of available resources [46]. In addition, through sporting events, the social cohesion and the pride of the citizens are enhanced, reflecting the multidimensional influence of a sporting event on the society as a whole [14]. The general upgrade of the image of a destination can, in the long run, be associated with the realization of a sporting event, and be enhanced by the active participation of citizens [52,53]. The fact is that sports tourism now places the environment at the center of a sporting event, with its protection and the ecological footprint being more important factors than the short-term economic benefits [54]. As a result, the multidimensional impact of a sport event on a destination shapes, at the same time, the attitude of residents and their behavior. Specifically, the attitude refers to the predisposition/mental tendency one may have towards an event. Additionally, behavior refers to the way someone either acts (active behavior) or stays passive (passive behavior) while an event is taking place.

Based in this context, the follow hypotheses were established.

Hypothesis 1: *The impact of sports events on the destination affects the attitude of residents towards sports events.*

Hypothesis 2: *The attitude of residents towards sports events affects their behavior.*

1.4. Entrepreneurial Activity and Sports Events

The success and efficiency of the entrepreneurial system can lead to the achievement of economic growth at a local level, regardless of industry [55]. The level of quality of the entrepreneurial system, as well as its complexity, determine the relationships that develop at the business level, as well as the performance of an entrepreneurial effort [55]. Subsequently, all actors in an entrepreneurial system participate and interact with external factors, as well as with the local government and the economy [56–58]. An important element related to the present research is the influence exerted on the entrepreneurial system of a destination by an event, such as sporting events. The influence of a sporting event on the development of a destination, in some cases, has been found to affect the attitude of residents towards it, their active or passive participation and behavior, as well as the possible development of business plans on their part [59,60].

In general, the literature on entrepreneurship, in many cases, focuses on the factors that influence a new business effort, either positively or negatively, as well as the formation of entrepreneurial behavior at a local level [61]. Nevertheless, according to He et al. [62] and Mirzayeva et al. [63], a sport event can lead to the multiplication of business activities, and thus, shape the attitude of the residents of an area towards the event itself. In particular, a major event, such as a sporting event, creates growth and entrepreneurship opportunities, and increases local entrepreneurs' interest in potential investments [62]. Therefore, it can be concluded that the behavior of the residents of an area can be shaped by the sporting event, and motivate them to participate in the entrepreneurial chain.

Based on this context, the following hypotheses were established.

Hypothesis 3: *There are factors that can predict the acceptance of sustainable development through the use of sporting events.*

Hypothesis 4: *The impact of sports events on the destination affects the residents' tendency to entrepreneurship.*

Hypothesis 5: *The residents' tendency to entrepreneurship affects the attitude of residents towards sports events.*

Hypothesis 6: *The residents' tendency to entrepreneurship affects their behavior.*

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Questions

Quantitative research was selected using a questionnaire to carry out the research. Quantitative research is an important and frequently used way of data collection, which allows the examination of the relationship between variables, as well as the collection of large volumes of data [64]. The general objective of the research is to investigate the attitudes and behavior of the residents of the Pieria Prefecture regarding sports events and sustainable tourism development. Based on the purpose of the research, the research design focused on the following research hypotheses, which are also illustrated in the following research model (Figure 1).

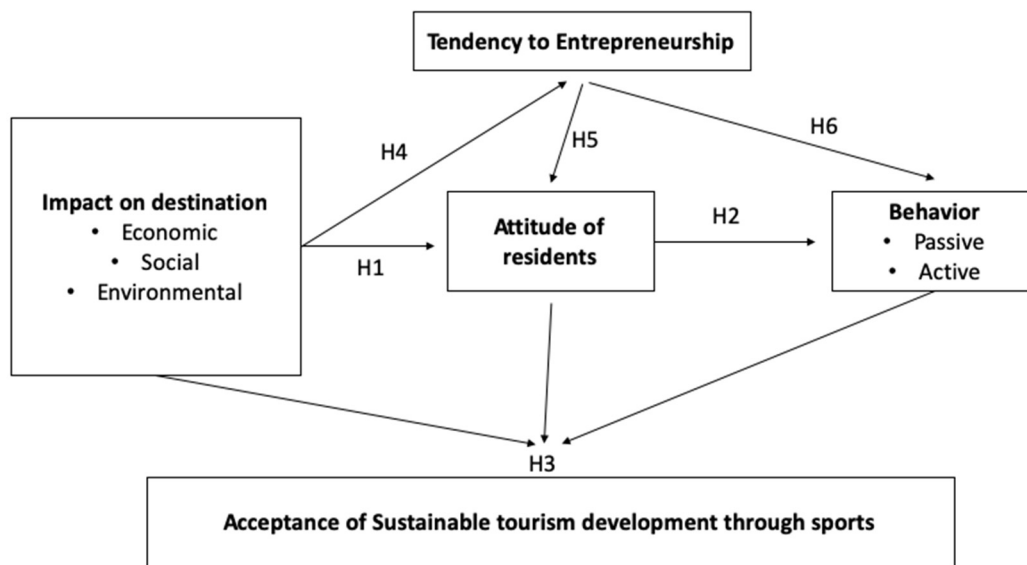


Figure 1. Research model.

2.2. Research Tool and Data Collection

The questionnaire was created in proportion to the objectives of the research, and it was based on previous research efforts of Choi and Sirakaya [65,66]; and Peters, Chan, and Legerer [67]. Specifically, as illustrated in Table 1, the impact on destination was assessed through three dimensions: economic impact (6 items), environmental impact (6 items), and social impact (8 items). Tendency to entrepreneurship was measured with the General Enterprising Tendency test (GET), which consists of 54 items assessing five personality dimensions (need for achievement, autonomy, drive and determination, risk-taking, and creativity) [68]. Finally, the acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports was measured with the Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale (SUS-TAS), which includes 38 statements. The answers to the questions are given on a 5-point Likert scale. All scales present high levels of reliability (Cronbach a > 0.70) and validity. Data were collected during two major sports events in the North part of Greece (Pieria Prefecture) which took place in June and September 2021. The researchers administer the questionnaire hand by hand, answering any possible question asked by the respondents. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Table 1. Questionnaire scale analysis.

Scale	Items	N
Impact on destination	Economic impact	Sports tourism attracts more investments and spending to the region.
		The standard of living has increased because of income through sports tourism.
		Prices of products, services, and real estate have increased because of sports tourism.
		Sports tourism brings economic benefits only to a small group of people.
		Sports tourism creates more jobs for external people than for local people in the region.
		In general, sports tourism brings the local economy more positive than negative effects in the region.
		6

Table 1. Cont.

Scale		Items	N
Impact on destination	Environmental impact	Sports tourism provides an incentive for the conservation of natural resources. Because of sports tourism, roads and other public facilities are kept at a higher standard.	6
		Sports tourism results in unpleasantly crowded and inaccessible places during the event.	
		Sports tourism greatly adds to traffic congestion, noise, and pollution. The construction of hotels and other tourist facilities has destroyed the natural environment in the region.	
	Social impact	In general, sports tourism brings the environment more positive than negative effects in the region.	
		Meeting tourists from all over the world is a valuable experience.	
		Sports tourism has led to an increase in the availability of recreational facilities for the inhabitants.	
Attitudes of residents	Sports tourism influences the regional culture (traditions and customs, etc.). Sports tourism supports the preservation of the regional culture (traditions and customs, etc.).	8	
	Sports tourism supports the restoration of historical buildings.		
	Sports tourism causes security and crime problems.		
Behavior	Active	In general, sports tourism brings the local society and culture more positive than negative effects in the region.	2
		I am in contact with tourists often.	
	Passive	In general, the advantages resulting from sports events development outweigh the disadvantages for the local residents in the region.	
Tendency to entrepreneurship	Acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports	Generally, I am open to further sports events development.	3
		I would join a committee to support the sports event locally.	
Tendency to entrepreneurship	Acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports	I would get involved during the sports event as a volunteer.	3
		I would join a group to participate in the sports event organization.	
Tendency to entrepreneurship	Acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports	I would not be actively engaged in the event organization, but it has my support.	2
		I inform myself on the event's activities and content.	
Tendency to entrepreneurship	Acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports	General Enterprising Tendency (GET)	54
		Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale (SUS-TAS)	
			38

2.3. Sampling and Participants

Sample selection refers to the taking of a number of respondents from the wider community [64]. In particular, the research population is the total of possible respondents that can be selected during the research process [64]. In the present survey, the target population is the residents of the Pieria Prefecture, with the final sample of the survey being 448 respondents. The selection of the respondents was made randomly from a sampling frame given by the local administration. Table 2 shows the answers of the respondents regarding their demographic characteristics. Specifically, 60.9% of the respondents were men, 34.4% were 26-to-40 years old, 56.5% were university graduates, and 26.1% were self-employed.

Table 2. Demographics.

Variable	Percentage	
Gender	Male	60.9
	Female	39.1
Age	18–25	27.5
	26–40	34.4
	41–55	24.1
	Over 56	14.1
	High school	19.9
Educational level	Bachelor degree	56.5
	Master	21.9
	PhD	1.8
Profession	Private employee	21.9
	Employee in the public sector	13.4
	Freelancer/business owner	26.1
	Student	18.1
	Unemployed	20.5

3. Results

Table 3 presents the mean score of impact on destination scales. Specifically, sports events on a tourism destination mainly affect the promotion of the specific area ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.487$), followed by financial ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.049$) and social benefits ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.561$). On the contrary, a sports event creates a low number of community issues ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 0.694$), and it has a low impact on the environment ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 0.758$).

Table 3. Impact of sports events on tourism destination.

	Mean	SD
Entertainment	3.34	0.817
Expenses on sports events	3.41	1.068
Financial benefits	3.76	1.049
Local community issues due to sports events	2.28	0.694
Impact on the environment	2.32	0.758
Promotion of tourism area	3.83	0.487
Social benefits	3.57	0.561

3.1. Attitude and Impact of Sports Events on the Destination

Based on the following Table 4, the impact of sports events on the destination presents a positive relationship with the attitude of the residents towards the particular type of event. Specifically, the economic impact was found to have the stronger correlation with citizens' attitude ($r = 0.668$, $p < 0.01$), followed by social impact ($r = 0.437$, $p < 0.01$) and environmental impact ($r = 0.400$, $p < 0.01$). As a result, the higher the impact of sports events on a destination, the more positive the attitude of its residents towards this type of event.

Table 4. Residents' attitude towards sports events and their impact on destination.

	Attitude	Social Impact	Economic Impact	Environmental Impact
Attitude	1	0.437 **	0.668 **	0.400 **

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.2. Residents' Attitude and Behavior towards Sports Events

Table 5 shows that the attitude of the residents towards sports events is strongly connected with their behavior: both passive ($r = 0.571$, $p < 0.01$) and active behavior ($r = 0.684$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, the positive or negative attitude of citizens towards the destination is associated with higher or lower levels of active and passive behavior.

Table 5. Residents' attitude and behavior towards sports events.

	Attitude	Active Behavior	Passive Behavior
Attitude	1	0.684 **	0.571 **

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.3. Regression Analysis for the Prediction of the Acceptance of Sustainable Tourism Development through Sports

The model created predicts 79.9% ($R^2 = 0.799$) of the variance, and adjusted R^2 is close, and thus, overfitting is avoided (Table 6).

Table 6. Prediction model summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.894	0.799	0.795	0.43831

Specifically, the acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports can be predicted by several variables, and in order of their importance, those are the economic impact ($b = 0.343$), residents' attitude towards sports events ($b = 0.287$), their active ($b = 0.245$) and passive behavior ($b = 0.164$), the environmental impact of sports events ($b = 0.144$), citizens' tendency to entrepreneurship ($b = 0.113$), and finally, the social impact of sports events ($b = 0.110$) (Table 7). Therefore, higher acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports can be achieved when there are higher levels of positive economic impact, positive attitude towards sports events, higher levels of active and passive behavior, high levels of environmental impact, and citizens' tendency to entrepreneurship, as well as high levels of social impact.

Table 7. Regression coefficients for the prediction of the acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	−0.690	0.115		−6.022	0.000
Attitude	0.290	0.025	0.287	11.482	0.000
Economic impact	0.296	0.024	0.343	12.370	0.000
Social impact	0.105	0.024	0.110	4.473	0.000
Environmental impact	0.117	0.018	0.144	6.592	0.000
Passive behavior	0.202	0.029	0.164	6.926	0.000
Active behavior	0.228	0.025	0.245	9.156	0.000
Tendency to entrepreneurship	0.098	0.019	0.113	5.175	0.000

3.4. Impact of Sports Events on Destination and Citizens' Tendency to Entrepreneurship

Additionally, the impact of sports events on the destination was found to be significantly related with the tendency of citizens towards entrepreneurship ($r = 0.519$, $p < 0.01$) (Table 8). As a result, the higher the impact of sports events on the destination, the higher the tendency of citizens towards entrepreneurship related to sports events.

Table 8. Impact of sports events on destination and citizens' tendency to entrepreneurship.

	Tendency to Entrepreneurship
Impact on destination	0.519 **

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.5. Citizens' Tendency to Entrepreneurship, Their Attitude and Behavior towards Sports Events

Finally, the tendency of citizens towards entrepreneurship was found to be connected with their attitude towards sports events ($r = 0.702$, $p < 0.01$), as well as their active ($r = 0.630$, $p < 0.01$) and passive behavior ($r = 0.434$, $p < 0.01$) (Table 9). Therefore, the higher the tendency of citizens towards entrepreneurship, the more positive their attitude is towards sports events, as well as their active and passive behavior.

Table 9. Citizens' tendency to entrepreneurship, and their attitude and behavior towards sports events.

	Attitude	Active Behavior	Passive Behavior
Tendency to entrepreneurship	0.702 **	0.630 **	0.434 **

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4. Discussion

The effects of tourism have been widely discussed over the years, both in the relevant literature and in official government documents. Although the effects rarely occur individually, they have been divided into different categories based on the changes they cause. These changes can be economic, socio-cultural, and environmental. The importance and benefits of planning for tourism development have been widely recognized by organizations, governments, and academics around the world [21]. According to Hinch and Ramshaw [69], tourism planning is a process that aims to predict, regulate, and monitor change, contributing to the wider sustainability of the destination, thus enhancing the tourist experience of the destination or place, as well as the important contribution of planning in the sustainable development of tourism in a destination, a fact that is supported by other academics.

Sport tourism events attract tourists, a large percentage of whom are spectators [69]. The sporting event involves the organization, marketing, implementation, and evaluation of any sport-related activity, according to Hinch and Holt [2]. Sports events, according to Csobán and Serra [70], are events that are characterized by creative and complex sports activities, leisure activities, or entertainment, and take place according to a specific predetermined schedule. The location or area in which these events take place receives social and economic influences when tourism is integrated alongside the marketing of these sporting events [71]. Sports tourism contributes to the development of sport and tourism in general, and occupies a unique financial position in terms of management and marketing prospects. Siyabulela [21] states that the organizers of sport tourism events must meet international needs in order to successfully manage events. Sports tourism generally means the use of all types of sports to expand tourism, in order to serve the interest and general well-being of the sport and the community.

The research findings suggest that sports events have greater impact on the promotion of the specific area in regard to the financial and social benefits. Thus, the impact of sports events is multiple, and it affects many aspects of a tourism destination. Firstly, through their brand name as a destination, which can potentially affect the attractiveness of the destination at the tourism level, as well as the economic and social aspects of citizens' life. Additionally, it was found that the higher the impact of sports events on a destination, the more positive the attitude of its residents towards the type of event (Hypothesis 1, confirmed), and the positive or negative attitude of citizens towards the destination is associated with higher or lower levels of active and passive behavior (Hypothesis 2, confirmed). As a result, the impact of sports events on a destination can be a strong determinant factor for citizens' attitude and behavior. In other words, the positive influence that a sports event has on a destination is connected with citizens' attitudes towards the event, and shapes their active behavior (involvement and participation). Thus, the citizens tend to understand the value of a sports event for their region, and they put effort to support it. Those findings are supported by previous studies, such as those of Choi and Sirakaya [65,66]; and Peters,

Chan, and Legerer [67]. Specifically, those studies show a positive relationship between residents' attitude and supportive behavior, as well as illustrating how the impact that an event has on a destination also affects residents' attitudes. However, they mention that these correlations may change by destination. Furthermore, it was found that higher acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports can be achieved when there are higher levels of positive economic impact, positive attitude towards sports events, higher levels of active and passive behavior, high levels of environmental impact and citizens' tendency to entrepreneurship, as well as high levels of social impact (Hypothesis 3, confirmed). Thus, sustainable tourism development through sports and its acceptance can be affected by several variables, and it can be concluded that the more obvious and positive the impact is, the higher the acceptance of sustainable tourism development through sports. As a result, area residents tend to connect sustainable tourism development with practical benefits for the community and the region in general. Those findings, to a certain extent, are supported by Peters, Chan, and Legerer [67], who mention that the economic, environmental, and social impact on a destination affects residents' attitude towards tourism development. However, they found social impact as the strongest determinant to local attitude; however, this is not supported by the current research, where economic impact was found to be the stronger determinant of the acceptance of sustainable tourism development. Finally, supporting the findings of He et al. [62] and Mirzayeva et al. [63], the research outcomes suggest that the impact of sports events on the destination is connected with the tendency of residents towards entrepreneurship related to sports events (Hypothesis 4, confirmed), and this particular tendency affects residents' behavior and their attitude towards sports events (Hypotheses 5 and 6, confirmed). Thus, the higher the impact of a sports event on a region, the higher the entrepreneurial engagement of the residents, as well as this type of engagement, leads to a positive attitude and active behavior through participation and involvement. Additionally, these facts show the interconnection between the variables, as well as the multiple impacts of sustainable tourism development on a specific tourism location.

The present study focused on only one area, which can be characterized as a weak point, as the results cannot be compared with other regions or countries. Nevertheless, this could be an opportunity for future research to be extended to other destinations to provide the opportunity to compare and contrast both locally and internationally. This could lead to the inclusion of other variables, such as the influence of culture as a mediator. Subsequently, a mixed design research approach adding qualitative aspects in the form of interviews with both decision policy-makers and residents could provide data on the research topic. It could also allow behavioral differences to be examined between different groups. Finally, a longitudinal approach could be adopted to examine how a sporting event changes the behavior of the citizens in a tourist destination, and how it can benefit the sustainable tourism development of an area.

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