

Achieving Goals and Building Bridges: Football Tourism in Libya as a Catalyst for Youth Development and Cultural Understanding

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Information of Article	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received: Jan 2024 Revised: Feb 2024 Accepted: Feb 2024 Available online: Mar 2024</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Football Tourism Economic Growth Cultural Understanding Youth Development Libya</p>	<p>This research scrutinizes football tourism's capacity to act as a pivotal force for transformation in Libya, examining its role in catalyzing youth empowerment, enhancing cultural comprehension, and propelling economic prosperity within a post-conflict framework. Anchored in the universal appeal of football and Libya's profound cultural legacy, this inquiry traverses the complex dimensions of sports tourism. It extracts lessons from international examples, meticulously adapting them to Libya's distinctive scenario. The study delves into the challenges and prospects present within Libya's tourism and sports domains, accentuating the imperative for the development of sustainable infrastructure, legal and regulatory enhancements, and approaches centered around community engagement. Employing a qualitative methodology grounded in an exhaustive review of literature and theoretical underpinnings, the research articulates strategic interventions for Libya. These encompass the fortification of digital marketing endeavors, the advancement of regional collaborations, and the prioritization of sustainability within football tourism ventures. The concluding remarks highlight the crucial role of strategic foresight, inclusivity, and global collaboration in maximizing football tourism's potential for extensive socio-economic advantages and international connectivity. This investigation aspires to enrich the dialogue on sports tourism's contribution to nation-building and economic diversification, proposing a comprehensive strategy for Libya and analogous situations.</p>

1. Introduction

The relationship between sports and tourism, particularly through the lens of football, has evolved into a compelling area of scholarly inquiry, given football's unparalleled global popularity. The staging of grand-scale sports events, like the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games, is increasingly viewed as a golden chance for countries to bolster tourism, elevate their international stature, and spark economic growth. Nevertheless, the impact of such events on host nations is complex and requires a detailed examination. Müller et al. (2023) delve into the evolution of mega-sporting events, identifying a pattern of soaring expectations leading to a predicament of overinvestment and scant post-event use. This insight is pivotal for grasping the extensive effects of these events beyond the short-lived excitement they create.

The economic impact of hosting the FIFA World Cup has sparked considerable scholarly debate. Borga (2020) offers an economic perspective that contrasts the effects of the World Cup on developed versus developing countries, indicating that outcomes differ markedly by context. Moreover, Viana, Barbosa, and Sampaio (2018) utilize a synthetic control method to examine the World Cup's role as an economic stimulant, uncovering a nuanced relationship between expected benefits and real economic results. These studies highlight the critical need for a calculated approach to hosting such events, with a focus on sustainable planning and infrastructure use. Additionally, the impact of major football events extends to altering destination images. Andersson, Bengtsson, and Svensson (2021) investigate the

influence of the UEFA European Football Championship and FIFA World Cups in France, Russia, and Qatar on perceptions of these locales. Their research reveals football's capacity to transform international views, underscoring the effectiveness of football tourism as a mechanism for national branding and cultural diplomacy.

This paper seeks to investigate the prospects of football tourism in Libya as a driving force for youth development and cultural insight. By analyzing the global experiences of countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and South Africa, the study provides strategic recommendations for Libya to tap into the socio-economic and cultural advantages of football tourism. Reviewing the triumphs and hurdles encountered by these nations, the analysis endeavors to outline a pathway for Libya to exploit its fervor for football, using it as a vehicle to promote national cohesion, economic prosperity, and global participation.

2. Literature Review

The scholarly discourse on the confluence of sports, tourism, and their socio-economic repercussions presents a rich and complex narrative, shedding light on both the potential advantages and challenges associated with organizing major sports events. This review zeroes in on the economic outcomes of such events, the broader effects on host communities, and the dynamic role of sports tourism amidst global crises, with a special focus on football tourism. Giraud (2014) conducts a pivotal examination of the economic ramifications of the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France, questioning the prevalent notion that major sports events inherently generate positive employment effects. Giraud's investigation brings to the fore the difficulties in quantifying the economic dividends of these events, indicating that while short-term job creation might be observed, the long-term economic impacts remain ambiguous. This inquiry casts doubt on the widely held belief in the automatic and significant economic benefits of hosting major sports events, advocating for a more discerning assessment of these impacts.

Similarly, Baade and Matheson (2004) scrutinize the economic consequences of the World Cup, offering an in-depth evaluation of its influence on local economies. Their research points to the frequently exaggerated economic advantages of hosting the World Cup, showing that the real economic benefits often fall short of expectations. Through a critical analysis of the methodologies employed in previous economic impact studies, Baade and Matheson call for a more stringent evaluation of the actual economic results stemming from such global sports phenomena. Broadening the analytical lens, Kersulić, Perić, and Wise (2020) champion a comprehensive exploration of the impacts of sports-tourism events that goes beyond immediate economic gains. They propose a research agenda that includes sustainability and strategic planning, underlining the necessity to consider the wider social and environmental repercussions of these events. This approach is key to comprehending the entire range of impacts that sports-tourism events may have on host communities, encompassing both the positive and negative outcomes.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Weed (2020) investigates how the intersection of sport and tourism has navigated global crises. This study delves into the adaptations of sports-tourism events to the pandemic conditions, offering insights into the sector's resilience and its role in aiding recovery initiatives. Weed's analysis illuminates the challenges

and prospects the pandemic has introduced, stressing the importance of inventive strategies to sustain and rejuvenate sports-tourism under extraordinary circumstances. Lastly, the bibliometric review by Jiménez-García, Ruiz-Chico, Peña-Sánchez, and López-Sánchez (2020) maps out the scholarly terrain of sports tourism and sustainability over an 18-year period. Their work identifies central themes and developments within the field, offering an exhaustive overview of its progression. This review accentuates the increasing focus on sustainability in sports tourism research, mirroring wider societal concerns about environmental conservation and social accountability. Collectively, these studies offer a foundational understanding of the intricate effects of football tourism, providing crucial insights for nations like Libya aiming to harness this global phenomenon for economic and societal advancement.

3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach, focusing on an exhaustive literature review to delve into the relationship between sport, with an emphasis on football tourism, and economic growth. The selection of this methodology is motivated by the goal to deeply understand the subtle effects of football tourism on host communities, specifically within the Libyan context. The aim is to amalgamate findings from varied settings to identify patterns, themes, and insights that are pertinent to employing sport as a vehicle for economic and social improvement in Libya.

At the heart of this qualitative strategy is a thorough literature review. This entails a methodical process of searching, assessing, and amalgamating findings from prior research that has explored the confluence of sport and tourism with economic enhancement. The literature review will give precedence to peer-reviewed journal articles, industry reports, case studies, and theoretical discussions that shed light on the economic consequences of staging football events, the contribution of sport to enriching tourism experiences, and the wider socio-economic advantages of sports tourism. This comprehensive review aims to construct a solid foundation upon which to understand and analyze the potential of football tourism as a catalyst for economic and social benefits in Libya.

4. The Impact of Football on Tourism

The nexus between football and tourism has garnered considerable scholarly attention, unveiling a complex interplay that affects host destinations in multiple dimensions. This overview synthesizes insights from pivotal studies, dissecting the influence of football, especially through flagship events like the FIFA World Cup and UEFA European Championship, on tourism dynamics, economic growth, and the perception of destinations. Müller et al. (2023) delve into the lifecycle of mega-sporting events, such as the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, illustrating a pattern characterized by rising expectations and ensuing challenges. Their analysis identifies a "peak event" phenomenon, where the zeal to host large-scale events frequently culminates in excessive infrastructure investments, with the long-term benefits and economic viability often not meeting initial expectations. This finding highlights the imperative for sustainable planning and the legacy utilization of sports infrastructures to avert potential downturns in tourism and economic activities post-event.

Borga (2020) contrasts the economic repercussions of the FIFA World Cup on the economies of developed versus developing nations. The study suggests that developed countries may witness a modest uptick in tourism and economic activities, whereas developing countries often struggle to convert event hosting into enduring economic advantages. This disparity accentuates the need for strategies that reflect the unique socio-economic landscapes of host nations. Viana, Barbosa, and Sampaio (2018) employ a synthetic control approach to evaluate the World Cup's efficacy as an economic catalyst. Their findings expose a complicated link between expected benefits and actual economic results, pointing out scenarios where the World Cup failed to significantly boost economic growth in comparison to synthetic analogs. This evidence advocates for a discerning comprehension of the circumstances under which football tourism can genuinely invigorate local economies.

Andersson, Bengtsson, and Svensson (2021) assess the impact of mega-sport football events on the images of destinations. Their studies on recent UEFA European Football Championships and FIFA World Cups reveal football's capacity to alter international perceptions of host destinations positively. The research advocates for leveraging football tourism for national branding and cultural diplomacy, indicating that well-executed events can elevate a destination's global image. Giraud (2014) and Baade and Matheson (2004) extend the discussion to the economic aspects of football event hosting. Giraud scrutinizes the employment impacts of the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France, presenting mixed findings, while Baade and Matheson challenge the optimistic economic impact predictions, calling for a thorough assessment of such events' tangible economic contributions. These studies collectively underline the challenges in measuring and achieving the economic promises of football tourism.

Kersulić, Perić, and Wise (2020), alongside Weed (2020) and Jiménez-García et al. (2020), broaden the dialogue to include the broader effects of sports-tourism events and sustainability considerations. Kersulić and colleagues advocate for an evaluation that also accounts for social and environmental impacts, Weed examines sport-tourism's resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Jiménez-García et al.'s bibliometric review highlights an increasing focus on sustainability within sports tourism research. This expanded perspective suggests a maturing understanding of football tourism's capacity to drive economic development, social unity, and environmental mindfulness. Collectively, the literature indicates that football tourism can have a substantial influence on tourism and economic development, with the potential to improve perceptions of destinations and stimulate local economies. Nonetheless, realizing these benefits hinges on sustainable and strategic planning, coupled with a deep understanding of the host destination's unique socio-economic context.

5. Football Tourism: Global Perspectives and Lessons Learned

The global exploration of football tourism unveils a rich mosaic of experiences, outcomes, and strategic approaches, offering valuable insights for countries like Libya that aspire to leverage football tourism for economic growth and cultural diplomacy. This synthesis draws from the experiences of various nations that have hosted significant football events, pinpointing critical success factors and common hurdles. The objective is to distill practical lessons to guide nations in optimizing football tourism's potential.

5.1 South Africa: 2010 FIFA World Cup

Hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup, South Africa became the first African nation to stage this prestigious event, positioning it as a landmark moment for football tourism. The event was celebrated as a chance to globalize South Africa's image, enhance infrastructure, and stimulate tourism. Post-event analysis showed an increase in tourist arrivals and an improved international reputation. Nonetheless, the long-term economic impacts presented a mixed picture, with challenges in repurposing some stadiums for sustainable use thereafter. South Africa's experience accentuates the critical role of legacy planning and the necessity for strategic measures to ensure infrastructure's sustainable utilization post-event.

5.2 Brazil: 2014 FIFA World Cup

The 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil sheds light on the intricacies of hosting within the milieu of a developing country. The event involved substantial investments in stadiums and infrastructure, which faced scrutiny for overspending and the limited utility of facilities post-tournament. Despite these issues, Brazil saw enhanced tourism and global visibility. This scenario underscores the delicate equilibrium between investments in sports events and the attainment of wider socio-economic advantages, advocating for cohesive planning that resonates with the nation's developmental aspirations.

5.3 Russia: 2018 FIFA World Cup

Russia's 2018 FIFA World Cup was distinguished by meticulous preparations and effective execution, aiding in rebranding the nation as an attractive tourist destination. The Russian strategy involved considerable investments in infrastructure, transport, and technology to enrich the visitor experience. The event acted as an impetus for tourism growth in cities beyond the traditional hotspots of Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Russia's experience demonstrates football tourism's capacity to drive regional development and improve international perceptions through strategic investments and planning.

5.4 Qatar: 2022 FIFA World Cup

Qatar's 2022 FIFA World Cup represents an ambitious endeavor to capitalize on football tourism for national branding and economic diversification. Qatar's strategy includes the construction of cutting-edge stadiums and infrastructure, with a pronounced focus on sustainability and legacy. The event is integral to Qatar's National Vision 2030, which aims at transitioning to a knowledge-based economy. The Qatari model underscores the strategic application of football

tourism to fulfill wider development goals, emphasizing the importance of visionary planning and sustainability in harnessing the full benefits of hosting such events.

These case studies collectively offer a nuanced understanding of football tourism's diverse impacts and the strategic considerations essential for realizing its benefits. For countries like Libya, these global precedents can inform strategies that balance immediate event success with long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The exploration of global instances of football tourism yields valuable lessons for countries considering football tourism as a conduit for socio-economic advancement and cultural dialogue. Central to these insights is the concept of sustainable legacy planning, which stresses the importance of ensuring that infrastructure and investments continue to serve beneficial purposes well after the events have concluded. Such foresight in planning not only enhances the value derived from these investments but also helps prevent economic setbacks post-event.

Another key takeaway is the necessity of aligning event planning with overarching development objectives. By integrating the aims of football tourism with national development goals, countries can amplify and spread the socio-economic benefits of such events across the broader social fabric. This strategic integration paves the way for comprehensive development, using football's global allure to further national progress. Community involvement is underscored as a fundamental element of successful football tourism initiatives. Engaging local communities in the planning and execution of football events cultivates a sense of ownership and inclusion, fostering social unity and ensuring the equitable sharing of benefits. This focus on community engagement deepens the impact of football tourism, fostering a legacy of cohesion and collective prosperity.

The principle of balanced investment cautions against the risks associated with excessive spending on transient infrastructure or the risk of resources becoming underutilized post-event. A measured approach to financial outlay ensures that the economic advantages of hosting football tourism events are realized without imposing unsustainable financial strains on the hosting nation. Strategic branding and marketing are crucial for utilizing football events to bolster a nation's global image and appeal as a tourist destination. Effective marketing strategies can exploit the worldwide exposure provided by football events to attract international tourists and investment, enhancing the country's appeal on the global stage.

Furthermore, the emphasis on sustainability is critical. Incorporating sustainability into every aspect of football event planning, implementation, and legacy ensures that these endeavors contribute to environmental preservation and social well-being. This dedication to sustainable practices aligns with international standards and guarantees that the advantages of football tourism benefit not only the present but also future generations. In sum, football tourism offers a potent avenue for economic growth and cultural exchange, capable of driving development and elevating a country's international profile. Yet, realizing these potentials hinges on the formulation of sustainable, inclusive strategies for event hosting. The experiences of countries like South Africa, Brazil, Russia, and Qatar provide instructive insights and warnings for nations like Libya as they contemplate integrating football tourism within their broader socio-economic and cultural development plans.

6. The Libyan Context

Libya's venture into developing football tourism unfolds within a complex milieu, marked by the interplay of its unique socio-political environment, rich cultural legacy, and existing legal and infrastructural framework. This landscape presents a blend of challenges and opportunities that shape the prospects for football tourism in Libya. Alamari (2021) provides an insightful analysis into the Libyan tourism sector's current state, pointing out the untapped potential amidst historical underinvestment and political instability. Despite these hurdles, there lies a significant opportunity for growth, particularly through capitalizing on Libya's rich historical and cultural heritage. This foundation posits that with strategic initiatives and a stabilization effort, Libya's tourism sector, including sports tourism, could witness substantial growth, aiding in economic diversification and fostering social unity.

The study by Rouland and Jarraya (2019) on the healthcare dynamics between Libya and Tunisia highlights the emergence of transnational care spaces, which inadvertently contribute to tourism. This development signals the possibility for cross-border tourism initiatives, potentially encompassing sports and recreational tourism. Such initiatives could serve as a catalyst for regional tourism development, offering Libya a pathway to bolster its sports tourism sector. ELfakharani and Albaheth (2023) explore the intricate connections between sports tourism and broader economic metrics, including foreign direct investment inflows and the implications of legal restrictions on alcohol consumption during sports events. Their findings underscore the significant impact of legal and cultural frameworks on a destination's appeal for sports tourism. For Libya, this denotes the importance of revising legal constraints and cultural sensitivities to create a conducive environment for international sports tourists.

Elgawash, Ahmed, and Al-Magarbi (2023) delve into the potential of digital marketing strategies to strengthen the Libyan hospitality industry within the tourism sector. Their analysis, using the SOAR framework, underscores digital marketing's pivotal role in amplifying the visibility and attractiveness of tourism offerings. For football tourism in Libya, employing innovative digital marketing approaches could be instrumental in drawing international tourists and sports aficionados, thus supporting economic upliftment and global engagement. In essence, Libya's context for developing football tourism is intricately woven with both formidable challenges and promising opportunities. Key to unlocking these opportunities are strategic investments in tourism infrastructure, adept handling of legal and cultural issues, and the adoption of cutting-edge digital marketing techniques. The literature collectively sketches a pathway for Libya to exploit its distinctive attributes, paving the way for a vibrant and sustainable sports tourism sector that contributes to economic prosperity, cultural exchange, and regional cooperation.

7. Recommendations for Libya

Given Libya's distinctive context, highlighted by its tourism and sports sectors' challenges and opportunities, a set of strategic recommendations is proposed to tap into football tourism's potential as a driver for economic enhancement, cultural exchange, and social unity.

7.1 Enhancing Infrastructure and Legal Framework

Develop Sports Infrastructure: Prioritize creating sports facilities and associated infrastructure capable of hosting international football events, including stadiums, training facilities, accommodation, and transportation links.

Reform Legal Frameworks: Modify legal and regulatory constraints that could impede sports tourism's growth. Adjust restrictions on alcohol consumption during sports events to align with global tourism practices, respecting local traditions and norms.

7.2 Leveraging Digital Marketing and Branding

Utilize Digital Marketing: Implement sophisticated digital marketing strategies to showcase Libya's football tourism potential. Emphasize a robust online presence, social media marketing, and innovative technologies like virtual reality for virtual tours of sports venues and attractions.

Initiate National Branding: Start an extensive branding campaign to portray Libya as a secure, inviting, and dynamic destination for football tourism. Promote Libya's rich cultural and historical heritage and its position as an emerging hub for football fans.

7.3 Promoting Community Engagement and Social Cohesion

Involve Community in Planning: Actively engage local communities in organizing football events to cultivate ownership, maximize social benefits, and ensure events reflect Libya's cultural diversity.

Youth Development Programs: Introduce football-focused youth development programs to foster local talent and offer pathways for young athletes to gain international acclaim. These initiatives can also champion education, health, and social integration.

7.4 Encouraging Regional Collaboration and Cross-Border Tourism

Regional Tourism Projects: Seek regional cooperation on sports tourism with neighbors like Tunisia, capitalizing on existing transnational relations. Such partnerships could boost North Africa's overall attractiveness for sports tourism.

Cross-Border Events: Arrange cross-border football events and tournaments to advance peace, unity, and cultural exchanges regionally. This could draw visitors from neighboring countries and further afield, strengthening economic and cultural ties.

7.5 Focusing on Sustainability and Legacy Planning

Sustainable Tourism Practices: Embed sustainability into every aspect of football tourism development, from green infrastructure to eco-conscious event management. Libya's commitment to sustainability can bolster its image as a conscientious and progressive destination.

Legacy Infrastructure Use: Guarantee that infrastructure built for football tourism serves the local community long-term, such as converting venues for public use or integrating them into the local economy.

7.6 Collaborating with International Bodies

Form Partnerships: Forge relationships with global football organizations, sports tourism authorities, and other pertinent groups to secure support and recognition for Libya's football tourism initiatives.

Host International Events: Organize global conferences and workshops on sports tourism and football development to offer Libya a stage to exhibit its advancements, exchange best practices, and connect with worldwide stakeholders.

In essence, these strategic suggestions provide a blueprint for Libya to exploit football tourism as a significant mechanism for economic growth, cultural outreach, and societal harmony. The fruitful execution of these plans necessitates a unified approach among government agencies, the private sector, community groups, and international allies, ensuring a holistic and participatory strategy for developing football tourism in Libya.

8. Conclusion

The exploration of football tourism in the Libyan context unfolds a story of potential amid adversity, shedding light on the multifaceted impacts that football tourism can wield on a nation. Beyond economic gains, football tourism can catalyze cultural exchange, foster social cohesion, and enhance international relations. This analysis, rooted in a comparative review of global practices and adapted for Libya, highlights the transformative capacity of football tourism when leveraged with strategic insight and conscientious execution. Libya, with its profound cultural heritage and untapped tourism capacity, is poised at a pivotal juncture. The nation holds the essential ingredients to cultivate a dynamic football tourism sector, promising to significantly bolster its post-conflict reconstruction and economic diversification efforts. Yet, unlocking this potential necessitates deliberate investments in infrastructure, legal modifications, community involvement, and digital promotion strategies. It also requires a dedication to sustainability and the establishment of regional and global alliances to boost Libya's profile internationally.

The strategies proposed offer a blueprint for Libya to unravel the intricacies of football tourism development. By prioritizing sustainable legacy initiatives, integrated development objectives, and community-focused practices, Libya can ensure that football tourism acts as a springboard for wider socio-economic advancement and global integration. The focus on digital marketing and branding, alongside efforts to foster regional cooperation, strategically positions Libya to tap into the international football tourism market. This inquiry also underscores the importance of perceiving football tourism not merely as a goal but as a conduit to broader societal ambitions. The capacity of football tourism to support youth development, encourage social unity, and uplift Libya's global image is immense. By adopting lessons from worldwide examples and tailoring them to its context, Libya is set to embark on a path that harnesses football's global charm to forge unity and extend bridges, both domestically and internationally.

In essence, the evolution of football tourism in Libya opens a distinct avenue to exploit the sport's worldwide allure for national progress, cultural outreach, and communal harmony. Achieving this vision demands a collective endeavor from all stakeholders, steered by strategic foresight, commitment to sustainability, and a comprehensive vision for the

future. As Libya progresses, integrating football tourism into its wider economic and societal development schemes promises not just fiscal rewards but also the enrichment of the Libyan communal tapestry and the reinforcement of its international stance.

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