



Satisfaction in Local Sports Events: Elements of Destination and the Event

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Abstract

Local sporting events have become tools for promoting tourism and the economic dynamisation of the places that host them. Knowing the exact profile of the athletes who participate in them, understanding their expectations and offering them satisfactory experiences is essential for reaping all the benefits that these events can bring to the destinations. In this sense, the aim of this study was to identify the elements of the destination and the event that most influence participants' satisfaction. The sample consisted of 476 athletes who took part in outdoor sporting events in the region of Osona during 2019. 13 event-related and 24 destination-related elements were assessed by means of questionnaires. The results of the study showed the relevant role of the presence or absence of athlete fellow companions in the destination elements affecting athlete satisfaction. They also revealed that the quality of the journey, the professionalism of the organisation and volunteers, the implementation of environmental protection measures and the quality of the refreshment facilities are the elements related to the event that most influence the satisfaction of the participants. With respect to the destination, environmental and natural attractions and the environment and atmosphere were shown to be the most influential elements.

Keywords: local sporting events, satisfaction, sport destination, sport tourism.

Introduction

Sports events can provide multiple benefits to the destinations that host them: added value to the tourist experience, economic impact, creation of destination image, attraction of tourists or prestige for the area (Tasci et al., 2018).

Traditionally, research on this issue has focused on major sporting events. However, since the early 2000s, many destination managers have also realised the economic and tourism potential of local sport events (LSE) (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010). Gibson et al. (2012) define them as minor events, with more participants than spectators, aimed at *amateur* athletes, held annually, with low media interest, limited economic activity and low public investment compared to major events.

The number of LSEs has grown significantly in recent years and similarly, interest in studying tourism potential has also grown (Fotiadis et al., 2016). Some of the most studied benefits of LSEs are the promotion of sustainable tourism, the economic impact, the deseasonalisation of tourism (Kenelly, 2017) and the improvement of destination image (Milovanovic et al., 2021).

Although at the national level, LSEs have a minor impact, they do have a special relevance for the destinations that host them. In some cases, the potential for tourism development is even higher for local events than for large events, especially if they are held on a recurring basis (Malchrowicz & Poczta, 2018).

The mere fact of organising and hosting LSEs, however, does not guarantee that all these benefits will be obtained. Zarei et al. (2018) point out that customers are not just buying products and services, but are looking for experiences that meet their expectations. And they suggest that the process of meeting consumer needs requires understanding and aligning them to the sport service before designing, producing and delivering it.

According to these authors, therefore, satisfaction is seen as key to maximising all the potential benefits outlined above. In the field of sport, satisfaction has been studied at various levels, especially at the level of facilities (Elasri et al., 2015) and sport events (Theodorakis et al., 2015). Satisfaction is often described using the expectation-disconfirmation model, which suggests that customer satisfaction is found from the difference between the final perception of the performance of a service and prior expectations of it (Oliver, 1980).

In the context of sport events, Yoshida & James (2010) understand satisfaction as "the rewarding fulfilment of needs arising from participation in the sport event and the services offered". Furthermore, a distinction should be made between overall satisfaction and satisfaction by attributes (Prayag & Grivel, 2018). In this sense, socio-demographic variables, the type of companion or the objective of participation in

the sporting event, condition the attributes that are most valued in both events and destinations (Sato et al., 2017).

Several studies show that participants' satisfaction with sport events acts as a predictor of future participation (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010). Thus, higher satisfaction increases intentions to revisit the destination and to recommend it to friends and family (Xiao et al., 2019).

Aicher and Newland (2018) find that organisational elements of events are evaluated by participants when assessing their experience. In this regard, Du et al. (2015) identified several elements that affect participant satisfaction and grouped them into five categories: event operations, event attributes, complementary services, expo amenities and service delivery.

With respect to sport destinations, some of the elements that influence participant satisfaction are: accessibility to the area, transport, quality of accommodation and entertainment options (Aicher & Newland, 2018). In addition, it appears that environmental elements, such as landscape and surroundings, affect the satisfaction of sport tourists (Peric et al., 2018). In a similar vein, Buning & Gibson (2016) highlight the importance of travel conditions when participating in sporting events and warn that the judgement of the event and the destination depends, to a large extent, on fellow travellers.

In short, in the case of local events, a satisfactory experience is directly dependent on the facilities, services and product features of both the destination and the event (Priporas et al., 2018).

Therefore, this study had three objectives: to identify which event elements affect participant satisfaction in local outdoor sport events, to identify which destination elements affect participant satisfaction in local outdoor sport events, and to examine how the type of companion and the number of events in which athletes have participated affect satisfaction.

This study was carried out in the region of Osona (Catalonia), an area located some 60 kilometres from Barcelona where, for more than five years, administrations, companies and sports organisations have been working to position themselves as a sports tourism destination. In 2019, 95 outdoor sporting events were held, attracting more than 23,800 participants.

Methodology

Design and Procedure

In collaboration with organisers of five local outdoor events in the Osona region, online questionnaires were sent to athletes who had participated in the 2019 running of these events. The events analysed were three mountain races - "Trail de

les Fonts del Montseny" (1,146 participants), "Pels Camins dels Matxos" (766), "Carrera de Roc Gros" (458)-, one mountain bike event -"Cabrerès BTT" (1,697 participants)-, and one road bike event -"Marxa Jufre Riuprimer" (836 participants)-.

The study was approved by the UVic - UCC Research Ethics Committee (113/2020). Informed consent was also collected from all participants in the study.

Participants

A total of 476 athletes (119 from the "Trail de les Fonts del Montseny", 95 from "Pels Camins dels Matxos", 27 from "Roc Gros", 115 from the "Cabrerès BTT" and 120 from the "Marxa Jufre Riuprimer") responded to the questionnaires sent. The sample (Table 1) consisted of predominantly male (84%), university-educated (44%), and employed (94%) individuals. The age of the participants ranged from 16 to 73 years, with an average age of 45.57 years, while the most common income bracket (38%) was between €20,000 and €29,000 net per year.

Instrument

The elements of the event and the destination that most affect participants' satisfaction were measured through a questionnaire divided into four sections. In the first instance, demographic information was collected, including

sex, age, level of education and annual income. The second section related to the athletes' participation in the events and included questions on the number and type of fellow companions and the number of events in which they had participated. Next were questions related to event elements, which contained 13 questions based on previous literature (Newland & Aicher, 2018; Buning & Gibson, 2016; Theodorakis et al., 2015; & Peric et al., 2018). Finally, there were questions relating to destination elements, which consisted of 24 attributes based on the Chi i Qu (2008) proposal.

All these elements were assessed using a 7-point Likert-type scale, as proposed by several previous studies (Theodorakis et al., 2015; Chi & Qu, 2008). The internal consistency of the questionnaire was checked using Cronbach's alpha, which presented an adequate value (.967) for proceeding with the analysis.

Statistical Analysis

In order to find out the underlying factors in the participants' responses, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out with SPSS 28.0 software. The extraction method used was maximum likelihood with Varimax rotation and a minimum factor loading value of .45 was set. Barlett's test of sphericity ($p < .05$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index (.945) validated the factor analysis of the data.

Table 1
Sample distribution.

	Sex	Age		Education		Income (€)		Fellow Companions		Number of Times	
M	84%	16-29	9%	ESO	16%	< 9,999	5%	Alone	22%	One	27%
F	16%	30-39	17%	Secondary School	10%	10,000 to 19,999	15%	Partner	10%	Two	31%
NB	0%	40-49	38%	VT	30%	20,000 to 29,999	38%	Family	15%	> Two	42%
		50-59	27%	Degree	25%	30,000 to 39,999	20%	Friends	52%		
		> 59	9%	Postgraduate	18%	40,000 to 49,999	11%	Others	1%		
				Doctorate	1%	50,000 to 59,999	5%				
						> 59,999	7%				

Finally, in accordance with the analysis carried out in similar studies in the field of satisfaction in sports services and events (Elasri et al., 2015; Newland & Aicher, 2018; Peric et al., 2018), T-test for independent samples was performed to segment the results according to sex; and ANOVA with Tukey's *post hoc* analysis was used to detect possible significant differences according to the type of fellow companions at the events.

Results

The exploratory factor analysis revealed the existence of five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 that explain 67.57% of the variance (Table 2).

The first factor, termed "event", explains 43.98% of the variance and includes 13 items associated with organisational elements of the sport event. The second factor, labelled "destination prices and services", accounts for 9.44%

Table 2
Factor structure identified.

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Factor 1: Event					
Professionalism of the Organisation and Volunteers	0.800				
Quality of the Refreshment Facilities	0.764				
Runner's Goody Bag and Other Giveaways	0.751				
Accessibility	0.746				
Journey Quality	0.736				
Clarity of Prior Information	0.731				
Implementation of Environmental Protection Measures	0.725				
Village Quality	0.678				
Atmosphere and Spectator Support	0.677				
Tradition and History of the Event	0.658				
Registration Fee	0.650				
Photographic Service for the Athletes During the Race.	0.635				
Proximity of the Event to Place of Residence	0.475				
Factor 2: Destination Prices and Services					
Value For Money in Accommodation		0.863			
Price of Activities and Shops		0.845			
Value For Money in Catering		0.784			
Diversity of Accommodation Options		0.714			
Variety of Dining Options and Culinary Options		0.621			
Outdoor Recreational Opportunities		0.574			
Communication and Access		0.505	0.415		
Variety of Spaces For Outdoor Activities		0.486			
Variety of Water Sports and Activities		0.485		0.447	
Parking Available Close to Amenities and Entertainment Options		0.472			

Table 2 (Continued)
Factor structure identified.

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Factor 3: Environment and Atmosphere					
Calm and Relaxed Atmosphere			0.824		
Friendly and Hospitable Residents			0.779		
Clean and Orderly Environment			0.766		
Pleasant Climate			0.728		
Uncrowded Environment			0.671		
Safe and Secure Area			0.662		
Factor 4: Entertainment and Leisure					
Variety of Entertainment Options				0.813	
Variety of Nightlife Options				0.787	
Variety of Cultural Events, Festivals, Fairs and Markets				0.670	
Variety of Local Shopping Options		0.540		0.565	
Distinctive Historical and Heritage Elements				0.545	
Factor 5: Environmental Attractions					
Unique Landscapes and Environmental Attractions			0.469		0.762
Attractive Routes and Trails			0.489		0.750
Attractive Rivers and Lakes					0.656
% variance	43.98%	9.44%	8.04%	2.94%	3.35%

and brings together the destination's characteristics in terms of services and accessibility. The third one, called "environment and atmosphere", explains 8.04% of the variance and relates to the area's environment. The fourth, "entertainment and leisure", explains 2.94% of the variance and refers to the entertainment, leisure and cultural options presented by the destination. Finally, the fifth, "environmental attractions", explains 3.35% of the variance and includes the items related to the natural assets of the area.

In relation to the objective of identifying the elements of the events that most affect participants' satisfaction, it was observed that "the quality of the journey" (5.93), "the professionalism of the organisation and volunteers" (5.70), "the implementation of environmental protection measures" (5.50) and "the quality of refreshment facilities" (5.45) were the most influential items (Table 3).

On the other hand, elements with less influence on participants' satisfaction were "the proximity of the event to place of residence" (4.02), "the photo service for the athletes during the event" (4.34) and "the quality of the village" (4.40). These three are the only factors below 4.5 points.

When comparing the elements according to sex, no significant differences were observed between men and women. On the other hand, in relation to the type of companions with whom the participant travels to the event (Table 4), significant differences were obtained for two elements: "the quality of the village" and "the tradition and history of the event". For these elements, according to the *post hoc* analysis, differences were significant between participants going alone and those accompanied by friends.

When making a comparison according to the number of times athletes have participated in the event (Table 5),

Table 3*Average for elements related to the event.*

	Average	SD
Professionalism of the Organisation and Volunteers	5.70	1.71
Quality of the Refreshment Facilities	5.45	1.71
Runner's Goody Bag and Other Giveaways	4.79	1.85
Accessibility	5.05	1.86
Journey Quality	5.93	1.68
Clarity of Prior Information	5.18	1.80
Implementation of Environmental Protection Measures	5.50	1.72
Village quality	4.40	1.93
Atmosphere and Spectator Support	4.97	1.85
Tradition and History of the Event	4.80	1.93
Registration Fee	4.95	1.83
Photographic Service for the Athletes During the Race.	4.34	1.92
Proximity of the Event to Place of Residence	4.02	2.11

Table 4*Differences in event-related elements according to the type of accompanying persons.*

	Alone (1)	Partner (2)	Family (3)	Friends (4)	Others (5)	F	Sig.	Post Hoc
Professionalism of the Organisation and Volunteers	5.47	5.98	4.42	5.81	5.80	1.559	.184	
Quality of the Refreshment Facilities	5.26	5.49	5.21	5.61	4.80	1.439	.220	
Runner's Goody Bag and Other Giveaways	4.46	4.96	4.73	4.94	3.60	1.865	.115	
Accessibility	5.05	5.06	4.49	5.22	4.40	2.365	.052	
Journey Quality	5.80	6.38	5.72	5.97	5.40	1.457	.214	
Clarity of Prior Information	5.17	5.47	5.01	5.20	4.60	.589	.670	
Implementation of Environmental Protection Measures	5.31	6.00	5.27	5.55	5.20	1.721	.144	
Village quality	3.95	4.66	4.04	4.67	3.00	4.180	.002*	1<4
Atmosphere and Spectator Support	4.68	5.32	5.00	5.04	4.00	1.502	.201	
Tradition and History of the Event	4.53	4.94	4.42	5.02	3.60	2.551	.038*	1<4
Registration Fee	4.91	4.98	4.73	5.04	4.40	0.563	.689	
Photographic Service for the Athletes During the Race.	4.16	4.21	4.40	4.44	3.60	0.645	.630	
Proximity of the Event to Place of Residence	3.78	3.85	3.84	4.21	4.00	1.056	.378	

Table 5*Differences in event-related elements according to the number of times partaking in the event.*

	1 (a)	2 (b)	> 2 (c)	F	Sig.	Post Hoc
Professionalism of the Organisation and Volunteers	5.60	5.71	5.74	0.291	.747	
Quality of the Refreshment Facilities	5.30	5.55	5.48	0.792	.454	
Runner's Goody Bag and Other Giveaways	4.57	4.89	4.86	1.318	.269	
Accessibility	5.00	5.11	5.04	0.118	.889	
Journey Quality	5.83	6.05	5.90	0.589	.555	
Clarity of Prior Information	5.19	5.26	5.13	0.238	.788	
Implementation of Environmental Protection Measures	5.43	5.57	5.49	0.233	.792	
Village Quality	4.05	4.54	4.51	2.882	.057	
Atmosphere and Spectator Support	4.84	5.13	4.93	0.924	.397	
Tradition and History of the Event	4.49	4.70	5.08	3.917	.021*	a<c
Registration Fee	5.04	4.97	4.89	0.265	.767	
Photographic Service for the Athletes During the Race	4.03	4.55	4.37	2.620	.074	
Proximity of the Event to Place of Residence	3.73	4.12	4.13	1.623	.198	

Table 6*Average for elements related to the event.*

	Average	SD
Value For Money in Accommodation	4.49	1.98
Price of Activities and Shops	4.61	1.90
Value For Money in Catering	4.84	1.81
Diversity of Accommodation Options	4.04	1.92
Variety of Dining Options and Culinary Options	4.38	1.83
Outdoor Recreational Opportunities	4.60	1.99
Communication and Access	4.96	1.69
Variety of Spaces For Outdoor Activities	4.82	1.99
Variety of Water Sports and Activities	3.25	1.96
Parking Available Close to Amenities and Entertainment Options	5.11	1.80
Calm and Relaxed Atmosphere	5.78	1.39
Friendly and Hospitable Residents	5.60	1.55
Clean and Orderly Environment	5.93	1.36
Pleasant Climate	5.64	1.46
Uncrowded Environment	5.79	1.46
Safe and Secure Area	5.60	1.50
Variety of Entertainment Options	3.56	1.89
Variety of Nightlife Options	2.89	1.86
Variety of Cultural Events, Festivals, Fairs and Markets	4.02	1.89
Variety of Local Shopping Options	3.61	1.83
Distinctive Historical and Heritage Elements	4.13	1.92
Unique Landscapes and Environmental Attractions	6.05	1.42
Attractive Routes and Trails	6.05	1.40
Attractive Rivers and Lakes	5.63	1.64

significant differences were observed in only one item ("Tradition and history of the event"). In this case, the element in question had more influence on the satisfaction of athletes who had participated in more than two events (5.08) than those who participated for the first time (4.49). For the other elements, although there were slight differences, they were not significant.

In terms of the objective of identifying the elements of the destination that most affect participants' satisfaction, the data showed that "unique natural landscapes and attractions" (6.05) and "attractive trails and paths" (6.05) were the only items with values higher than 6 points (Table 6). This was followed by "clean and orderly environment" (5.93), "uncrowded environment" (5.79) and "calm and relaxed

atmosphere" (5.78). On the other hand, the items with the least importance were "variety of nightlife options" (2.89), "variety of sports and water activities" (3.25), "variety of entertainment options" (3.56) and "variety of local shopping options" (3.61).

The comparison of destination attributes according to the type of fellow companions with whom the participant visits the event destination showed significant differences in eighteen items (Table 7). *Post hoc* analysis showed that the items where there were significant differences were between participants who travel alone and those who participate accompanied. This was observed in 8 items for individuals who go with a partner, 5 items for individuals who go with friends and 2 items for individuals who attend with family.

Table 7

Differences in destination-related elements according to the type of accompanying persons.

	Alone (1)	Partner (2)	Family (3)	Friends (4)	Others (5)	F	Sig.	Post Hoc
Value For Money in Accommodation	4.13	5.04	4.68	4.49	4.20	1.997	.094	
Price of Activities and Shops	4.08	5.34	4.70	4.69	3.40	4.565	.001*	1<2,1<4
Value For Money in Catering	4.44	5.34	4.84	4.94	3.60	3.012	.018*	1<2
Diversity of Accommodation Options	3.63	4.74	4.05	4.07	4.00	2.811	.025*	1<2
Variety of Dining Options and Culinary Options	3.94	4.79	4.36	4.50	3.80	2.495	.042*	
Outdoor Recreational Opportunities	4.15	5.02	4.86	4.67	2.80	3.362	.010*	
Communication and Access	4.62	5.23	5.03	5.02	5.20	1.480	.207	
Variety of Spaces For Outdoor Activities	4.33	5.21	5.03	4.93	3.00	3.530	.007*	
Variety of Water Sports and Activities	2.87	3.77	3.53	3.24	2.20	2.533	.040*	
Parking Available Close to Amenities and Entertainment Options	4.60	5.66	5.03	5.24	5.40	3.632	.006*	1<2,1<4
Calm and Relaxed Atmosphere	5.39	6.02	5.99	5.85	5.20	3.262	.012*	1<3,1<4
Friendly and Hospitable Residents	5.20	5.70	5.59	5.73	5.40	1.664	.157	
Clean and Orderly Environment	5.59	6.13	6.04	6.00	6.40	2.289	.059	
Pleasant Climate	5.25	5.87	5.82	5.69	6.00	2.585	.036*	
Uncrowded Environment	5.45	6.00	5.92	5.85	6.20	2.031	.089	
Safe and Secure Area	5.20	5.85	5.63	5.69	6.40	2.755	.028*	1<4
Variety of Entertainment Options	3.12	3.91	3.90	3.60	2.60	2.824	.024*	1<3
Variety of Nightlife Options	2.47	3.15	3.10	2.98	2.20	2.126	.077	
Variety of Cultural Events, Festivals, Fairs and Markets	3.67	4.68	4.21	4.00	3.60	2.607	.035*	1<2
Variety of Local Shopping Options	3.13	4.17	3.59	3.73	3.00	3.365	.010*	1<2,1<4
Distinctive Historical and Heritage Elements	3.84	4.81	4.01	4.18	2.60	2.974	.019*	1<2
Unique Landscapes and Environmental Attractions	5.78	6.45	6.21	6.06	5.00	2.838	.024*	
Attractive Routes and Trails	5.76	6.45	6.16	6.09	5.20	2.733	.029*	1<2
Attractive Rivers and Lakes	5.40	6.11	5.63	5.66	4.20	2.509	.041*	

In addition, unaccompanied athletes gave lower scores for all items than the other groups. When this comparison was made in relation to sex, as with the event elements, no significant differences were found between men and women.

When making a comparison according to the number of times athletes have participated in the event, significant differences were observed in five items (Table 8). In two of the five elements, differences emerged between athletes

who had participated in only one competition and those who had participated in two competitions ("communication and access" and "clean and orderly environment"). The item "pleasant climate" showed significant differences between athletes who had participated once (5.35) and those who had participated more than twice (5.76). With respect to the item "variety of nightlife options", differences were observed between those who had participated twice (2.63) and those who had participated more than twice (3.14).

Table 8

Differences in destination-related elements according to the number of times partaking in the event.

	1 (a)	2 (b)	> 2 (c)	F	Sig.	Post Hoc
Value For Money in Accommodation	4.75	4.41	4.39	1.431	.240	
Price of Activities and Shops	4.85	4.55	4.50	1.427	.241	
Value For Money in Catering	4.90	4.89	4.77	.268	.765	
Diversity of Accommodation Options	4.14	3.99	4.01	.255	.775	
Variety of Dining Options and Culinary Options	4.31	4.47	4.35	.272	.762	
Outdoor Recreational Opportunities	4.60	4.69	4.54	.261	.770	
Communication and Access	4.69	5.27	4.89	4.525	.011*	a<b
Variety of spaces for outdoor activities	4.69	4.96	4.80	.635	.530	
Variety of Water Sports and Activities	3.20	3.35	3.21	0.277	.758	
Parking Available Close to Amenities and Entertainment Options	4.91	5.34	5.08	2.091	.125	
Calm and Relaxed Atmosphere	5.63	5.93	5.76	1.683	.187	
Friendly and Hospitable Residents	5.41	5.74	5.62	1.590	.205	
Clean and Orderly Environment	5.74	6.15	5.90	3.209	.041*	a<b
Pleasant Climate	5.35	5.72	5.76	3.540	.030*	a<c
Uncrowded Environment	5.65	6.02	6.71	2.775	.063	
Safe and Secure Area	5.31	5.73	5.68	3.171	.043*	
Variety of Entertainment Options	3.41	3.46	3.73	1.464	.232	
Variety of Nightlife Options	2.82	2.63	3.14	3.361	.036*	b<c
Variety of Cultural Events, Festivals, Fairs and Markets	3.94	3.88	4.18	1.192	.305	
Variety of Local Shopping Options	3.61	3.61	3.61	0	1.000	
Distinctive Historical and Heritage Elements	4.14	4.15	4.10	.030	.970	
Unique Landscapes and Environmental Attractions	5.87	6.19	6.06	1.756	.174	
Attractive Routes and Trails	5.84	6.21	6.08	2.374	.094	
Attractive Rivers and Lakes	5.52	5.63	5.69	0.435	.648	

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this study show that the elements that most affect the satisfaction of LSE participants - which in turn influence intentions for future participation, return to the destination and recommendation to friends and family - boil down to five factors: event; destination price and services; environment and atmosphere; entertainment and leisure; and environmental attractions.

The elements related to the event itself are in line with previous studies, with the quality of journey being the most influential, in accordance with the results obtained by Newland & Aicher (2018), Getz & McConnell (2014). The professionalism of the organisation and volunteers is the second most influential element in participants' satisfaction, in line with the findings of Xiao et al. (2019). However, this result is in contrast to the study by Theodorakis et al. (2015), which found no significant relationship between participants' interactions with organisers and satisfaction. From the perspective of bystanders, some studies also show a significant relationship between interaction with staff and satisfaction (Yoshida & James, 2010). The third most important element is the implementation of environmental protection measures, in line with the results obtained by Peric et al. (2018), who suggest that this may be due to a greater environmental awareness among participants and the fact that they want to preserve the natural environment, which is essential for practising their sporting disciplines. A final element that appears quite frequently in the literature on satisfaction at sporting events is the atmosphere and ambience surrounding the event. Whilst Theodorakis et al. (2015) find it to be an important element for participants, the results obtained in this study suggest a minor influence, coinciding with the study by Getz & McConnell (2014), also on mountain bikers and runners.

In relation to the influence of the type of fellow companions, Buning & Gibson (2016) report significant differences when an athlete travels alone or with other cyclists or when travelling with non-athletes. Athletes travelling alone value several elements of the event as more important: the registration fee, the quality of the journey and the tradition of the event. However, in this study only significant differences in the quality of the village have been detected. With regard to the number of times athletes have participated in the event, the differences detected relate, once again, to a single element. Thus, the data from the present research do not coincide with those reported by Buning & Gibson (2016), who report differences in the importance of elements such as the quality of the journey, the registration fee and the clarity of prior information.

With respect to the objective of identifying the attributes of the destination with the greatest influence on participants' satisfaction, the results show that the elements included

in "environmental attractions" and "environment and atmosphere" are the most influential. Particularly relevant are items such as the uniqueness of the environmental attractions, the attractiveness of the paths and trails in the area, the cleanliness of the surroundings, the absence of overcrowding and the peacefulness of the environment. These results are consistent with those obtained by Peric et al. (2018) and Buning & Gibson (2016), which highlight the natural environment and safety aspects of the area. Beyond the environmental and natural attractions, the results reveal that the hospitality of the residents is one of the elements that most influences the satisfaction of the participants. In this sense, Kim & Jogaratnam (2015) point out that hospitality is one of the destination attributes that best predicts visitor satisfaction.

With respect to the type of fellow companions, Buning & Gibson (2016) suggest that certain destination attributes such as entertainment options, historical elements and activities related to the event gain importance among participants accompanied by non-athletes. The results of this study follow the same pattern. Significant differences were found in eight of the ten attributes relating to destination services, and in four of the five relating to entertainment and leisure. In fact, athletes travelling with a partner report a greater influence of destination services and entertainment on their satisfaction than those travelling alone. This may be due to the fact that those travelling alone prioritise participation in the event, while those travelling as a couple seek a balance between sport and leisure.

From the results of the study, practical implications are drawn for the organisation of LSEs and their use for tourism, both from the perspective of the organisers and the destination managers. In this respect, as Kaplanidou et al. (2013) point out, coordination between the different stakeholders involved is paramount. Collaboration between LSE organisers and destination managers is seen as key to maximising the satisfaction of accompanied participants, who also generate more economic impact in the area.

Finally, given the size of the sample in this study, the influence of event and destination elements on participant satisfaction should be further investigated in other types of events, in new destinations and with different samples. It seems particularly relevant to investigate the perspective of fellow companions and spectators, who often play an important role in the final choice of both the event and the destination. Finally, a deeper understanding of the perspective of the organisers, and the possibility of aligning it with that of the participants, is also a very interesting line of research that could contribute to improving and consolidating the quality of local sporting events and the satisfaction of athletes and those accompanying them.

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