



Research Article

# The Relationship between Sports Clubs and Regional Development: Destination Management in Barcelos (Portugal)

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## Abstract

Sport has a great and indisputable link with the tourism sector, which helps to boost local, regional, and national development. That said, sports tourism has been gaining an increasingly important place in the tourist offer. This is due to the fact that sport has a great capacity to attract tourists, either to practice it or even to attend sporting events as spectators. Since sports tourism can be considered a driving force behind the development of regional tourism, there may be a need for municipalities and local sports associations to work together. The aims of this project are to understand the importance of sports organizations for local tourism, with the main focus on the Gil Vicente FC and Óquei Clube de Barcelos clubs. Data were collected by interviewing the director of the Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports department of Barcelos Municipality, with the aim of studying the municipality's relationship with the main local sports entities. The results will make it possible to identify what joint work is being carried out between the aforementioned entities, as well as the importance of the two clubs for sports tourism in Barcelos. From an interdisciplinary perspective, this study seeks to present some preliminary insights into sports tourism and its contribution to territorial development in the context of Barcelos.

**Keywords:** sport tourism, sustainability, differentiation, local development

## Introduction

Today, we live in a consumer society where tourism has become an integral part of people's daily lives. This is due to the fact that people travel not only to gain knowledge about other cultures, but also to recover mental and physical strength (Félix et al., 2017). That said, since people travel for different motivations, new types and segments of tourism are emerging, which makes attempts to reach a consensus on its definition difficult. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the main international tourism organization, tourism comprises "the activities of people who travel and stay in places outside their usual environment, for a consecutive period of time of less than one year, for leisure, business or other purposes" (WTO, 1994). Within the various different types of tourism, the UNWTO presents "sports tourism", which is the type of tourism that we intend to study in this project. Sport is a phenomenon of growing relevance and influence in the world, becoming a reference not only in the social and cultural sectors, but also at an economic and tourist level. In many countries and regions, tourism authorities are increasingly seeking to promote sporting activities in an attempt to attract visitors, boost local development and also contribute to the well-being of many human beings (Félix et al., 2017).

## Theoretical Background

In order to study the phenomenon of "Sports Tourism", it is necessary to review its two constituent concepts, Tourism and Sport. According to the European Charter of Sport (1992), "sport is understood to mean all forms of physical activity which, through organized or unorganized participation, aim at the expression or improvement of physical and mental fitness, the development of social relationships or the achievement of results in competition at all levels". Sport has a strong relationship with the evolution of humanity, just like tourism. As a human activity, sport undergoes changes depending on the time period it is in, whether in terms of trends or technological evolution (Félix, 2015). In their contemporary forms, it can be said that sport and tourism originated at the same time and, since then, have evolved individually, but with an interesting parallelism

(Carvalho & Lourenço, 2008). That said, sports tourism is the result of the interconnection between the areas of tourism and sport (Félix, 2015). In fact, the term "sports tourism" was created to further study the use of sport "That this trip is not definitive, normally considering that it should not exceed 12 months"; 3- "That this trip does not have as its main motivation to carry out a paid activity"; 4- "That the traveler participates during the trip or stay, in a sporting activity or context"; (Carvalho & Lourenço, 2008). For Gammon & Robinson (1997), "sports tourists are those individuals who actively or passively participate in sports competitions or leisure activities, while traveling and/or staying in places outside their natural environment, with sport as the primary motivation for the trip" (Gammon & Robinson, 1997).

For Hall (1992), sports tourism can be subdivided according to tourists' motivations: - Events: where the main motivation is to take part in or watch a sporting event; - Health and Fitness: where the main motivation is to go to a place that offers health and fitness activities, such as therapeutic spas and fitness cruises; - Outdoors and Nature: where the main motivation is to stay in hotels in places that offer outdoor physical activities, in contact with nature, and where most of the activities are not possible to do in the sportspeople's home areas. (Hall, 1992). Sports tourism can be defined as "all sports activities in which tourists participate as practitioners". Tourists who participate in sport in this way can be considered "sports tourists", i.e. tourists who practice a sporting activity during their trip, regardless of the main reason for the trip (Carvalho & Lourenço, 2008). Those who have a different motivation for their trip, such as sun and sea tourism or rural tourism, may occasionally take part in a sporting activity. This proves that regardless of the motivation for the trip, the practice of sport by these tourists also represents a field of overlap between tourism and sport. That said, sports tourists can be divided into two categories:

- The Enthusiast Tourist: Someone "who travels to a destination with the main motivation of practicing a specific sporting activity";
- Sporadic tourists: those "who practise some

kind of sporting activity during their trip, but whose main motivation is not to practise sport” (Carvalho & Lourenço, 2008).

Sports Spectator Tourism, on the other hand, is defined as the set of sporting activities enjoyed by tourists as spectators, considering the person with this type of participation in sports tourism as the sports spectator tourist. In contemporary times, soccer has become a universal phenomenon and also a place where rivalry and victory meet. For footballers, soccer is their job, to which they are obliged to devote all their effort in order to achieve good results and, at the same time, to entertain the masses of fans. From the fans' point of view, soccer is a game that influences people's lives (Iangngap & Raizada, 2020). In the context of soccer tourism, McDowell (2017) stated that British soccer teams have been involved in domestic and international tours since the 19th century. The same author also states that footballers used to explore destinations through leisure trips before or after matches. Currently, studies on soccer tourism reveal that this type of tourism can be experienced by fans and non-fans alike through attendance at live matches and visits to museums and stadium tours. Some club museums and stadium tours have become the most visited attractions in some destinations. An example of this phenomenon could be the “The Beatles Story” exhibition in 2019, located at the historic Royal Albert Dock in Liverpool, which saw Liverpool FC register 340,000 visitors to its museum and stadium tours (Tobar & Ramshaw, cited by Oliveira et al., 2021). This active or passive participation in these venues and football-related experiences requires a temporal and spatial displacement from their homes and a motivation - whether primary or not - that can be explained by passion and affiliation with soccer clubs (McManus, 2020). Soccer tourists

are a group of people who travel for some kind of soccer event. Within this group, it is possible to distinguish three significant groups of soccer tourists: soccer teams who need to travel to play (Falcão, 2020); members of the press who visit the city where the match will take place to cover the event; and, finally, spectators, who form the largest group of soccer tourists (Erdogru & Yazici, 2013). According to Iangngap & Raizada (2020), in the last ten years, almost 2 million travelers from all over the world have traveled to different cities to watch a soccer match. The same author also says that, according to the global tourism economy, it has been found that soccer has a very strong attraction for travelers, a power that surpasses all other sports. This phenomenon can be explained by soccer's ability to motivate people, which encourages travellers to explore different parts of cities and the world (Iangngap & Raizada, 2020). In the UK, the Office for National Statistics published the International Passenger Survey, where the results showed that almost one in 44 visitors and more than 45,000 international visitors, who traveled for business purposes, managed to watch a soccer match during their trip. In the contemporary world, soccer has transformed various leagues and clubs into global brands, and this is due to the commercialization of soccer. This phenomenon has had a major impact on sports tourism, as soccer has started to become a significant part of people's daily lives (Iangngap & Raizada, 2020). As mentioned earlier, soccer is a sport that has a very strong attraction for travelers, surpassing all other sports.

Despite being the sport in which Portugal has won the most titles, both national and club, it is still a growing phenomenon. According to Fonseca (2013), roller field hockey became widely known in Portugal at the beginning of the 1940s through the available media, when

they began to follow the national team's games and make the excitement of this sport known to all households. Roller field hockey then fulfilled an important sporting mission: it identified and united a people. However, with the advent of television, what had been part of many people's auditory imagination became reality, arousing even more attraction for the sport. This sport then reached high viewing figures, ranking just behind soccer (Fonseca, 2013).

### Context and Methodology

Nowadays, sport has emerged as one of the main human activities. Sport has the ability to draw crowds, "drive" millions of people crazy and easily drive a country or a society into collective hysteria (Serrado, 2014). Soccer and roller field hockey are two sports that are much loved by the Portuguese, and both have long histories of development and success at both national and international level. This chapter will begin with a historical, contextual, and general analysis of the two sports, as well as their governing bodies and main competitions and clubs in Portugal. Next, the main sports clubs in the city of Barcelos - Gil Vicente FC in soccer and OCB (Óquei Clube de Barcelos) in roller field hockey - will be discussed, taking into account their historical trajectories and sporting successes. Finally, the chapter closes with an approach to tourism in the city of Barcelos through a geographical contextualization and highlighting its main tourist attractions and tourist statistics. Soccer arrived in Barcelos in the early decades of the 20th century through reports from visitors traveling to Porto and Lisbon. The sport quickly gained admiration in the region, which led to the formation of the first local teams, such as the Barcellos Sporting Club and the União Foot-ball Club Barcellense, made up of local youngsters. However, it was on May 3, 1924, that a group of young friends from Barcellos decided to create "Gil Vicente Foot-ball Barcelense". The idea for the name came about because this group used to meet to play soccer near the Gil Vicente Theatre, one of the

city's most prestigious venues, named after one of the greatest Portuguese playwrights, who is believed to have been born in the city of Barcelos.

Although the first roller field hockey championships date back to 1938, the sport only arrived in the city of Barcelos in 1948, when one of the city's main sports clubs, Óquei Clube de Barcelos (OCB), was founded. It was through a young group of friends who, tired of the lack of conditions and organization of the sport in the city, decided to create a club that would become one of the biggest in the sport in Portugal. After several attempts at a name, the founders' biggest doubt was whether to write the club's name with or without an "h", a choice that would be made years later by spelling the word "field hockey", leaving the name Óquei Clube de Barcelos in history. From a tourist point of view, despite being a city known for its handicrafts and its importance in the Caminhos de Santiago, Barcelos has a number of natural, monumental, and cultural resources, which spread from the city center to the most typical parish in the municipality. According to the Barcelos Municipal Master Plan, the natural resources are an effective feature of the municipality and are made up of attractions such as the River Cávado, the River Neiva, the River Este, countless patches of forest in and around mountains, viewpoints and the landscape shaped like a smallholding. In terms of monumental and cultural resources, Barcelos has a vast heritage, including attractions such as the Historic Center and its gardens, the Campo da Feira (or Campo da República), the Town Hall, the Pottery Museum, the Paço dos Condes, the Medieval Bridge, the Bom Jesus da Cruz temple, the Gil Vicente Theatre, the Medieval Tower, among others. As Barcelos is a center of tradition, ethnographic resources such as folklore, festivals, fairs and pilgrimages are of great importance to the development of local tourism.

These include the Festa das Cruzes - also known as the first great pilgrimage in Minho - and the traditional weekly fair that brings many people to Barcelos. Still within the

tradition, Barcelos has a rich and varied gastronomy accompanied by the best wines from Barcelos, wines that are considered the best vinho verde in the Minho region. Handicrafts are arguably Barcelos' greatest tourist resource, a resource which, according to the Barcelos Municipal Master Plan, "has boosted the dissemination and formalization of Barcelos' tourist image in Portugal and around the world". This is due to the fact that the emblematic Rooster of Barcelos came from Barcelos' handicrafts. As mentioned earlier, the city of Barcelos is also known for being an important waypoint on the road to Santiago. According to Gonçalves & Costa (2020), "Barcelos is historically linked to the Way of St. James through various traces of medieval pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela, including the existence of a cross evoking the Jacobean legend of the miracle of the Barcelos rooster". The same authors conclude that in 1960, tourism associated this Jacobean legend with the piece of pottery, Galo de Barcelos, making these two resources the main tourist attractions in the city of Barcelos today.

This section presents the study's methodology, i.e. the way in which the information relevant to the research was collected. According to Batista (2008), methodology is of paramount importance in scientific work. The same author states that methodology "becomes a compass for researchers, inserted in a map full of undiscovered paths" (Batista, 2008). According to Félix (2015), in an investigation, the choice between a quantitative or qualitative approach should be made according to its objectives. That said, this study takes a completely qualitative methodological approach. According to Godoy (1995), qualitative methodology occupies a recognized place among the various possibilities for studying

phenomena involving human beings and their social relationships established in various environments. In the qualitative approach, the researcher goes into the field with the aim of capturing the phenomenon under study through the perspectives of the people involved in it, considering all the relevant points of view (Godoy, 1995). In this study, the qualitative methodological approach chosen was to interview a tourism organizer in the municipality of Barcelos.

The general objective of this study is to answer the basic question: What is the importance of sports clubs in the development of local tourism? The aim is to understand how sports clubs have an impact on the development of local tourism, taking as a specific case the relationship between the clubs Gil Vicente FC and Óquei Clube de Barcelos and tourism in the city of Barcelos. To achieve the general objective, it is necessary to draw up specific objectives in order to facilitate the study. Therefore, this study has the following specific objectives: - To understand the relationship between the main sports clubs and the entity responsible for developing tourism; - To understand the importance of sports tourism for the development of local tourism; - To understand how the clubs influence the image of the city in which they operate; - To understand the impact of sports club marketing on the image of the city in which they operate. For the information-gathering phase, it was decided to carry out a semi-structured interview. Despite the disadvantages of being a highly subjective and biased technique (Bell, 1977), interviews have advantages that were considered valuable for the study. This choice was made because the semi-structured interview allows the participant to be free to share experiences and

perspectives through more open answers, even though there is a considered decision on the topic and a series of specific questions. The flexibility offered by this type of interview was seen as another important advantage for this study.

The target of this investigation is the entity responsible for developing tourism in the city of Barcelos. An interview was therefore conducted with the aim of understanding how clubs contribute to the development of local tourism. Thus, the sampling technique used in this research was convenience sampling, since it consisted of choosing the stakeholder with the greatest capacity to help answer the intended objectives. The interview was therefore directed to the director of the Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sport department, as it was considered that he was the person with the most knowledge to address the issue and help to conclude the objectives of this study.

### **Preliminary Discussion**

According to the interviewee, sports tourism is a segment that has been growing both in Barcelos and in the region, and there are a number of events that add value to the traditional offer that exists in the municipality. Although Gil Vicente FC and the OCB make an important contribution to the development of local tourism, there are various sporting activities that contribute to the same goal. Events such as Rally Spirit and Trails are examples of sporting activities that have been attracting people to the city of Barcelos. Having invested in events such as the Final Four, the municipality of Barcelos is aware of the importance of sports tourism for the development of local tourism, and it is in the action plan for the following years, from the point of view of the added value it brings to traditional commerce, hotels and the general dynamism it brings to the territory. The interviewee also said that sports tourism is of great importance, as it can be seen as a great argument in the fight against seasonality, being important for the hotel rate, especially in low

seasons. Sports tourism is therefore a lever for tourism development in a territory that wants sustainable development. According to the participant, there is no agreement with the clubs to develop local tourism. The interviewee revealed that there is a use of what is the tourism promotional strategy to enhance the events and moments that the clubs provide. As mentioned earlier, Barcelos recently hosted the Final Four event, in which OCB was involved, and this required talks with the base club, in this case OCB.

Barcelos will host another major sporting event in the soccer segment, the Portugal under-21 team, which required talks with Gil Vicente to organize. The participant also reveals that this coordination is aimed at increasing the importance of these moments for the local economy. Despite being aware that large-scale events will be held throughout the year, particularly when soccer clubs considered "big" visit Barcelos, the interviewee showed a desire to go beyond these events. In other words, he wanted to turn sports tourism into an argument for boosting the city and, as mentioned above, to use the segment to combat seasonality. In the participant's opinion, the benefits that partnerships between sports clubs and the municipality bring to local tourism are unquestionable. He also revealed that there are a series of sports development contracts and programs that end up being the municipality's way of structuring, supporting, and financing a series of events that they increasingly want to organize/receive. These contracts are also a way of enabling all the existing associations in the municipality to develop. One of the advantages of these partnerships is that they create dynamism among the clubs. Partnerships can help sports clubs look at events from the perspective of their contribution to society and the local economy, and not just from a sporting perspective. Partnerships also allow sports clubs to take the name of Barcelos to Portugal and the world, helping the city's image. Another factor considered an advantage for the image of local tourism is the fact that the municipality sponsors clubs that are in the First Division,

thus taking the name of Barcelos to all corners of Portugal and beyond.

As for the disadvantages, the interviewee believes that there are no disadvantages to these partnerships as long as the municipality is proportional in its actions. This is due to the fact that if the municipality has more structured actions with the sports clubs in question in this study, other sports associations in Barcelos may question its position or lack of the same actions towards them. On the other hand, this disadvantage is easily solved, since there are the sports development contracts and programs mentioned above. Not only because of the affection shown by the people of Barcelona for the OCB, but also because of its history and sporting performance, using the marketing tool to create/develop the OCB brand could be important for the city's image. When asked about this, the interviewee said that it would be beneficial since OCB is a club with a high profile in Portugal and even on the Iberian Peninsula. When it comes to promoting a tourist area, brands play an extremely important role as they help to bring the municipality closer to the segment it is working with. The interviewee believes that if, in addition to the Rooster, handicrafts or even the Creative City, the OCB is a successful brand, it will add value to the development of tourism in Barcelos, since it is included in a segment that is constantly growing in the territories. Although it is not the municipality's responsibility, the interviewee believes that tourist packages designed in advance for the target audience in question would be an asset and a way of improving the work that has been done to capitalize on the dynamics of sports tourism. Even though he thought it was an interesting initiative, the interviewee revealed that from the point of view of OCB's historical dimension, this topic is little promoted even by the club itself. Acting

in harmony with hotels and contributing to quality tourism, the interviewee believes that these packages could and should be a very interesting product. According to the participant, sporting events generate quality of experience. Events such as the Spirit Rally (which has a large number of foreigners), the Trails, or even when the teams considered great in the different sports come to play in Barcelos, when they are associated with the quality of the gastronomy, the quality of the hospitality or the enjoyment of the heritage, will form a positive image of the city. The better the organization of an event, the better the image formed by the visitors who take part. The interviewee also reveals that it is not only the event organizers who are responsible, since the constituents of the events in question have to be in harmony for the event to work and consequently form a positive image of the city of Barcelos.

### **Conclusion**

Nowadays, it is indisputable that sports tourism has undergone a major evolution, both in theoretical and statistical terms. Sport is a phenomenon capable of moving many people for the most varied of reasons, making sports tourism increasingly an enabler of local, national, and international tourism. This project, therefore, focuses on analyzing the contribution of sports clubs to local tourism and the importance of sports tourism, based on the relationship between the Gil Vicente FC and OCB sports clubs and tourism in Barcelos. The general objective was to understand how sports clubs have an impact on the development of local tourism. To help achieve this general objective, the following specific objectives emerged: to understand the relationship between the main sports clubs and the entity responsible for developing tourism; to understand the importance of sports tourism for the

development of local tourism; to understand how the clubs influence the image of the city in which they operate; and, finally, to understand the impact of the marketing of sports clubs on the image of the city in which they operate.

A qualitative methodological approach was chosen as the methodology, more precisely a semi-structured interview in order to achieve the intended objectives. The interview took place in person, at the Barcelos Youth House, with the director of the Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sport department.

The main conclusions are that the municipality clearly wants to explore the sports tourism segment and use it as a lever for the city's tourism development, as well as taking advantage of the sporting events provided by the clubs in question, whether from a tourist, economic, or even territorial development perspective. The conclusion is also drawn that partnerships between these entities could be put to better use by the clubs, as they can bring benefits to both parties. Marketing, as a tool for creating/developing brands, could also be better exploited by sports clubs, in the sense that it could bring advantages to both the sports bodies and the image of the city of Barcelos.

With regard to the joint work between the sports bodies in question and the municipality of Barcelos, it can be concluded that the municipality is not in agreement with the clubs, but that the tourism body is making positive use of the benefits that clubs provide through the sporting events they organize or are involved in. Finally, it can be concluded that sporting events are very important for local tourism, making it more interesting to offer tourist packages designed in advance for the target audience. Although this is not yet a reality, it could be an interesting and advantageous proposal for both sports clubs and local commerce and tourism.

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