Quantifying the Economic Impacts of Major Football Events: A Data-Driven Approach to Tourism, Infrastructure, and Long-Term Growth

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Abstract

Purpose: Major football events such as the FIFA World Cup are known to impact the economic conditions of host nations significantly. This research evaluates the multifaceted economic impacts of such events through a data-driven approach, focusing on aspects such as tourism, infrastructure and long-term growth. This research builds on a growing body of existing sports literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of which conditions lead to economic benefits when hosting a football event. This research has addressed existing research gaps by attempting to evaluate both tangible and intangible benefits to the host nation's economy. Additionally, it examines this topic through a long-term lens as well, compared to existing research which primarily focuses on immediate impacts.

Methods: Through a detailed analysis of past events, this research tests three hypotheses regarding the economic benefits and effects of hosting major football events on the host country. Data was collected through a survey sent out to football enthusiasts, the majority with event attendance experience. The results were assessed using a partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) technique. This was done through the SmartPLS-4 software. The model assessed all four research questions and linked each question from the questionnaire to a research objective. Through this method, the relation between research objectives and the reliability and validity of the research questions were tested.

Results: Our findings demonstrate that hosting such events can benefit the host city's economy significantly, provided strategic planning and effective resource management exist. The analysis revealed strong relationships, with Cronbach's alpha values of up to 0.837.

Conclusion: This research demonstrates that major football events can effectively benefit the economy of the host country, present new facilities and infrastructure and improve the quality of life for stakeholders, with the condition of effective management and planning.

Keywords: FIFA World Cup, football, PLS-SEM, economic impacts, tourism, major football events

I. Introduction

Football entertains billions across borders and unites the world in shared passion and excitement. Originating in England in the mid-19th century, football rapidly spread across the globe to become the most-watched and followed sport. The sport's popularity gave rise to major international competitions such as the FIFA World Cup, Copa America, UEFA European Football Championship and more. The most prominent football tournament in the world is the FIFA World Cup, which began in 1930 (Nikolaou et al, 2023). In 1904, the heads of seven European football associations met and formed the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, more commonly known as FIFA (Matheson, 2018). FIFA now boasts more members than the United Nations (Rinke, 2014). Due to the number of stadiums required for this event, FIFA presents the opportunity to host the event to a country rather than a city. The FIFA World Cup has notable economic impacts on host nations. FIFA World Cups are economic catalysts in terms of attracting tourism, developing infrastructure and fostering long-term growth. However, it certainly comes at a cost. The investment required is high, reaching estimates of 6 billion euros for both Germany 2006 and South Africa 2010(Viana et al, 2018). Despite the potential risks, countries compete to host such events. Major sports events are viewed as valuable prizes by several countries, and there is often vigorous competition to host such events (Baumann and Matheson, 2018). The FIFA World Cup is no different. In the previous two FIFA World Cups,2018 and 2022, there were 6 and 5 candidates respectively for hosting these events, showcasing that countries understand the benefits of hosting these events (Viana et al, 2018). The global significance of such events cannot be overstated. The FIFA World Cup happens once every four years, and approximately 5 billion people engaged with the most recent World Cup in Qatar. Additionally, over 1 million visitors travelled to Qatar for the FIFA World Cup, clearly proving that such tournaments are extremely influential and drive tourism greatly (FIFA, n.d) The initial FIFA World Cup held in Uruguay had a live attendance of 434,000

V. Agarwal et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the Global Innovation and Technology Summit "AAROHAN 3.0"_HSS Track (GITS-HSS 2025)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 1005,
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-559-1_41

while the FIFA World Cup in 2022 had around 3.4 million, revealing the growth of the sports events industry worldwide. This growth is further represented by Figure 1.

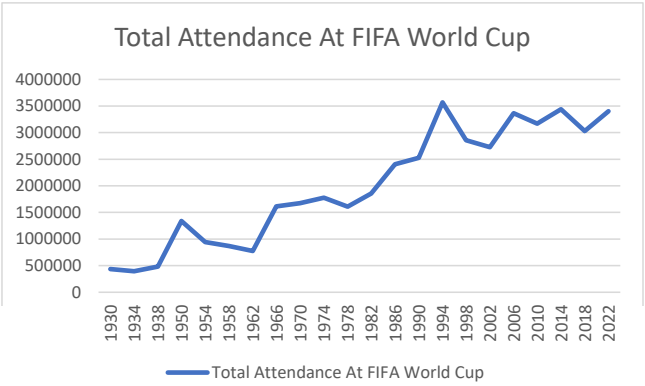

Figure 1. Source: Statista

Yet, despite the apparent significance of major football events, data-driven approaches to the long-term economic benefits of such tournaments are minimal and it remains an underexplored area of research. Literature on the economic impact of major football events focuses primarily on short-term economic benefits such as temporary boosts in tourism, job creation and ticket sales. Factors such as employment, foreign direct investment, etc, are underexplored in modern literature, presenting an incomplete picture of the economic impacts (Ovechkin, 2024). Another gap in existing literary work that this research paper aims to fill is regarding a data-driven model which integrates the direct and indirect economic impacts of these mega sports events. Direct impacts, such as event-related spending, are relatively well documented; however, there is a paucity of research which addresses indirect impacts such as long-term effects on tourism and urban development. Through the use of several indicators and a holistic data-driven approach, a complete overview of the economic impacts of major football events will be generated through this research.

The primary objective of this research is to develop a methodological framework to analyse the impact of significant football events. This framework will integrate data from diverse sources to assess the short-term and long-term implications of such events. The research will evaluate the effects across four critical areas: tourism, infrastructure, employment and long-term economic growth. The data recorded will be analysed through SmartPLS 4 (Ringle et al, 2024). In addition, the research will aim to provide actionable policy recommendations for host nations of large football events. By offering insights based on past evidence, the research will seek to assist with ensuring sustainable economic growth in local economies. Major football events that have already occurred will be analysed in depth, and trends will be reviewed to conclude on the best economic practices. As the global appetite for major football events continues to grow, understanding their economic implications in detail is a necessity for sustainable growth. This research will help policymakers, future hosts, and other stakeholders gain a more comprehensive understanding of the economic effects.

The organization of the subsequent sections is as follows: Section 2 delves into previous research and studies relevant to the economic impacts of major football events. Next, section 3 outlines the research methodology and methods used for data collection. Section 4 analyses and reviews the data collected while section 5 is a further discussion on the results identified. Lastly, section 6 provides a conclusion on the research conducted.

II. Literature Review

An analysis of existing research considering the economic impacts of sports mega-events reveals key points. 3% of all economic activity globally is tied to sports (Nikolaou et al, 2023), revealing the importance of sports events. The FIFA World Cup is an important event worldwide, both for football and for the economy. Several studies have already looked into certain aspects of this event, such as its costs and benefits. This section entails a review of existing literary work on the topic of research. The FIFA World Cup is classified as a mega-event. Mega-events are those events which are on a large scale with regards to target market, audience, financial involvement of the

public sector, political effects, media and television coverage and infrastructure (Ruiz et al, 2019). Hosting sports mega-events can improve a location's global image and accelerate economic development (Caiazza and Audretsch, 2015). Being a host of a large-scale sports event enables a country to present its unique culture and facilities to the world, improving its image and setting a foundation for further development (Chen, 2024). The FIFA World Cup has several tangible and intangible economic impacts, many of which have already been studied in prior research.

Firstly, infrastructure plays a large role in the FIFA World Cup due to the stadium requirements and the need to accommodate the influx of tourists for this event. FIFA has guidelines for stadiums which host countries must follow. The country must have a minimum of 12 modern stadiums with a capacity of at least 40,000. Additionally, at least one of the stadiums must have a capacity of at least 80,000 for the opening match and the final (Baumann and Matheson, 2018). The host country is fully expected to cover these expenses. For developing host countries, the World Cup can be a huge benefit due to the quicker approval of infrastructure projects (De Aragoa, 2015). The amount of investment required varies from host to host based on the existing infrastructure. For instance, South Africa required investments of 364 million dollars in ports of entry, 1.35 billion dollars in train stations, airports and roads, and 156 million dollars in broadcast technology (De Aragoa, 2015). Such high investments were required for these purposes, as South Africa had fewer facilities present before the event. On the other hand, when the USA hosted the 1994 FIFA World Cup, they faced construction costs far lower than past or future World Cups due to extensive existing infrastructure (Wenner, 2012). Even at the application stage, the USA had about 30 ready-made stadiums that complied with all FIFA requirements. The FIFA World Cups typically require high investments in infrastructure, notably stadiums, and fans and taxpayers often question the usability of this infrastructure after the events. In the case of the 2002 World Cup in South Korea and Japan, around 8.1 billion dollars were spent, and a significant portion of this expenditure was on the construction of sports facilities. 10 new stadiums were built in South Korea for 1.7 billion dollars. However, these massive stadiums were not in demand after the World Cup. The popularity of football is relatively low in this nation, with even the best matches rarely attracting over 20,000 people (Ovechkin, 2024). This prior research resulted in the hypothesis 'Investments in infrastructure for major football events have a lasting positive impact on the host city's economy, provided they are strategically planned and managed.'

Tourism is an aspect of the FIFA World Cup which is well documented by previous scholarly research. Of course, there is a large boost in short-term tourism due to the FIFA World Cup, which is clearly backed by statistical evidence. For instance, estimates suggest that during the 2014 FIFA World Cup, Brazil saw about 1 million more foreign visitors, a number higher than estimates by the government expected (Baumann and Matheson, 2018). Additionally, the 2022 FIFA World Cup improved Qatar's tourism sector, with a 157% increase in international tourists post-tournament, which consequently benefited the aviation and hospitality industries (Qatar Government Communications Office). Furthermore, tourists increase total expenditure within the country. This research contributed to the creation of the hypothesis 'Hosting major football events benefits local stakeholders and tourists, resulting in a significant positive impact on the host city's economy.' In South Africa, during the year of the FIFA World Cup, visitors' average spending was 24% higher than in previous years (De Aragoa, 2015). Even though visitor spending was estimated at 444 million dollars, South Africa recovered only a tenth of the 3.12 billion dollars invested in the World Cup (De Aragoa, 2015). Prior research questions the true impacts of increased tourism. This is primarily due to the crowding out effect, which states that crowds and congestion associated with such a large event may dissuade other travellers from entering the host country. This can be seen from the France World Cup in 1998. France, a popular summer tourist destination, saw minimal changes in international tourism during the 1998 World Cup (Allmers and Maennig, 2009). Additionally, events which draw primarily local audiences do not represent money entering the economy but rather the money being reallocated within the local area. Furthermore, leakages may occur, referring to money leaving the host country's economy, notably for expenditure on goods and services supplied by multinational corporations (Baumann and Matheson, 2018). The effect on tourism has varied from country to country; however, generally, there has been a hike in short-term tourism to the host country.

Yet another significant economic topic of discussion regarding the FIFA World Cup's impact is job creation. Due to the scale of the event, jobs are created in sectors such as tourism, construction and hospitality. In the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, an estimated 130,000 jobs were created leading up to the World Cup. The construction of the 10 stadiums alone created 66,000 construction jobs, generating 7.4 billion rand in wages (Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2013). The jobs created frequently benefit low-income households, reducing poverty in host nations. The direct economic impacts, such as on GDP and expenditure, of the FIFA World Cup have been

documented in the past. The 2022 FIFA World Cup had direct financial returns of approximately 2.2 billion dollars, with long-term economic returns estimated at 2.7 billion dollars (Qatar Government Communications Office). The 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia had an estimated impact of 952 billion Rubles on Russia's GDP, which is equivalent to 1.1% of Russia's annual GDP (Ovechkin, 2024).

Table I. Evaluation of Existing Literary Works

References	Impact Area	Positive	Negative	Potential impact (Long/Short Term)
(Government Communications Office), (De Aragoa, 2015)	Economic	Helps in job creation and rise in GDP	High costs incurred and not always fully recovered	Short term
(Baumann and Matheson, 2018), (De Aragoa, 2015)	Tourism and Hospitality	Increase in expenditure due to international visitors for the event	Crowding out effect, Leakages and money is being reallocated if locals are spending	Short term
(De Aragoa, 2015), (Ovechkin, 2024)	Infrastructure & Physical resources	Stadiums and infrastructure built; Projects approve faster	The host country must cover most costs.	Long term
(Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2013)	Skill Gaps	Workers often receive work experience and gain skills through training such as in SA in 2010	Workers may not be able to find employment after the event	Long term/Short term
(Chen, 2024)	Socio Cultural	The host can showcase culture; Improves perception; helps in job creation	Locals may not support the event; Brazil 2014 saw protests	Short term
(Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2013)	Employment & Income	Helps low-income households gain employment and reduce poverty	Many of the jobs are only temporary and do not benefit the economy in the long run	Long term

Table I highlights several areas of impact and their positive and negative effects. Furthermore, it examines whether the areas primarily impact the economy in the short or long run. This extensive literature review resulted in three hypotheses and three research questions, which are evaluated in the subsequent sections:

R1: What are the economic and social impacts of hosting major football events on host cities and nations, beyond the immediate revenue generated during the event?
R2: What are the specific impacts of major football events on employment, local enterprises, tourism and infrastructure development in the host economy?
R3: How can the infrastructure investments made for major football events be leveraged for long-term sustainable development and benefit the local population after the event concludes?
R4: How successful was the organisation of the major football event in meeting expectations, managing logistics, ensuring clear communication, and overall execution?

H1: Hosting major football events benefits local stakeholders and tourists, resulting in a significant positive impact on the host city's economy.
H2: Investments in infrastructure for major football events have a lasting positive impact on the host city's economy, provided they are strategically planned and managed.
H3: A well-organised football event improves the quality of life of local stakeholders and tourists, building their intent to visit the event.

III. Research Methodology

The methodology used began with an in-depth literature review of prior work in the field of major football events' economic impacts, followed by identifying gaps in existing research. After identifying the gaps, a questionnaire was designed to try and address these research gaps. The questionnaire was shared with football enthusiasts and primarily targeted at those who have attended major football events. The responses to the questionnaire were

collated and analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) through the SmartPLS 4 software (Ringle et al, 2024).

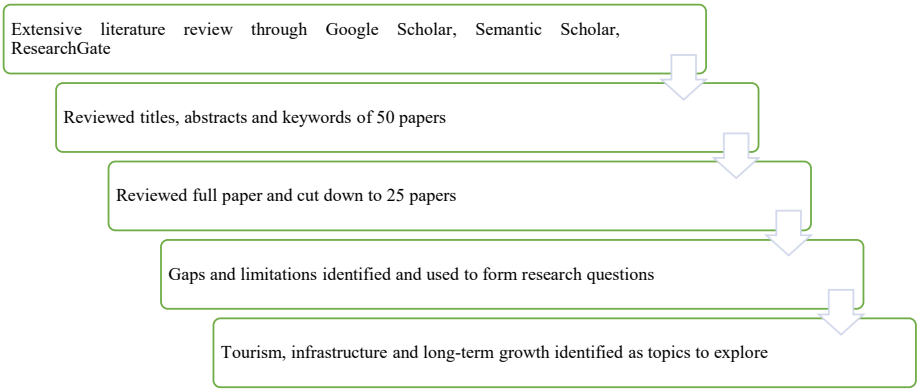

Figure 2. Methodology to assess the economic impacts of major football events

Figure 2 outlines the methodology which was followed to obtain primary and secondary research data for this study and to review the economic impacts of major football events. The questionnaire was administered to 61 knowledgeable football followers. The questionnaire collected information about the participants (age, gender, educational qualifications, employment status and football events attended) and 19 Likert scale questions regarding the study's objectives. A 5-point Likert scale was employed, where 1 represented strong disagreement while 5 represented strong agreement. The questions were carefully curated to achieve conclusions regarding the research questions identified. Targeting football enthusiasts ensured that the responses came from relevant sources. The questionnaire was designed for self-administration to be user-friendly and cost-effective. The researchers communicated to the respondents that any input was solely for academic research purposes to improve the quality and validity of the data collected.

82% of the respondents were male, 16.4% were female, while 1.6% did not disclose their gender. The majority of respondents (60.7%) had a master's degree as their highest educational qualification. 24.6% of the participants were within the age of 15-25, 4.9% fell between 26-35, 34.4% were in the age range of 36-45, and the final 36.1% were 46-55 years old. Finally, the majority of the respondents were in full-time employment (49.2%), while 26.2% were self-employed, 23% were students, and 1.6% were in part-time employment. The survey consisted of 19 questions, each aligned with a research objective. Table II highlights all the research objectives. The research objectives primarily looked into the economic impacts on the host country of the football events. The survey's questions were designed to answer the questions raised by the research objectives. Table III maps the questions to their research objectives.

Table II. Research objectives

S.no	Research Question
R1	What are the economic and social impacts of hosting major football events on host cities and nations, beyond the immediate revenue generated during the event?
R2	What are the specific impacts of major football events on local stakeholders in the host economy?
R3	How can the infrastructure investments made for major football events be leveraged for long-term sustainable development and benefit the local population after the event concludes?
R4	How successful was the organisation of the major football event in managing logistics?

Table III. Questionnaire about the survey conducted on major football events

RQ	Question Number	Survey Items
R2	1	The major football event significantly increased local business revenues.
R2	2	The event contributed positively to job creation in the local area.
R2	3	The influx of visitors during the event boosted sales in retail sectors.
R2	4	The event led to increased tax revenues for local government.
R1	5	The overall economic impact of the event was beneficial for the community.
R1	6	The major football event attracted a significant number of tourists to the area.
R1, R2	7	Visitors were likely to return to the area for future tourism after attending the event.
R1, R2	8	The event improved the overall perception of the destination among potential tourists.
R2	9	Local attractions received increased visitor numbers due to the event.
R1	10	The major football event fostered a sense of community pride among residents.
R2, R3	11	Local residents benefited from improved infrastructure due to the event.
R1	12	The event provided opportunities for local cultural expression and engagement.
R1	13	The community experienced positive social interactions due to the event.
R3	14	There were noticeable improvements in community facilities as a result of hosting the event.
R4	15	The organisation of the major football event met expectations.
R4	16	Local authorities effectively managed traffic and crowd control during the event.
R4	17	Communication regarding event details was clear and accessible to attendees.
R3	18	The facilities provided for attendees were adequate and well-maintained.
R4	19	Overall, I believe that hosting this major football event was a success from an organisational perspective.

The data was analysed using SmartPLS 4.0 software (Ringle et al, 2024). This analysis involved creating a PLS-SEM model to evaluate the relationships between several variables. The measurement model evaluated the reliability and validity of the constructs while the structural model examined the hypothesised relationships between the constructs (Panagopoulos et al, 2025). Researchers have extensively applied the PLS-SEM model across various fields to investigate factors which impact specific outcomes.

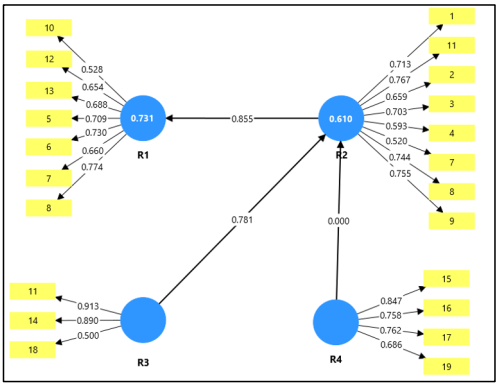

Figure 3. Mapping Research Questions to Questionnaire Questions

IV. Data Analysis

To assess the relationships between the identified constructs, PLS-SEM was employed through the SmartPLS 4.0 software. PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for exploratory research involving complex models with multiple indicators and constructs, making it useful for this research. The data analysis followed a rigorous two-stage approach. First, the measurement model was assessed to test the validity and reliability of the constructs. Next, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypotheses and the model's predictive power (Panagopoulos et al, 2025).

The analysis of the measurement model covers tests for construct reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. The composite reliability for all the research objectives exceeded 0.7, demonstrating satisfactory

reliability. Specifically, R1 had a composite reliability of 0.857, R2 had a composite reliability of 0.875, R3 had a composite reliability of 0.825, and lastly, the composite reliability of R4 was 0.849. As for internal reliability, Cronbach's alpha values for the research objectives were as follows: R1 was 0.806, R2 was 0.837, R3 was 0.694, and R4 was 0.767. R1, R2 and R4 exceed the threshold of 0.7, and although R3 fell slightly below this recommended threshold, the objective was retained for exploratory analysis and due to its satisfactory composite reliability. As for convergent validity, Average Variance Extracted values were reviewed. R3 and R4 were well above the benchmark of 0.5, indicating that the items accurately captured their respective latent variables. However, R1 (0.464) and R2 (0.471) fell short of this benchmark. Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Additionally, cross-loadings indicated that items loaded more strongly on their assigned construct than on others. Next, the structural model was tested through several indicators such as R^2 and F^2. R^2 indicates the amount of variance explained in the endogenous constructs. It measures the model's explanatory power and it ranges from 0-1, with higher values indicating greater explanatory power. The R^2 values of R1 and R2 were 0.731 and 0.610 respectively, indicating moderate explanatory power for the results. The VIF was also assessed to assess the collinearity to ensure the results are not biased. VIF values above 5 indicate probable collinearity issues. In this model, the VIF value was below 3 for all constructs, revealing the model's strength in this aspect. F^2 was also used to understand how the removal of a predictor construct affects the construct's R^2 value. The F^2 value between R2 and R1 was 2.713, and the F^2 value between R3 and R2 was 1.006, indicating a large F^2 effect size.

Table IV. Analysis of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and R-square of data

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	R-square
R1	0.806	0.857	0.731
R2	0.837	0.875	0.610
R3	0.694	0.825	
R4	0.767	0.849	

Table V. Fornell-Larcker criterion

	R1	R2	R3	R4
R1	0.681			
R2	0.855	0.687		
R3	0.649	0.781	0.791	
R4	0.493	0.467	0.597	0.765

V. Discussion

The research findings largely support the three hypotheses proposed initially, with important nuances that contribute to the existing body of literature on sports economics. Regarding H1, which refers to the economic impact of hosting the events on local stakeholders and tourists, our analysis confirms that hosting major football events generally results in positive economic impacts for host cities. This can be seen through the high Cronbach's alpha values for R1 and R2, at 0.806 and 0.837 respectively. The composite reliability is also strong, at 0.857 for R1 and 0.875 for R2, showing further support for this hypothesis. This result aligns with previous research by Chen (2024), which identifies considerable financial and economic benefits from hosting major football events through modes such as broadcasting rights, ticket sales and more. The questions referring to this hypothesis outline various sectors and stakeholders such as tourists, local government and more, extending the understanding of economic effects. H2 outlines the long-term impacts of infrastructure investment, and our findings support this hypothesis. R3 was constructed to investigate this hypothesis and had a high composite reliability (0.825), revealing the strength of this hypothesis. This hypothesis outlines the positive effects of infrastructure investment, although it is contingent on strategic planning and management. This finding echoes concerns in previous literature about the underutilization of facilities after the event due to poor planning or management, such as by Ovechkin (2024). Our research contributes by identifying the potential benefits that infrastructure and new facilities can bring while outlining conditions to prevent negative effects. The infrastructure being discussed extends beyond stadiums and includes transportation networks, public facilities and urban development. Changes in these facilities can significantly impact a country's citizens and its ability to host future events. Finally, the

research findings also supported H3, which assesses the event organisation's impact on quality of life. R4 was designed for this hypothesis and had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.767 and composite reliability of 0.849, which strongly supports the hypothesis. This finding is consistent with previous research, which suggests that successful major football events are associated with national pride and creating a positive social atmosphere.

Despite its significant contributions, this study has a few limitations that suggest potential topics of interest for future research. Firstly, the analysis is reliant on past events and experiences, which may not be reflective of evolving trends in the organisation and the economic impact of major football tournaments in the future. Future research could utilise a more forward-looking approach to anticipate changes in this industry. Additionally, while this research attempts to incorporate tangible and intangible factors, quantifying and analysing intangible factors remains a challenge. Next, this research focuses primarily on economic factors relating to major football events. It pays minimal attention to environmental and social dimensions. Future research can incorporate these as well to maximise the usefulness of the research to organisers and other stakeholders, for instance, by making the events sustainable and beneficial to the natural environment. Furthermore, the analysis is limited by the availability and quality of data relating to past events. In the future, as enhanced data collection methods are available, there is scope for more detailed and accurate research regarding this topic. Lastly, future events are likely to incorporate more technology and artificial intelligence; therefore, these topics can also be researched in future literary work.

VI. Conclusion & Future Scope

Major football events continue to captivate global audiences, and with several tournaments at regular intervals, it is of utmost importance that host nations seek to maximise economic returns from these events. Overall, this research provides a comprehensive analysis of the economic impacts of major football events, with a focus on specific economic aspects. Through a PLS-SEM based methodology, we tested three hypotheses, which were largely supported by our research. The hypotheses all cover different economic factors, enabling a holistic evaluation of this topic. Our findings affirm that such tournaments, when hosted with sufficient planning and management, can yield significant economic benefits to host nations. Key findings include the confirmation that major football events benefit the economy, present new infrastructure and facilities and improve the quality of life for stakeholders, contingent on planning and management. Despite minimal limitations such as data availability, the research contributes valuable insights on the economic impacts of major sports events by integrating tangible and intangible factors into an analytical framework.

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