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A Pathmaking Journal



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EXPLORING PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISM SEASONALITY AND SPORTS EVENTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF KISSAVOS MARATHON RACE

Sofia Gkarane

University of Macedonia (Greece)

sgarane@uom.edu.gr

Chris A. Vassiliadis

University of Macedonia (Greece)

Chris@uom.edu.gr

Maria Gianni

University of Macedonia (Greece)

giannima@uom.edu.gr

ABSTRACT

Local tourism professionals entail those who strongly face the personal and financial difficulties of tourism seasonality. The main purpose of this paper is to examine the local tourism professionals' perceptions of a small-scale sports event, which is held in the off-season. Through the study of Kissavos Mountain Race — a small-scale running event that is held annually in the region of Agia Larissa — the contribution of such an event to seasonality mitigation is investigated. Accordingly, this study aims to describe how the local professionals of this mountainous village understand and interpret the relations between sustainable small-scale

sports events and seasonality aspects. An exploratory study was designed to address the local professionals' opinions regarding the effectiveness of the running event in mitigating seasonality as well as their willingness to support similar actions. Through a literature review on seasonality tourism, sustainability, and minor events, a semi-structured interview guide was created and twenty-five local tourism professionals were interviewed. Subsequently, data that reflect their perceptions of events and seasonality were collected. Based on the analysis of the replies, the respondents believe that the sports event impacts seasonality mitigation but only in conjunction with other actions. Most of them also converge on a strategy that would not only include the needs of visitors but also the authorities' ongoing support of their businesses. On this basis, it is recommended that local and regional tourism managers use a variety of combination tools to smooth out seasonality. From a practical viewpoint, this study draws attention to the perspectives of local professionals and allows tourism policymakers to understand the market's characteristics and needs. As it would be interesting to apply this investigation in different seasons for different areas, this study ultimately contributes to the tourism field by examining the contribution of a small-scale event to seasonality mitigation via a local stakeholder approach.

KEYWORDS

Seasonality; Running race; Professionals' perceptions; Sustainability; Kissavos.

ECONLIT KEYS

M31; L83; L30

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the main pillars of the economic growth in Greece; however, like most coastal areas of the Mediterranean, Greece also tends to face intense tourism seasonality problems (Krabokoukis & Polyzos, 2021). As seasonality is one of the most considerable characteristics of tourism, destination marketing organizations, tourism companies, and public authorities often take several actions to address this issue (Sainaghi et al., 2019). To counter seasonal concentration, a frequent initiative entails the organization of events and festivals during lower tourist flow periods (Baum & Hagen, 1999).

The strategic role of events in seasonality mitigation as a prevailing strategy to tackle seasonality has been widely discussed in the literature (Cannas, 2012). Nowadays, events of every shape and size are organized and diversity of meetings, sports, social meets, and shows are included in their concept (Vassiliadis, 2020). However, when attempting to mitigate seasonality through events, the scale of each

event must be considered (Jönsson & Lewis, 2014). Most events around the world are small-scale and local (Damm, 2011) and held every year; these events also include more competitors than spectators and do not attract significant national media interest nor incur remarkable economic activity (Gibson et al., 2012). On the other hand, if small-scale events are repeated annually and fairly distributed, they may have long-term impacts compared to large events (Aureli & Graziano, 2020).

In the light of the significant tourism potential of small-scale events such as outdoor sports events, growing research interest has been noted (Tzetzis et al., 2014). However, despite the increasing number of studies on small-scale sports events in general, there is still a need for more research on seasonality and such events. For example, Higham and Hinch (2002) call for more research on the understanding of sports and tourism seasonality at the local level. Besides, each stakeholder group has different perceptions and attitudes towards sports events and their satisfaction depends on various event attributes (Chersulich et al., 2020). Thus, at the host destination, local stakeholders tend to be involved differently in an event (Chersulich et al., 2020).

This paper aims to explore a rather neglected area of tourism research, particularly the local tourism professionals' perceptions of a small-scale sports event in the light of tourism seasonality. As part of the local community, local tourism professionals are the ones who strongly face the personal and financial difficulties of seasonality. Therefore, to yield a new understanding of seasonality mitigation strategies for a sports event by revealing the opinions of the locals, this study specifically aims to describe how the local tourism professionals of a mountainous village understand and interpret the relations between sustainable small-scale sports events and seasonality aspects.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1) SEASONALITY AND SMALL-SCALE SPORTS EVENTS

Butler (1998) characterized seasonality as “a temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism,” which is one of the most outstanding tourism

characteristics that result in unevenly distributed tourist flows over the year (Vergori, 2017). In the literature, seasonality is regarded as a problem or difficulty associated with the tourism industry (Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2020), which can adversely influence the destination image and tourist spending (Duro & Turrión-Prats, 2019). However, the causal factors for seasonality may either be natural (weather and climate) or institutional (human interventions like school vacations) (Ridderstaat & Croes, 2020). Although this phenomenon will never be completely eliminated (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005), studies have proposed some initiatives for facilitating the process, such as a) the off-season development of events, b) market diversification, and c) product diversification (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005).

The strategic role of events in tourism seasonality mitigation as a common combating strategy has been mentioned in many studies (e.g., Connell et al., 2015; De Cantis & Ferrante, 2017; Sainaghi et al., 2019). Indeed, events like sports may not only contribute to seasonality mitigation but can also create new job positions and encourage volunteerism (Jönsson & Lewis, 2014). Sports events, for instance, are a considerable part of sports tourism and are probably most influential toward tourist numbers and economic influence (Getz, 2003). Sports tourism is one of the ways to bring visitors to a place that they, in other respects, would not visit (Daniels & Norman, 2003). Although sports tourism literature has focused on mega sports events, smaller ones may still enhance tourist traffic significantly (Perić & Slavić, 2019). Likewise, there is tourism development potential in a destination that hosts small-scale events for people to go to, even when they would probably not (Veltri et al., 2009). Apparently, in terms of tourism seasonality, the way sports moderate or potentially change seasonal visitation patterns is more critical than ever (Higham & Hinch, 2018). Given that events have a limited duration, Vergori (2017) recognizes that they cannot create an alternative season on their own; however, they can attract tourists during the off-season and enhance the perception of the destination as an attractive place. Thus, sports events may facilitate repeat visitation and smooth seasonal peaks (Lamont & Dowell, 2008).

Among the various types of sports events, running races may be considered one of the critical tools for the development of local communities (Goulas, 2020). Running

is a popular form of outdoor exercise event (Larsen, 2019) where participants are either active amateurs who train moderately or family supporters as spectators (Larsen & Bærenholdt, 2019). Running races are generally categorized into mountainous routes (mountain), non-mountainous routes (road), and multiple sports (multi-sports) (Vassiliadis, 2020). Despite the number and significance of running events, a research gap in the link between running and tourism was identified (Larsen, 2019), let alone the implications of small-scale running events for seasonality mitigation.

2.2) SUSTAINABILITY OF SMALL-SCALE SPORTS EVENTS

Small-scale events, which have remarkably grown during the last years (Fotiadis et al., 2020), are likely to improve the image of destinations and essentially serve their purpose for local societies (Fotiadis et al., 2016; Fotiadis & Vassiliadis, 2020; Priporas et al., 2018). In terms of sustainability, the contribution of small-scale events is widely acknowledged in tourism literature. The potential of small-scale events arises around local sustainable development; their annual organizations ensure the use of existing facilities and social capital accumulation (Melo et al., 2021). Unlike large-scale sports events, small-scale sports events are regular events that operate within existing infrastructure without incurring mass crowding and environmental congestion (Malchrowicz-Moško & Poczta, 2018). Thus, although such events may not entail major economic benefits compared to large ones, they will not bring about social disruption and environmental damage (Fredline, 2005). Based on Gibson et al., (2012) study on six events, a viable form of sustainable tourism development could include a consistent small-scale event portfolio with the local infrastructure, which constitutes economic advantages, social durable outcomes for the local community, and respect for the environment. Considering their importance for local development, the events should be designed in a way that would meet the needs of all stakeholders, including travelers, competitors' needs, and the preferences of the local community (Getz, 2003). Hence, for a sports tourism event to be sustainable, due care should be given to its planning and implementation, in the light of collaborative policymaking among the event stakeholders (Chersulich et al., 2020).

2.3) LOCAL PROFESSIONALS

The success of tourism is built around the support of local communities (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). Tourism literature has stressed the importance of tourism development to local communities, which allows resident-tourist interactions, in addition to providing benefits to local businesses and enabling several economic, socio-cultural, and environmental changes to take place in host destinations (Gannon et al., 2021). For example, as depicted by Figini and Vici (2012) in their study on the attitude of local residents towards tourism, successful tourism development programs are highly possible when the residents' opinions are taken into account. Residents who perform their professional activities in a destination constitute part of the local economy; therefore, when businesses lack success or do not grow steadily, the local community is affected (Getz & Nilsson, 2004). In this regard, sustainable tourism success depends on the host residents' attitudes, perceptions, and participation (Ayazlar & Ayazlar, 2016; Holladay et al., 2018). However, as a part of the local community, professionals' perceptions of tourism development and its impact on their professional activities may differ (Hanafiah et al., 2013). Furthermore, their support for the sports event may also depend on the positive or negative impacts of the event on their activities (Chersulich et al., 2020).

In destinations with extreme tourism seasonality problems, local businesses are forced to contend with both financial and personal difficulties. On the one hand, they must work hard during the peak season at the expense of their leisure and social life; on the other hand, they tend to face difficult economic situations, as they need to stay open during the low season (Getz & Nilsson, 2004). Upon examining the effects of extreme tourism seasonality on family businesses through respondents' reactions to seasonality, Getz and Nilsson (2004) revealed three strategies to address this phenomenon: "coping," "combating," and "capitulating" seasonality. The "coping" strategy involves acceptance and efforts to cope with the impacts of seasonality, while "combating" entails the efforts to defeat seasonality or at least try to expand the shoulder season, and "capitulating" refers to selling or terminating the business. In this study, the three strategies outlined above are explored through the assessment

of a small-scale running event, namely the “Kissavos Marathon Race”, as well as the local tourism professionals’ opinions on seasonality.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1) EXPLORATORY RESEARCH – INTERVIEW DESIGN

Given the exploratory nature of this study, a qualitative research method using interviews has been chosen. The interviewing procedure provides in-depth information about the respondents’ experiences and opinions on a specific issue (Turner, 2010). Through semi-structured interviews, flexibility is enhanced with a deeper understanding of the research questions (Fylan, 2005). To evaluate tourism professionals’ views and thoughts of the running event and its sustainability as well as their beliefs regarding the effectiveness of the event in mitigating seasonality, the following research questions were formulated:

A. How do local professionals perceive tourism seasonality?

B. How do local professionals perceive sustainability issues concerning seasonality and small-scale running events?

C. What is the attitude of the local professionals towards the organization of small-scale sports events in the off-season?

In this study, *Seasonality* (A) is based on the following bibliography: Andriotis (2005); Baum and Hagen (1999); Corluka et al., (2016); Getz and Nilsson (2004); Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2010); Pegg et al., (2012). As for *Sustainability* (B), the study adopted suggestions of Gibson et al., (2012), Butler (2014), and Jönsson and Lewis (2014). Meanwhile, the questions for *Events* (C) are based on the following bibliography: Andereck and Vogt (2000); Burgan and Mules (2001); Gibson (2003); McDowall (2010); Veltri et al., (2009).

3.2) STUDY AREA

Owing to the multifaceted event portfolio and the tourism sector's economic importance, the case study was conducted in a municipality that is considered relevant for the application and testing of the valuation tool. The study area entails the region of Kissavos in Larissa regional unit in Thessaly, Greece. Standing at the northeastern borders of Larissa and Magnesia Provinces, Kissavos (also known as Ossa) is a mountain of 1,978 meters (6,490 ft) high. It is endowed with wonderful valleys, imposing gorges, rushing rivers, and beautiful hiking trails with beautiful small villages scattered around.

One of these villages is Agia, the head town of the city, which is built at an altitude of 200 m on the slopes of Kissavos. The inhabitants of Agia are engaged in the production of apples, cherries, and pears, which overall occupy the first places in the trade. The Municipality of Agia is an attractive tourist destination that offers generous hospitality to its visitors. The place is not only full of natural beauty but also traditional architecture and religious wealth since it constitutes a living history museum with traditional settlements and monuments. With a coastline of 36 km where the mountain joins the Aegean Sea, the variety of beaches serves as a pole of attraction for tourists during summer. Opportunities for alternative tourism such as therapeutic tourism, religious tourism, and sports tourism (i.e., running, trekking, mountain biking, and mountain climbing) are also provided in the area (Agia Larissas, 2021).

3.3) KISSAVOS MARATHON RACE

One of the options for sports tourism includes the Kissavos Marathon Race, a small-scale running event that is held every spring since 2017 in the region of Agia (Figure 1). It is organized by the club of Health Runners of Agia with the support of the local Municipality and the Region of Thessaly.

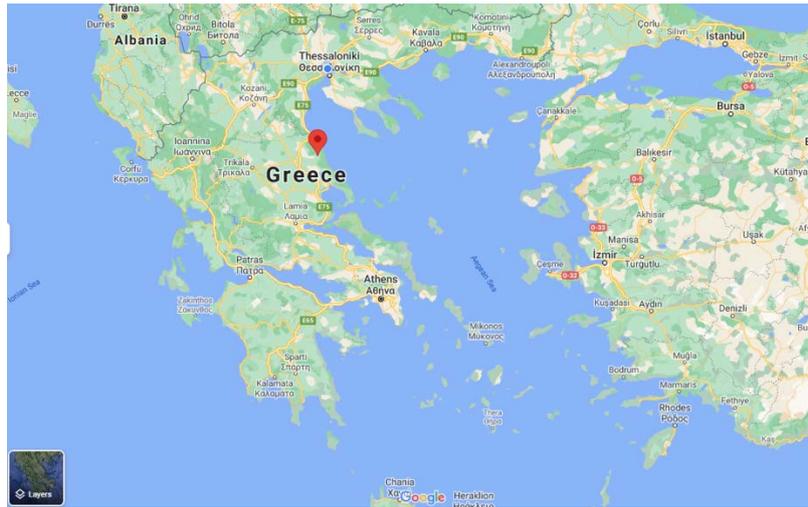


Figure 1. The region of the Kissavos Mountain Race sports event.
Source: Google map; modified by the authors (accessed 28 01 2022).

In three different routes of 10 km, 20 km, and 40 km on the paths of Kissavos, mountain running lovers can get acquainted with the abundance and variety of vegetation as well as the alternation of the landscape from the "aesthetic forest" to the alpine landscape of the top. Young athletes aged 8-12 years would run a 1500 m route from the traditional village of Metaxochori to the square of Agia. At the finish line of the Kissavos Marathon Race, a crowd of people would wait for the athletes and applaud their effort (see Figures 2, 3, and 4). Every year after the race, athletes and escorts have the opportunity to enjoy delicious pasta, pies, and other local delicacies in the square of Agia.



Figure 2. The region of Agia central square on the day of the race.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Kissavos-Marathon-RACE-Greenway-236671480134276>, Kissavos Marathon Race Facebook Official Page (accessed 07 02 2022).



Figure 3. The starting point of the Kissavos Marathon Race.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Kissavos-Marathon-RACE-Greenway-236671480134276>, Kissavos Marathon Race Facebook Official Page (accessed 07 02 2022).



Figure 4. Runners during Kissavos Marathon Race.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Kissavos-Marathon-RACE-Greenway-236671480134276>, Kissavos Marathon Race Facebook Official Page (accessed 07 02 2022).

3.4) RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

The researchers compiled a preliminary list of the local tourism enterprises before conducting the interviews. Of the listed enterprises, 25 local professionals responded positively to the study and took part in the semi-structured face-to-face interviews, which were conducted on their business premises. In qualitative research, researchers would visit the place of the respondents to conduct the procedure so the researchers could get involved in the respondents' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The interviewees generally represent a variety of tourism professionals: accommodation providers (2); foodservice and bar operators (12); attraction/recreation (1); vehicle rentals (2); provision shops (6); others (2) (see Table 1).

Business Activities	Number of Respondents
Accommodation	2
Foodservice/bar operators	12
Attraction/recreation	1
Vehicle rentals	2
Provision shops	6
Other	2
TOTAL	25

Table 1. Tourism business activities of respondents.
Source: The authors.

Other than requiring that the local professionals are residents of Agia, the survey requirements also entail that the professionals carry out tourist activities in the area; therefore, businesses associated with other sectors were omitted. Interviews were conducted in January during the low season period and each interview was recorded by note-taking. In our case, the interviews took two days to complete and each session lasted from 20-30 minutes.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Coding, in qualitative research, is an operation that enables data to be gathered, categorized, and sorted into themes (Williams & Moser, 2019). Open coding was used in this study to particularly identify the main themes of seasonality and small-scale sports events so the researchers can focus on the central attitudes, which is then followed by axial coding. Open coded data was reassembled and themes were further improved and aligned to yield categories and sub-categories (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). While selective coding refines the relationships among the codes, the authors further discussed the content analysis results until a mutual consensus on the themes was reached.

5. RESULTS

5.1) PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISM SEASONALITY

Most of the local professionals in this study recognized that tourism activities are seasonal in their region and accentuated the issue of tourism seasonality. According to one of the local professionals, unlike the peak season from June to September, tourists seldom visit Agia during the low season and this situation also tends to be extremely bad during winter:

The region of Agia confronts severe tourism seasonality. There is no work for us and there is not any development (available in the area). We have to do other jobs to survive, especially between February and May. The situation is difficult and I believe that some enterprises will close for sure.
(Vehicle rental professional)

The local professionals confirmed that tourism seasonality indeed creates negative consequences for their businesses and their region. During the low season, there are few or no visitors at all; thus, their turnovers are very low as they could not sell out. However, during the high season, their revenue would increase and they could save money for future investments. Similarly, in the low season, the region is affected by a feeling of desolation and reduced employment. Thus, to survive the low season, most of the respondents would adopt the competing strategy and one of their efforts includes internal lending:

Through internal lending, I try to keep the business open.
(Foodservice professional)

Alternatively, some of them would also adopt the coping strategy to survive:

I close my tourism business and I often borrow money from my parents.
(Attraction/recreation professional)

Nonetheless, only a small percentage (from the food service sector) of the respondents intended to sell or terminate their business soon (capitulating).

Overall, due to the severe economic difficulties in the low season, it can be deduced that the local professionals deem tourism seasonality a major problem for their businesses (Figure 5). Thus, besides the need for internal or external funding in winter to ensure the viability of their businesses, most of them have also adopted the “coping” strategy to survive and close their businesses.

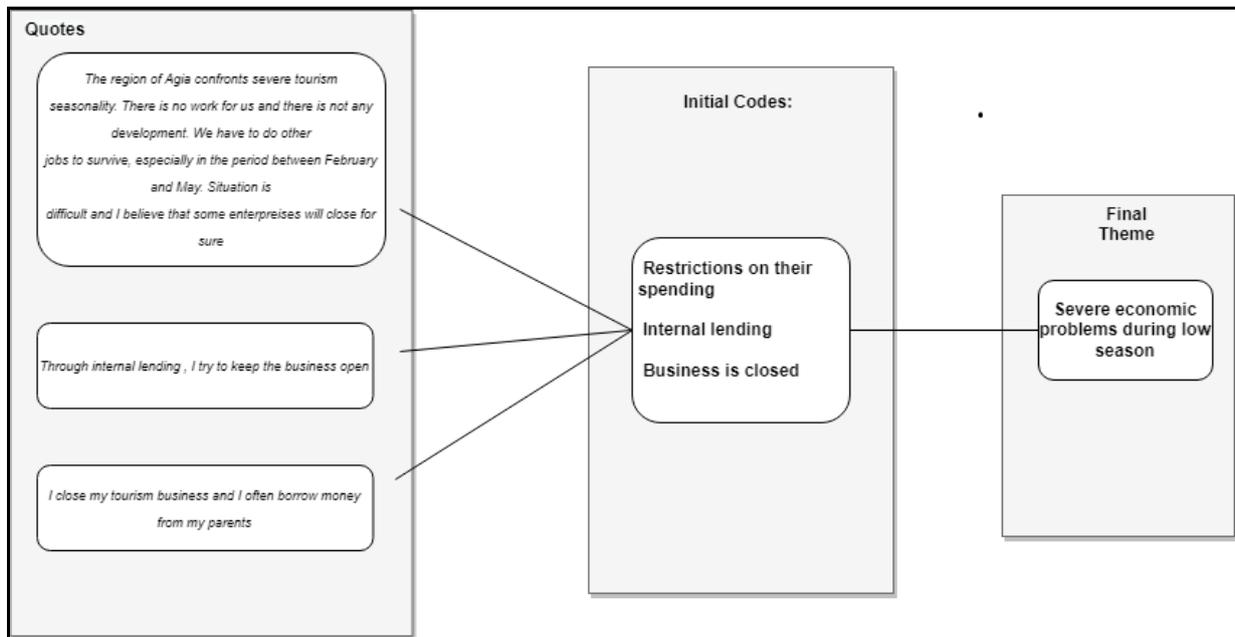


Figure 5. Coding related to perceptions of seasonality.
Source: The authors.

5.2) PERCEPTIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNING SEASONALITY AND SMALL-SCALE EVENTS

In terms of sustainability issues and tourism seasonality, most of the local professionals highlight the economic challenges during the low season in which they experience significant losses in their turnover. However, unlike the low season when the economic sector is negatively affected, tourist flows are associated with positive economic effects on businesses in the high season. From a social perspective, the local professionals experience a better quality of life in respect of community engagement and mind-broadening aspects during the peak season. Nonetheless, from an environmental perspective, this sector is slightly affected in the peak season

because, according to the respondents, ecological effects or degradation have not been created in the region.

In line with the literature, the findings of this study confirm that the organization of small-scale events, specifically the Kissavos Marathon Race, is perceived as having important leverage for the local economy:

*There is a significant tourist flow in Agia during a period
in which the whole town would be empty.
(Foodservice professional)*

However, some of them opined that the duration of the race should be longer:

*Kissavos Race takes place only on Sundays when I am closed.
The organizers should think about extending the days of the event.
(Others)*

Most of the local professionals also opined that the race event in their region has a positive effect on their social life:

*During the race, we feel happier; residents participate with their children
and everyone is in a good spirit.
(Provision shop)*

In line with the literature coupled with the respondents' opinions, it is confirmed that the environment is slightly or not at all affected by the event:

*There is just some traffic and some rubbish in the center but everything is
cleaned up quickly and the image of the area is better than before.
(Accommodation)*

In general, it has been evidenced that the organization of small-scale sports events for the local community in the low season generates positive social and environmental impacts that spread beyond the economic growth (Figure 6).

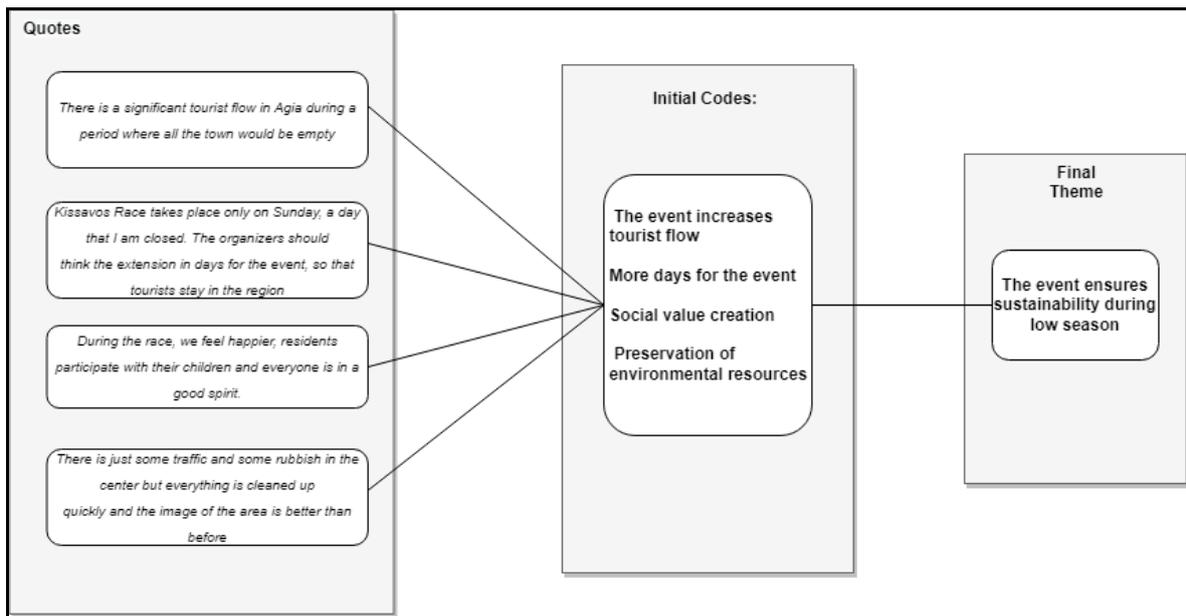


Figure 6. Coding related to perceptions of sustainability.
Source: The authors.

5.3) PERCEPTIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF SMALL-SCALE SPORTS EVENTS

Although a few older respondents expressed different beliefs due to their anxiety about the general economic situation, the majority of the local professionals believe that the economic values of small-scale sports events would still contribute to the expansion of tourism season and, thus, their local businesses. Thanks to the event, the area is promoted during a period when no tourists would come. However, they ask for more actions by the authorities:

One event is not enough; more events and other actions should be organized during the low season. A general effort is required to promote the destination; the event should be promoted more and local product exhibitions should be organized.

(Accommodation professional)

Despite the importance of the tourism sector in Agia, some of the local professionals complained about poor tourism infrastructure in the area and associated it with lower tourist flows on the day of the event:

Of course, the infrastructure is not enough. Otherwise, the event's visitors would stay longer in our village. More restaurants and hotels are needed.
(Vehicle rental professional)

Rather than focusing only on sports events, the respondents also agreed that all kinds of events should be organized as an alternative for mitigating seasonality, such as by introducing the local eating style and gastronomy to enhance the attractiveness component of new events.

Anything related to events in connection with our local products; apple, chestnut, olives, and peaches.
(Foodservice professional)

On the whole, in terms of seasonality mitigation, the respondents' predominant opinion remains on the general promotion of the region:

We need a better tourist promotion; for example, a connection of the mountainous areas with the beaches and promotion of our monuments and old mansions.
(Accommodation professional)

Famous personalities should be invited; more hotels and tavernas (should be) developed, and the event (should) last more than 1-2 days.
(Foodservice professional)

Evidently, to ensure more tourist flows and length of stay in the region in mitigating seasonality, most of the local professionals have suggested the adoption of a tourism agenda that includes several marketing tools (Figure 7).

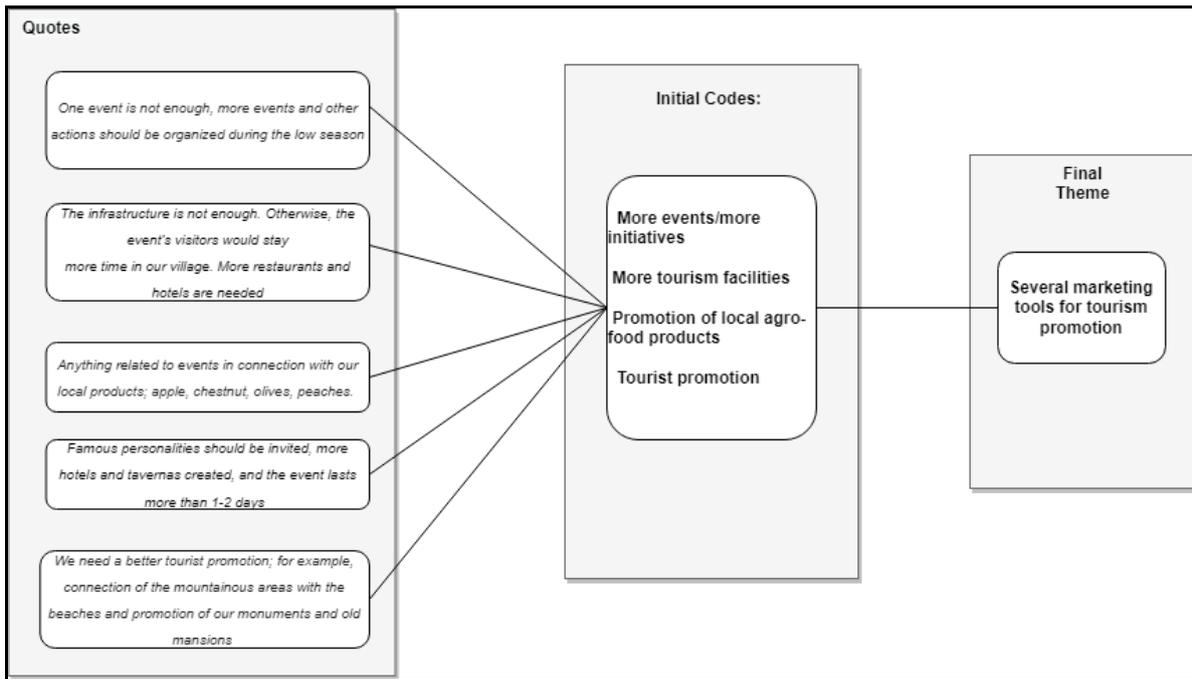


Figure 7. Coding related to perceptions of small-scale sports events.
Source: The authors.

6. DISCUSSION

Interviews with the local professionals have solicited additional information on seasonality and the issues surrounding tourism-related sports events. The sense of pride among respondents for Kissavos Marathon Race is most pervasive as they acknowledged the happy atmosphere during the days the sports event is organized. Their dominant impression of the event on seasonality mitigation is also positive — both in terms of its very good organization as well as its economic and social footprints on local society — that the respondents suggested extending the event duration for at least one more day or organizing a similar sports event at another time of the year during the low season. However, most of the respondents acknowledged the lack of infrastructure such as hotels and restaurants in the town. In fact, even if the visitors or athletes choose to stay in Agia, the respondents claimed that the town will not be able to exploit this flow and the head city of Thessaly will once again be unable to benefit from the situation. Hence, this poses a challenge for the destination to develop and maintain the necessary infrastructure in order to sustain tourism activities throughout the year and enhance its competitiveness.

While most of the local professionals seem to converge on a strategy that includes the needs of tourists and athletes, ongoing support from the state should also be expected. Therefore, the stakeholders of the local community (municipal authorities, professionals, residents, and organizers) must agree on the destination development goals to be set in order to ensure the success of the race and, particularly, the sustainability of the destination.

7. CONCLUSION

This study, which is part of the broad literature on the impacts of sports events on seasonality and Greek tourism, evaluates the implications of a small-scale sports event with the perceptions of local professionals. Overall, based on the findings, the local professionals have a positive attitude towards event tourism development and the sports event, Kissavos Marathon Race, which is deemed important for the local economy as the local professionals believe that this race can significantly increase tourism development in the region. Thus, when planning the future of a sports event tourism destination, it is important to consider the perceptions and attitudes of the local community towards the effects of any proposed event tourism development strategy.

The predominant reason, according to the local professionals in this study, is that one event is not enough and more similar actions or other initiatives should be organized during the low season in combination with support from the authorities. Despite the honest efforts of the few, tourist and athletic culture does not seem to have been cultivated in the region; therefore, the authorities should play a crucial role in increasing the favorable attitude of local professionals towards event tourism. Accordingly, the authorities should adopt persuasive communication policies to strengthen the positive aspects of sports event tourism, especially among skeptical residents.

Because of the pandemic crisis, the attitudes of tourism stakeholders such as residents, tourists, and businesses have changed; thus, the restart of tourism should include sustainability solutions and ways inspired by a new sustainable development agenda (Boluk & Rasoolimanesh, 2022) to allow all relevant stakeholders to adapt to

the new face of tourism. As unknown destinations near major urban centers are expected to emerge, sports events such as Kissavos Marathon Race can contribute to the promotion and sustainable development of tourist areas so long as they are not treated as “interventions” but rather as a tool in the destination’s marketing strategy.

8. IMPLICATIONS

The current study primarily aims to analyze the local professionals’ perceptions of seasonality mitigation through the organization of small-scale sports events in the context of Greece. Theoretically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge by unravelling the perceptions of local professionals and their involvement in the organization of tourism-related sports events, especially in low-season periods. Hence, the findings of this study are useful in advancing the academic field of community-based event tourism.

From a managerial perspective, the current study offers insights into the improvement of event organization for tourism managers, event organizers, and local authorities in facilitating the future planning process of a small-scale sports event during the low season. This study also opens a window for them to create a holistic event marketing plan owing to the views of the local professionals and their significant support of the event. Thus, in the effort to create a sustainable model for event tourism development during the low season, all authorities and other policymakers involved are supported.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study is not without several limitations. First, the small research sample cannot be considered representative of Greek professionals; therefore, future research should entail a larger sample of stakeholders. Subsequently, as the study was mainly conducted in Greece, future studies should also include small-scale events in different settings and sports worldwide with extreme tourism seasonality. Furthermore, to investigate whether the findings can be generalized, this study could

be repeated in other tourism destinations and future research may also measure the overall impact of sports event tourism in relation to the attitudes of local professionals. Finally, the findings of this study can be used to develop a grounded theory model of how small-scale sports events affect tourism seasonality based on a local-stakeholder approach.

Acknowledgements

The authors are especially grateful for the support from the researcher Alexandros Liaskos, and also for the important contribution of the local authorities and professionals of Agia Larissa region.

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Article info: Received 15/10/2021. Accepted 18/04/2022. Refereed anonymously.