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An investigation of the economic impact of small-scale sports events: The case of a medium-sized city in the Western United States

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ABSTRACT

The current study was designed to bridge a sporting event typological and geographical gap by investigating evidence of the economic impact of five small-scale sports events in the Western region of the United States. Utilizing the input-output economic impact equation established by the Sports Event and Tourism Association, data was collected from participants and spectators through on-site intercept surveys. Data was analyzed using the traditional calculations for economic impact as well as offering real-time economic impact data using an sporting event intercept survey procedure. Results showed small-scale events impact the economy of their host city positively, mainly by filling hotel rooms that would otherwise have gone vacant. Results also show that real-time economic impact data may prove more reliable to future decisions of cities hosting events. Previous research on mid-sized cities hosting sporting events as well as the current research related to small-scale sporting events proves more beneficial than large-scale sporting events in large-sized cities.

Given the information from the current study, local sports commissions and political figures may effectively advocate hosting small-scale events to their public using the justification of economic impact (traditional or real-time). Additionally, stakeholders of such events should consider maintaining or expanding the current inventory of small-scale events throughout the calendar year.

KEYWORDS

sport tourism; sports event typology; sports commissions

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INTRODUCTION

Individuals spend their free time in a variety of ways, one being travel for leisure opportunities. Between 2009 and 2015, the global leisure travel industry grew 65% to nearly $263 billion annually (Hungenburg et al., 2016). Ijspeert and Hernandez-Maskivker (2020) stated more than 1.4 billion people traveled leisurely all over the world in 2019. These figures find the tourism industry with tremendous economic possibilities (UNWTO, 2019). Included in the leisure travel industry is the sector of sport tourism. According to the Sports Events and Tourism Association (Sports ETA), located in the United States, their 2014 state of the sport tourism industry report noted $8.96 billion in visitor spending. The next year reported a more than 5% increase to $9.45 billion (Sports ETA, 2021a). Years later, an expansion to a similar report found "Sports travelers, event organizers, and venues spent $45.1 billion in 2019, which generated $103.3 billion in business sales when including indirect and induced impacts" (SportsETA, 2021a, p. 4).

Sport tourism is defined as, "all forms of active and passive involvement in sport activity, participated in casually or in an organized way for noncommercial or business and commercial reasons, that necessitates travel away from home and work locality" (Daniels et al., 2004, p. 180). This definition expands a sport tourist(s) travels at least 50 miles (approximately 80 kilometer) outside of his or her home area to participate in, watch, or experience sport in any other way (Kurtzman, 2005). Duglio and Beltramo (2017) suggested there are three types of sports tourists: (1) active-based tourists (those who actively participate in an event; e.g., athletes), (2) event-based tourists (those who watch events; e.g., spectators), and (3) nostalgia-based tourists (those who want to see sports-related sites).

Traveling 50 miles or more from a single location offers a multitude of options for consuming a variety of sporting events ranging in size from mega (cf. Gratton et al., 2007; Wan & Song, 2019) to small-scale (cf. Duglio & Beltramo, 2017; Ritchie & Adair, 2004). Duglio and Beltramo (2017) suggested a five-step typology to describe sport tourism events adapted from several authors that have studied sporting events in the past (Gratton et al., 2000; Wilson, 2006). The A through E typology Duglio and Beltramo (2017) developed separates events into categories A (i.e., mega-events) through E (small-scale events) and other various sizes of events in between. Previous research focused heavily on Type A events and found that these mega-events are often detrimental to their host areas economically, socially, and environmentally (cf. Agha & Taks, 2015, 2018; Chernushenko, 1996; Hall & Hodges, 1996; Hiller, 2006; Lee & Taylor, 2006; Smith, 2009; Wan & Song, 2019). Those authors that conducted research on smaller size events continue to suggest that additional research is needed, especially events in the Type E category.

Local and regional sports commissions play a large role in planning and executing sport tourism events. According to Gibson (2012), "Sports commissions may work at the state, county or city levels; they may be part of a convention and visitors bureau or may comprise a stand-alone non-profit agency" (p. 161). The Sports Events and Tourism Association (Sports ETA), formerly known as the National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC) was founded in 1992 with the goals of educating, providing networking opportunities, and protecting "the integrity of the

sports events and tourism industry" (Sports ETA, 2021b). The founding membership was comprised of 15 established sports commissions around the United States. This membership has grown in size to include 1,783-member organizations (Sports ETA, 2021c). The extensive number of sports commissions in the United States dedicated to developing competitions and attracting sports tourists to their communities shows that there is an interest in hosting sports events across the country. Although there is an appeal to hosting sporting events, there is limited research focused on the impact of small-scale events in specific locations around the U.S. (Dixon et al., 2013; Saayman & Saayman, 2014).

The economic impact is a primary factor governments review when assessing the performance of sports commissions. Crompton and McKay (1994) described the economic impact of an event as, "... the net economic change in a host community, excluding non-market values, which results from spending attributable to the event" (p. 33). Agha and Taks (2018), simplify this understanding by stating, "Economic impact is new spending in a local economy less any expenditures that have left the local economy due to the event in question" (p. 474). Expenses to bring a sport organization to a town or city are a part of an existing budget set forth by the sports commission. Moreover, local events already have established sport facilities for hosting events such as high school football games, local parks and recreation soccer tournaments, or youth baseball and basketball leagues. To determine economic impact, accurate data needs to be collected from the area in which a sports commission operates. Previous literature related to economic impact from medium-sized cities and small-scale sporting events (Type E) in certain regions of the United States is growing, but still limited. This gap in the literature has relegated local sports commissions to using Sports ETA's general economic impact model for its calculations rather than a generalized economic impact model for other types of events that may be hosted by the tourism bureau (e.g., automotive trade show).

The model and equation employed in the current research set forth by the Sports ETA multiplies average direct spending by the number of sports tourists and days stayed in the area and then apply an economic modifier based on economic factors from the specific geographical location being examined. Sports tourism is a global phenomenon with a wide array of research found in different geographical regions of the world. Research has been conducted on sports tourism in a variety of areas including ultra-long distance running in South Africa (McKay et al., 2019), mountain biking in Malaysia (Yusof, 2010), and football/soccer in Scotland (Allan et al., 2007). Countries such as these have different economies and cultures that may challenge the ideas of an economic impact than in the United States. Therefore, the current study explored the question: What is the economic impact of small-scale sports events in a medium-sized city in the Western United States? This research will help the local sports commissions in the United States understand their economic impact more accurately and add to the existing body of knowledge created by previous authors in this field. Similarly, parallel sports commission type organizations in other countries may view the current research as helpful as it is offers real-time data procedures that may prove beneficial in the decision making process for hosting sporting events in their area. The next section of this paper will focus on research conducted in the United States with notations on international research on the same topic to provide perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A recent body of literature has focused on the economic impact of small-scale sporting events (cf. Csobán & Serra, 2014; Daniels & Norman, 2003; Daniels et al., 2004; Duglio & Beltramo, 2017; Gibson et al., 2012; Gibson et al., 2003; Taks et al., 2015). Several authors have provided a conceptual framework for building this area of study by including typologies of events through tourism (cf. Duglio & Beltramo, 2017; Gratton et al., 2000; Wilson, 2006). Further studies have taken these typologies and explored the economic impact of single events (cf. Csobán & Serra, 2014; Daniels & Norman, 2004; Duglio & Beltramo, 2017) as well as multiple events (cf. Daniels & Norman, 2003; Gibson et al., 2003; Gibson et al., 2011; Taks et al., 2015). While these studies have contributed to the body of knowledge relating to the impact of small-scale sports events, the existing literature can be strengthened by the addition of studies completed throughout a range of geographical locations to continue to support previous literature, but also offer specific experiences in each city or region explored. The current study seeks to lend support to existing research on small-scale sports events by studying such events in a medium-sized city in the Western United States.

TYPOLOGIES OF EVENTS AND THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Not all sporting events are created equal, with the type (i.e., specific sport), size, and location of the event contributing to their classification. Gratton et al. (2000) built the discussion around the need to clearly define sporting events with Wilson (2006) building the foundation of event typologies. Gibson et al. (2012) formulated the idea of categorizing events using typologies. Applying the foundational work of these authors, Duglio and Beltramo (2017) presented five typologies for defining different events concerning sport tourism. Figure 1 represents the event typology structure devised by several authors over the years and finalized by Duglio and Beltramo (2017). Events

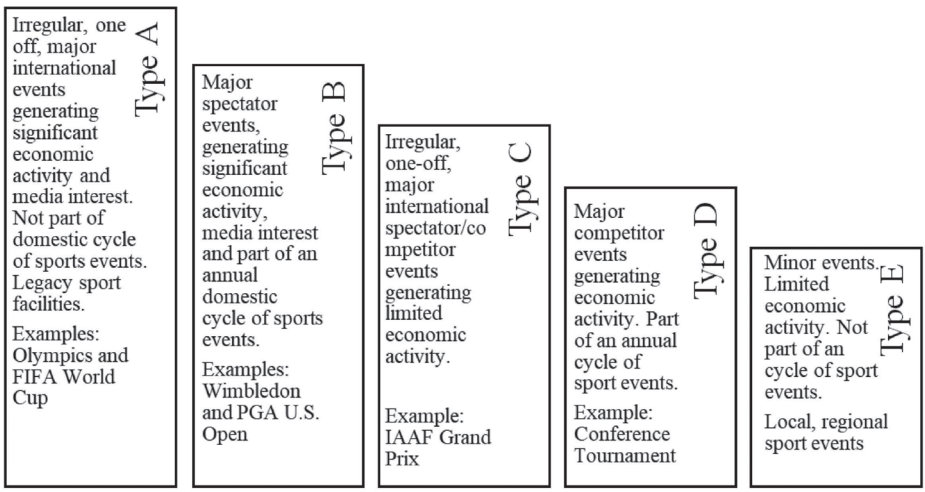

Figure 1 Event typologies

range in size from Type A mega-events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup (Gibson et al., 2012) down to small-scale Type E events such as a regional qualifier event for youth volleyball. Duglio and Beltramo (2017), whose research focused on active sport tourism, suggested that more research on small-scale events was needed, particularly in terms of looking at the economic impact of passive sport tourism.

Contunual contributions to the literature is necessary to further understand the impacts of smaller events on cities around the world (c.f., Dixon et al., 2013). Saayman & Saayman (2014) identified research related to the typology of events weighing in favor of larger events (i.e., Type A, B, C, & D) versus smaller Type E events. In an exploration of research articles between 1990 and 2013, Saayman & Saayman (2014) identified 54 Type A-D research articles ranging in the type of larger events such as the World Cup (14 articles) and the Olympics (10 articles). During this timeframe, eight research articles were published on Type E events such as college baseball (Dixon et al., 2013), swimming (Wilson, 2006), and a hockey tournament (Yardley et al., 1990). With the continued rise in revenue generation toward any size of sport tourism event, research is necessary to keep up with such growth.

SMALL-SCALE MULTIPLE EVENT ECONOMICS

Previous research on small-scale events was undertaken in several different ways. Daniels and Norman (2003) wanted to determine the economic impact of several events in the state of South Carolina. The authors selected seven events that were located in different cities across South Carolina held between April and October 2001. Events included a 10k run/walk, a tennis championship, a regional regatta championship, a national softball world series, a soccer championship, a senior amateur golf championship, and a youth soccer tournament (Daniels & Norman, 2003). Data was collected through a questionnaire that was mailed to the participants one month after the event ended. Daniels and Norman (2003) drew their participants from an estimated pool of 62,454 people. Of that pool, respondents consisted of approximately 85% tourists and 15% residents. After collecting the data, Daniels and Norman (2003) used an input-output analysis to determine the average amount that each person spent concerning the specific events. With an estimated size of 30,740 entrants, the run/walk event was the largest while the smallest was the golf championship with an estimated 260 participants. The run/walk also had the highest overall economic impact which totaled $6,080,482 (Daniels & Norman, 2003). The authors determined that the small-scale events improved the local economies of the state of South Carolina. Benefits of a study such as Daniels and Norman (2003) uncovered that hosting sporting events bring people to the city that would not normally travel to such a destination. According to the authors, 90% of the participants would not have traveled to the host city if it was not for the sporting event. The need for further research was noted by Daniels and Norman (2003) to determine if their results transferred to other regions.

In a study similar to Daniels and Norman (2003), Gibson and a team of scholars recognized the need for research for small-scale events. Previous literature suggested that larger events such as the Olympics or FIFA World Cup have left negative legacy barriers once those events were complete (Gibson et al., 2012). Several barriers included

financial burdens to sustain legacy facilities (Hillar, 2006; Lee & Taylor, 2006; Smith, 2009), social legacies that included residents being displaced due to the large event (Hall & Hodges, 1996), eminent domain being used for the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Kassens-Noor, Gaffney, Messina, & Phillips, 2018). Gibson et al. (2012) analyzed several events yet they chose events occurring in a single city. Gibson et al. (2012) evaluated six small-scale events occurring in Gainesville, Florida[1] with the efforts of examining the impacts of the three pillars of sustainability created by Elkington (1997): economic, social, and environmental. Elkington (1997) suggested this model of sustainability would allow businesses to determine how their actions affected the world around them. Gibson et al. (2012) applied Elkington's model to sports events to understand how these events would impact the communities in which they were hosted.

The team of researchers collected data from three adult events (marathon, senior games, archery) and three youth events (soccer, softball, swimming). Over 18 months, Gibson et al. collected data from 1,348 participants. Daily per person expenditures ranged from $137.83 (USD) (senior games) to $216.62 (USD) (youth soccer) with the a varying number of individuals in the traveling party and length of stay. Similarly, total expenditures ranged from $560.43 (archery) (USD) to $828.94 (USD) (softball). In summary, Gibson et al. (2012) noted that "all of the events generated substantial overall direct spending amounts from the expenditures of the event participants" (p. 167). The authors note that their findings should not be considered generalizable, however, the data suggest that small-scale events might be viewed as a "viable form of sustainable tourism development for many communities" (p. 170).

SINGLE EVENT IMPACT

In contrast to the multiple-event studies conducted by the likes of Daniels et al. (2004) and Gibson et al. (2012), Csobán and Serra (2014) explored the economic impact of a single event in fencing. Csobán and Serra aimed to determine if a niche sport event, such as fencing, could be a sustainable form of sport tourism by uncovering how the local economy was impacted by the event in the city in which it was annually hosted. The study reviewed data collected on sub-categories of economic impact including tourists' length of stay, accommodations, dining, and the approximate amount of money spent per day. Data was collected from both active and passive sports tourists by way of an on-site survey and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Of 149 possible subjects, 108 participated in the survey (72.5%). Over half of the participants (64%) stayed for the duration of the event for 2 to 3 days (depending on when the competition ended). A majority (72%) of the survey participants stayed in three or four-star hotels and ate in restaurants (83%) while attending the event. By comparing the results of this study to previous studies, Csobán and Serra (2014) concluded that the fencing tournament impacted the local economy of the

[1] Gainesville, Florida is in Alachua County with an estimated population of 269,043 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Gainesville is approximately 178 kilometers northwest of Orlando, Florida, and 115 kilometers southwest of Jacksonville, Florida.

host city that aided in the decisions to continue such events in the future. Csobán and Serra (2014) suggested that future research should focus on a variety of events to provide a broader picture of event sustainability.

The economic impact of small-scale sports events has been repeatedly demonstrated by studies such as those discussed above. Multiple authors have suggested further research in a variety of geographical locations to help triangulate the trends and consequences of small-scale sports events. One region that is lacking specific data is the Western United States.

METHODS

The outcomes of the current study will add to the body of knowledge relating to sport tourism and the economic impact derived from small-scale sports events in a medium-sized city in the Western region of the United States. Similar studies of similar size were previously conducted in other regions and cities including Gainesville, Florida (Gibson et al., 2012) and South Carolina (Daniels & Norman, 2003). Not only does the current study aid in determining the consequences of small-scale sports events while expanding the current body of knowledge, but it also provides the local sports commission with a better understanding of the economic impact their services provide and, in turn, offer additional data that will aid in future decisions regarding hosting sporting events.

The research undertaken in this study is descriptive in nature. Jones (2015) discussed descriptive research to be, "used to assess or evaluate the outcome of something, such as an economic outcome study" (p. 7). This correlates with the research goal of assessing the economic results of the selected sport tourism events in a city located in the Western part of the United States. Furthermore, Csobán and Serra (2014) suggested that descriptive research is the standard method used in sport tourism literature.

STUDY SITE

The location for the current research study is a medium-sized city in the western United States. At the time of the data collection, the estimated population of the city was 217,108 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The classification "medium-size" was determined by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and is used for a city with a population between 200,000 and 500,000 people (OECD, 2018). The region label "West" associated with the city under investigation was supplied by the U.S. Census Bureau which separates the United States into four regions: Northeast, South, Midwest, and West (U. S. Census Bureau, 2020). The current research data collection occurred between June 2018 and December 2018. The local sports commission approved data collection access to sports tourists during this time frame. Additionally, the local sports commission agreed that this research was beneficial to provide the association much-needed data to market themselves competitively as a prime place to host sports events. Finally, the data could increase opportunities for the continued expansion of small-scale sports event programming in the area.

EVENTS

In coordination with the local sports commission, five sporting events were selected for the current research study. The events included a track and field master's championship event, a youth softball tournament, a powerlifting event, a collegiate wrestling tournament, and a co-ed volleyball tournament. Each of these events are governed by the greater association body associated with that sport. The governing bodies host thousands of events per year across the United States from more than 400 events for USA Powerlifting to more than 8,000 events for USA Track and Field. Table 1 offers a broad representation of the associations that had local, regional, or national events hosted in the city being studied. As economic impact research continued to build for small-scale events in medium sized cities, it is also important to note how often events such as these return to the same city as it will be significant to continue this type of research analyzing one sport's impact on a city over multiple years.

Table 1 Sport governing bodies[2]

Event	Association	Association Membership	Event classification	Times event hosted at research location
Softball	USA Softball	2,000,000	Local	
Volleyball	USA Volleyball	275,000	Regional	
Wrestling	USA Wrestling	230,000	Regionals	
Track & Field	USA Track & Field	130,000	Nationals	
Powerlifting	USA Powerlifting	22,000	Nationals	

The selection of five different events was suggested by Daniels and Norman (2003) as an opportunity to understand a diverse tourism population rather than focusing on one event. The authors used the typology suggested by Wilson (2006) when determining the size classification of their events. All events for the current study fell under the Type E sport event category.

The authors used data provided to them by the local sports commission[3], in conjunction with data collected through on-site and online, fixed choice, self-administered questionnaire responses (i.e., intercept surveys). The type of survey given to respondents was dependent on how participants registered for the selected events. Questionnaires were distributed to both participants and spectators, 18 years or older.

[2] All information related to Table 1 was retrieved from each governing bodies website and the local sports commission being studied.

[3] The local sports commission included information about the sport associations coming to the area as well as final attendance numbers collected by the sports commission in partnership with each sport association.

The response rate was different for the on-site and online questionnaires with the on-site questionnaires having a significantly higher response rate.

SELECTED POPULATION

Sport tourism includes both active and passive sports tourists. It is common in sport tourism literature for one or both types of sports tourists to estimate the population of a study (cf. Csobán & Serra, 2014; Daniels & Norman, 2003; Duglio & Beltramo, 2017; Gibson et al., 2003; Gibson et al., 2012). The current study utilized both types of sports tourists at the five selected events to show the combined economic impact these populations have on the study site.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected applying surveys created and administered using an electronic software platform and portable electronic tablets (i.e., iPads). A pilot event was selected and survey administration was completed in May 2018 before the start of the official data collection for the current research. The benefits of this pilot research were to practice using data collection equipment and to understand the survey process and survey questions with potential sport tourism participants.

Once the events were selected the survey was administered at the site of the event using a random selection process during the last two days of each event. The investigators approached subjects for voluntary participation using a intercept survey method. The intercept survey data collection method provides the researcher the ability to connect with participants in a real-time situation during the event to ask them direct questions related to the topic of the research (Deutsch & Goulias, 2009). This was considered a benefit to the current research as previous studies have used quantitative surveys to delve into the economic impact of sports events often after the events occurred (cf. Csobán & Serra, 2014; Gibson et al., 2003; Gibson et al., 2012), for example, mailing questions to participants as much as a month after the event occurred.

The survey consisted of 15 questions, including demographic information and additional questions suggested by the Sports ETA for determining economic impact. Beyond verifying if a participant was 18 years of age or older, no personal identifying information was collected. Surveys lasted between five and eight minutes. Other data was provided by the local sports commission when available.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics as suggested by Csobán and Serra (2014) and Gibson et al (2012). The economic impact was determined by placing the economic numbers derived from the analysis of the survey results, into the input-output equation developed by Sports ETA,[4]

[4] The current research recognizes the advances in technology, but follows Barnes and Henrickson (2015, 2017) equation as it is closely related to the geographical location for this study.

The total number of sports tourists × *the number of days* × *$150* (*an estimation provided by the local sports commission*) × *1.3* (*an assumed economic multiplier*[5]).

The Sports ETA recognizes that all sports commissions are not the same and gives each commission the ability to use the above equation or to adjust the equation based on current standards or expert's knowledge in their geographical location. Therefore, the authors utilized an updated equation based on economists Barnes and Henrickson (2017) to reflect their expert opinion on similar local areas. Their equation was chosen as the city used in their study matched the city used for the current study. Barnes and Henrickson (2017) input-output equation was as follows:

the total number of sports tourists × *total number of days* × *$209.25* (*estimated average spending*) × *1.3* (*economic multiplier range*).

RESULTS

The five events studied were multi-day events. According to the local sports commission, these five events saw 10,454 active and passive sports tourists. During this study, a total of 151 survey responses were collected from active and passive sport tourists (n = 113) as well as local residents (n = 38) across the five events. The data from participants that were considered local was collected to simply show that small events do attract nearby residents to small events, where larger events are known to deter residents from attending or even leaving town while the event is taking place (Bull & Lovell, 2007). However, the responses from local participants in the study were not included in the economic impact data as these numbers would have skewed figures such as lodging.

The results from the current research offered 113 responses were collected from sports tourists that traveled 50+ miles to the event(s). One methodological limitation was that we did not decipher between an active (one that competes in the events) or passive sport tourist (one that travels to the event to watch the competition). We simply asked if they traveled more than 50 miles to the competition. The breakdown of sports tourists participants for each event are as follows, Powerlifting (47), Wrestling (20), Softball (17), Volleyball (15), and Track and Field (14).

Sports tourists attempt to find lodging accommodations near or within driving distance (i.e., less than 50 miles, often closer) to the event. Sports tourists stayed an average of 3.32 days during the five events. Sports tourists that stayed the most days were Track and Field (4.14) followed by Powerlifting (3.98), Volleyball (3.13), Wrestling (2.93), and Softball (2.15) and in decending order were sports tourists attending the Track and Field event of 4.14 days.

When asking survey questions about lodging accommodations, categories were not given to the participant rather the participant simply divulged the information related to where they they slept during their stay. Of the 113 total sports tourist respondents,

[5] A multiplier in its simplest form is how many times money is spent by a tourist that may circulate through an economy(Crompton et al., 2016).

a majority, 75.2% stayed in a hotel or motel (85) during their stay in the area. Next, results showed staying at a relatives/friends house (13) and AirBnB (13) were common followed by RV Park/Camping (1) and Other (1).

Individuals participating in the current research traveled with others. Each survey in this study represented an average of 2.38 people in their party per response. The largest party size corresponded to the youth softball tournament (3.20 people per party). Next was Wrestling (2.50), Powerlifting (2.13), Volleyball (2.07), and Track and Field (2.00).

Daily expenditures were broken down into categories common with existing economic impact research. Table 2 lists the per person, per day spending in the areas of accommodation, food and drink, retail, transportation, amusement and attractions, and an optional "other" category. The average dollar amount spent per person, per day on accommodations was $43.19. This category was found to be the largest expenditure category. The sports tourists associated with the Track and Field event paid the most ($52.56) for accommodations, while those associated with the Youth Softball tournament paid the least ($31.40) for accommodations. After accommodation expenses, sports tourists spent the most on food ($28.03), followed by retail purchases ($15.34) and transportation costs ($12.85). Overall, through the five events studied, sports tourists spent on average $100.75 per day during their stay in the area. The highest per day spending was at the Powerlifting event ($121.12) and the lowest was at the Youth Softball event ($89.99).

Table 2 Financial expenses person/day

Event	Hotel/Motel	Food	Retail	Transportation	Amusement	Other	Total/Day
Powerlifting	$51.63	$33.63	$17.23	$17.17	$1.26	$0.20	$121.12
Track & Field	$52.56	$21.05	$4.71	$20.44	$5.09	$0.00	$103.85
Volleyball	$45.37	$29.39	$10.91	$11.84	$0.98	$0.00	$98.49
Wrestling	$34.98	$28.89	$11.51	$12.20	$2.73	$0.00	$90.31
Softball	$31.40	$24.89	$27.18	$5.20	$0.71	$0.61	$89.99
Mean	$43.19	$27.57	$14.31	$13.37	$2.15	$0.16	$100.75

REAL-TIME ECONOMIC MULTIPLIER

Combining data from the current research and utilizing the foundation of the economic impact equation from Barnes and Henrickson (2017), real-time data was created for the individuals that participated in this study. As seen in Table 3, calculations are shown for each event analyzed for the current research that may be considered real-time economic impact figures. The equation includes the number of participants, the average number of individuals in their travel party, the average number of days stayed at an event, the average expenses per person for each event including the input-output multiplier are calculated.

Table 3 Real-time economic impact of survey participants

Event	Tourists	Mean number of people in travel party	Mean number of days stayed	Expenses per person × economic multiplier (1.3)	
Powerlifting	47	2.13	3.98	($121.12) × (1.3)	$62,736.42
Track & Field	17	2.00	4.41	($103.85) × (1.3)	$20,242.65
Softball	20	3.20	2.15	($89.99) × (1.3)	$16,097.41
Volleyball	15	2.07	3.13	($98.49) × (1.3)	$12,443.47
Wrestling	14	2.50	2.93	($90.31) × (1.3)	$12,039.68
Total					$123,559.63

ECONOMIC IMPACT COMPARISON

Identifying economic impact is not an exact science. "Economic impact analysis is an inexact process and the output numbers should be regarded as a *best guess*, rather than as being inviolably accurate" (Jeong & Crompton, 2015, p. 1). When understanding the economic impact of sport tourism, many of the figures are based on estimates of the existing economy during the year of the event when figures are available. Estimated figures come from the active and passive sports tourists attending events and economic experts in a local, regional, or national setting determining the estimates for expenses. Additionally, an appropriate multiplier with the possibility of certain types of motives (e.g., political) influencing economic impact reports being conducted (Crompton, 2006). Certain influences, motives, and existing local economic landscape at the time of research may affect the daily expenditures and multiplier. For example, Birmingham, Alabama built a sports complex to attract visitors beginning in 2011. This facility was built to hold events such as the National Senior Games and a National Collegiate Athletic Association Division II Track and Field Championship. When conducting an economic impact study to determine that the facility brought $35 million to the city, economists used a $195 daily expenditure with a 1.7 economic multiplier (Barnes & Henrickson, 2017). Similarly, Spokane, Washington built a comparable type of sports facility. To determine the potential economic impact of this facility, Barnes and Henrickson (2015) used a $209.25 daily expenditure with a multiplier of 1.3. Previously, Jones et al. (2010) conducted an assessment of three sports facilities in the Spokane, Washington area. Given the breadth of this report and the three different facilities, several multipliers were used (e.g., 1.42, 1.80) as well as per day expenditures (e.g., $354.29, $114.36) to determine the economic impact. Tables 4 and 5 represent real-time economic impact data versus economic impact data using Barnes and Henrickson (2015, 2017).

Table 4 Real-time economic impact data for total number of sports tourists

Event	Total number of tourists	Average number of days stayed	Expenses per person × economic multiplier	Economic impact
Track & Field	2620	4.41	($103.85) × (1.3)	$1,559,874.77
Powerlifting	2464	3.98	($121.12) × (1.3)	$1,513,089.18
Wrestling	3770	2.93	($90.31) × (1.3)	$1,296,845.28
Softball	1600	2.15	($89.99) × (1.3)	$402,435.28
Volleyball	890	3.13	($98.49) × (1.3)	$356,672.67
Total				$5,128,917.18

Table 5 Economic impact data using Barnes and Henrickson (2015, 2017) tourist expenses estimates

Event	Tourists	Number of days	($209.25) × (1.3)	Economic impact
Track and Field	2620	4.41	($209.25) × (1.3)	$3,143,031.26
Wrestling	3770	2.93	($209.25) × (1.3)	$3,004,815.35
Powerlifting	2464	3.98	($209.25) × (1.3)	$2,667,673,01
Youth Softball	1600	2.15	($209.25) × (1.3)	$935,766.00
Coed Volleyball	890	3.13	($209.25) × (1.3)	$757,780.04
Total				$7,841,392.65

The location used for the economic impact study conducted by Barnes and Henrickson (2015, 2017) was similar to that of the current study. The importance of the current study was to show how the current average of daily expenditures with a similar multiplier is shown in table 4 and table 5. As these tables show, there was a substantial difference in estimated daily expenditures used from Barnes and Henrickson (2015, 2017) and real-time expenditures combined with the active and passive sport tourist figures provided by the local sports commission of the current study. This difference accumulated to $2,712,475.47.

The benefit of hosting small-scale events offers the opportunity to use existing sport facilities, fields and courts to lower the cost of expenses needed to manage each event (Hingham, 1999). Event expenses were requested by the authors to the local sports commission being studied. Table 6 represents the gross real-time economic impact, the event costs, and the net real-time economic impact. One author asked a question to a local sports commission representative concerning sport associations chosing to host their event in their city and related expenses, this representative responded by stating:

Sometimes [sports associations take on all or some expenses and other times] we take on costs if the tournament or respective associations need it. Sometimes, we will just offer to work [at the events or], let them use equipment and signage for free or just make a donation to them so they continue to bring the event back year after year.

Because in the end, if they have the event and it brings in people from out of market, that helps us in the long run (Local Sports Commission Representative, personal communication, January 24, 2022).

Table 6 Real-time economic impact and sports commission expenses

Event	Gross real-time economic impact	Sports commission costs for event	Net real-time Economic Impact
Track & Field	$1,559,874.77	($50,200)	$1,509,674.77
Powerlifting	$1,513,089.18	($20,000)	$1,493,089.18
Wrestling	$1,296,845.28	($42,000)	$1,254,845.28
Softball	$402,435.28	($6,300)	$396,135.28
Volleyball	$356,672.67	($5,770)	$350,902.67
Total	$5,128,917.18	($124,270)	$5,004,647.18

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was to build and contribute to the existing body of knowledge to further understand and support previous literature by investigating if the economic impact was evident with five small-scale sports events. John Crompton, a seasoned scholar in the area of sport finance and economics, along with other colleagues suggest that conducting sport economic impact research is often a prediction rather than truth (Crompton & McKay, 1994; Jeong & Crompton, 2015). This statement would indicate the necessity for continued research in the area of sport economic impact throughout the world. Previous literature has found research of this type in many areas of the United States (cf. Daniels & Norman, 2003; Gibson et al., 2012) as well as internationally (cf. Bazzanella et al., 2019; Malchrowicz-Mośko, & Poczta, 2018) showing economic impact evidence for small-scale sporting events, but the call for further research was necessary. Therefore, an additional benefit of this study bridged a gap in the literature related to the location of the study as previous literature has seen less research conducted with a medium-sized city in the Western United States.

Utilizing elements of a sports commission economic impact input-output equation (i.e., Barnes & Henrickson, 2017), the direct spending results gathered through the intercept survey tool used in this study showed sport tourists' impact on the economy and the region during their time participating and attending events. This is one of the primary benefits to a study such as this, in showing actual financial figures of individuals attending specific events such as Track and Field and Powerlifting. The ability to show real-time financials, such as the amount of spending per day, during the events provide a level of validity to the case at hand as researchers such as Crompton (2006) and Jeong and Crompton (2015) reiterate that studying economic impact is not an exact science.

The industry standard for sports commissions finds annual reports using estimates of the number of individuals that attend all events for the year, for example, and using

the industry-standard input-output multiplier for sports commissions. Some sports commissions go so far as to not recognize expenses incurred to host the events for the year in these reports. The 2018 Harris County of Houston, Texas sports commission annual report, it was identified revenues of $93,577,261 (i.e., hotel and car rental taxes), $125,000,000+ in economic impact from non-seasonal events, and a projected $900,000,000 economic impact for all events in 2018 (Harris County, Houston Sports Authority, 2021, p. 4–5). This report did not identify any expenses associated with hosting events, construction costs, or sports commission employee salaries.

The current study offers support, although a small sample size, of similar trends previous literature identified that hosting small-scale sporting events, bring sport tourists to a city in which they would have not otherwise visited (cf. Daniels & Norman, 2003; Gibson et al., 2012; Hingham, 1999). Moreover, the sports tourists that did travel to the host city did in fact offer evidence of economic impact to the Western United States city in question. Additionally, the current research, similar to that of Daniels and Norman (2003), showed that beyond the daily expenses of lodging, food, and transportation, sport tourists did not spend much money per day on other items such as entertainment or retail (see Table 5). Local sports commissions should take note of the spending habits of their sport tourists by identifying ways to entice these individuals to spend money elsewhere to maximize economic impact beyond the money spent toward expenses.

More than two decades ago Higham (1999) suggested the benefits of small-scale sporting events outweigh the costs that would show a net impact on the city is positive. The city has the existing infrastructure to host small-scale events and sports tourists which, along with the decreased cost of security and the lower costs to bid for small-scale events, can lead to a determination that the small-scale events in the current study had a net positive effect on the area. The current study offers useful information that could help local sports commissions move forward when potentially deciding to host smaller events of their own rather than larger events. The data showed that most sports tourists stayed in hotels or motels during their time in the city. Given the city's hospitality tax on these accommodations to support the sports commission's bid for small-scale events, the costs to the citizens of the area are reduced by spending brought about by sports tourists. The data collected during this study can also show that while per-person spending per day did not reach the heights of either the local sports commission's estimate or the conclusions of Barnes and Henrickson (2015, 2017), it did amount to over $100 per day, per person spent in the area being studied. Depending on the size of the event and the number of sports tourists involved, this can represent an important impact as seen in the case of the powerlifting competition.

While the current study is opportunistic for small sporting events in mid-sized cities in the United States, other similar sized cities around the world should take note. Being critical of the current study is important for sport managers, politicians, and other government workers in other cities, but taking this critique and adapting a economic impact model for their own cities and the sporting events they host is paramount. Other cities that are able to adapt more of a realistic economic impact model (i.e., real-time data gathering technique) are likely to get much different economic data, however, it is the adapation of their models from past literature (c.f., Barnes & Henrickson, 2015, 2017), that the current research will shape sporting event research

in the future. It is of note that while the current study suggests a positive relationship between small-scale sports events and economic impact, there were a few limitations to the study and areas which can be expanded upon in future research.

One limitation that arose after the events were complete was the recognition that real-time data to determine economic impact can prove to be beneficial for stakeholders making decisions about spending for local events. If this was recognized earlier, a larger data collection team could have been arranged to increase the number of study participants at each event. With 10,454 active and passive sport participants and the number of participants for the current research (n = 113), the rate of tourists to participants lies at just over 1%. Anticipating the number of attendees to events can aid in the number of data collectors at each event in the future.

Another limitation that was identified that hindered the data collection process was related to the number of surveys completed from the master's track and field competition was affected by the usage of technology and the weather during the event. Due to high temperatures during this one event, the electronic tablets used to collect responses overheated, limiting the number of possible responses. Fortunately, this situation occurred on the first day of a multiple day data collection process. This was reflected in the low number of responses as compared to the other events. Future research should consider all elements of data collection practices before events, including environmental and technological issues.

Taking a real-time economic data collection approach offers limitations in understanding the population, traditions, and local customs related to all participants. While it was not tracked specifically beyond knowing whether or not the participants traveled more than 50 miles to attend the events, other factors play a role in spending habits of participants including their own home customs, or even the type of sport they participated in. For example, active Powerlifting participants spent the most amount of money on food. It is well known that those that compete in Powerlifting will not only spend money on food at any given location, they will also have an additional nutritional strategy that includes bringing a food scale for measuring portions and pack familiar foods in case the city they are traveling to does not have what they want or need (Capurso, 2017).

Future research would benefit from obtaining cost information for hosting events, especially when trying to determine the net impact of small-scale sports events. Agha and Taks (2015) suggest utilizing a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) to gain better insight into the economic impact of these types of events. Furthermore, they suggest that a CBA can lead to a more accurate understanding of the impact caused by hosting small-scale sporting events than simple input-output calculations. The resulting implications from the current study could be transferred to other cities that utilize a similar tax structure to help sports commissions and tourism organizations show government officials why they should support small-scale sports events in their cities. With the information gathered, cities similar in size may be able to justify bidding to host small-scale sports events to bring revenue into the city.

The findings of this study suggest the need for further research on the net impact of small-scale sport tourism and how to increase additional opportunities for active and passive sport tourist spending. Given the results of the current research, it could be argued that small-scale events in medium-sized cities are beneficial for the city in

terms of economic impact. However, larger events in large-sized cities (i.e., in the U.S. or other countries) may not prove as beneficial (cf. Coates & Humphreys, 2008; Harger et al., 2016; Humphreys & Prokopowicz, 2007) or possess similar results as the current research. Future research should investigate ways to continue to collect economic data in real-time. Additionally, towns and cities that host Type E events should look for ways to increase sports tourist spending beyond the categories in this research, mainly through access to amusements and attractions in the host city that coincide with the sporting event and sports tourists' interests in similar-sized cities.

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