



ACCESS

Achieving Circularity in Cities through
Environmental Sustainability of Sports

SPORT'S ROLE IN ACHIEVING CIRCULAR CITY CONCEPTS

Scientific Paper

ACHIEVING CIRCULARITY IN CITIES THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SPORTS

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Abstract

Sport tourism has become an increasingly popular global phenomenon, merging the allure of sporting events with the adventure of travel (Van Rheenen et al., 2017). Given the scale of such events and the transient spike in population they induce, it is crucial to consider sustainable practices as well as cross-sectoral cooperation and synergies between sports organisations and their local and regional stakeholders. To investigate the role of sports in achieving circular city concepts, a survey was conducted, addressing not only sports workers and relevant stakeholders but also policy officers and decision makers within local and regional authorities, as well as a wider target group such as supporters and sponsors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sport tourism has become an increasingly popular global phenomenon, merging the allure of sporting events with the adventure of travel (Van Rheenen et al., 2017). Given the scale of such events and the transient spike in population they induce, it is crucial to consider sustainable practices as well as cross-sectoral cooperation and synergies between sports organisations and their local and regional stakeholders. To investigate the role of sports in achieving circular city concepts, a survey was conducted, addressing not only sports workers and relevant stakeholders but also policy officers and decision makers within local and regional authorities, as well as a wider target group such as supporters and sponsors. The results of the survey are aimed to provide the Circular City Committees (CCCs) with valuable intelligence and input, or additional stakeholders, as well as to elaborate findings into a scientific paper which will be submitted for publication in a journal of interest, thus adding value to ACCESS regular dissemination activities. Since green accommodations emerged as a key solution in mitigating the environmental footprint associated with sports tourism (Merli et al., 2019), the study focused on the behaviour of sports fans in selecting green accommodations.

Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (SSSA) unveiled the study on fans' behaviour in selecting green accommodations at the 7th International Conference on Business, Management and Finance, which took place in Cambridge, UK, from the 7th to the 9th of June 2024. More details on the Conference are provided in the Annex.

ACCESS presentation, delivered by SSSA's Annamaria Pesci, emphasised the role of sports in achieving Circular City concepts and the study generated considerable interest, particularly in the perspective used to investigate the topic. Interest was shown not only for the study itself but also for the entire project, that is the connection between sports and cities or regions in promoting environmentally friendly strategies and practices. The presentation on fans' behaviour in selecting green accommodations was notable as the only one centred on sport management, and among the few addressing sustainability. It began with an overview of ACCESS project and then delved into the specific study. The presentation covered the scientific basis of the study, its aim, and the research questions addressed. Data collection was briefly explained, and the main results were shown. Finally, conclusions were drawn within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour identifying an intention-behaviour gap among fans when selecting their accommodation for sporting events. Key findings indicated that while fans generally hold positive attitudes towards green behaviours and can be positively inspired by peers and influential figures/groups, the availability of information and cost significantly impact their decision to choose green accommodations.

2. SCIENTIFIC BASIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The importance of selecting green accommodations for sports tourists cannot be overstated. These eco-friendly facilities are designed to operate under principles that reduce energy consumption, conserve water, and minimize waste, aligning with broader environmental sustainability goals (Preziosi et al., 2019). By opting for such lodging, fans contribute directly to the preservation of the host city's natural resources, enhancing its capacity to host more sustainable events in the future. Moreover, green accommodations often employ local materials and labour, support local economies, and foster community engagement, thereby creating a ripple effect of benefits beyond just environmental conservation (Kim et al., 2015).

Environmental sustainability in sport tourism not only addresses the immediate impacts of increased resource use but also sets a precedent for future events. As the world becomes more conscious of climate change and environmental degradation, the sports industry is under growing pressure to demonstrate leadership in sustainability (McCullough et al., 2020). Sports fans, as critical stakeholders in this industry, wield significant influence through their economic choices (Daddi et al., 2024). By choosing accommodations that prioritize ecological responsibility, they signal to event organisers and host cities the importance of sustainability, encouraging a shift towards greener practices across all facets of sport tourism (Martins et al., 2021).

Sport tourism represents a potent catalyst for economic and cultural exchange but also poses significant environmental challenges (Mascarenhas et al., 2021). The decision by fans to opt for green accommodations is a pivotal step in transforming the industry. It not only helps in reducing the ecological footprint of major sporting events but also fosters a culture of sustainability that resonates with global environmental objectives (Wicker, 2019). As the intersection of sports and tourism continues to grow, so does the responsibility of all

stakeholders to ensure that this convergence contributes positively to the health of the planet, making green accommodations not just an option but a necessity for environmentally conscious sports fans (Kamboj et al., 2022).

Green hotel and tourist behaviours have been frequently investigated in literature. Scholars have mainly centred their attention on two perspectives: the green practices adopted by hotels and accommodation facilities, and consumers' behaviours in the frame of the theory of planned behaviours.

While confirming the theory of planned behaviour, Han (2015) recognised the importance of the prominent role of awareness of consequences and normative process in generating intention. This result was also confirmed by Han and Yoon (2015) who, in addition to consumers' environmental awareness, recognised the importance of perceived effectiveness and reputation of hotels' eco-friendly behaviour. Wang et al. (2020) also recognised that there is a significant positive relationship between green purchase attitudes and green behavioural intention. Verma and Chandra (2018) confirmed that the attitude ranks high in merit for predicting the consumer's green hotel visit intention. The relevance of the relationship between personal values, attitudes, environmental knowledge/awareness, and perceived benefits and hotel/restaurant image, perceived quality, and satisfaction in influencing consumers' behavioural intentions (e.g., word-of-mouth intentions, retentions, willingness to pay, and willingness to pay a premium) was also confirmed by Gao et al. (2016). The importance of environmentally friendly activities and overall image was also shown by Yarimoglu and Gunay (2020). Wang et al. (2018) showed that perceived consumer effectiveness and environmental concern have positive effects on the attitude and the intention of consumers to visit green hotels, and that perceived consumer effectiveness has the largest effect.

However, Teng et al. (2015) claimed that, in addition to attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, consumers' altruism plays a crucial role in the selection of green accommodation. Nimri et al. (2020) also extended the analysis to other variables. These authors claimed that green hotel knowledge and attitudes, as well as subjective injunctive norms positively influence intention towards green hotel patronage. Some limitations related to the theory of planned behaviour have also been highlighted by Olya et al. (2019). These authors, while recognising that perceived behavioural control boosts consumers' continued intention to visit, claimed that it is insufficient for predicting green hotel guests' intention to recommend.

With regard to green practices adopted by hotels to reduce their environmental footprint, the academic literature is divided into two main streams of research. On one hand, there is a group of scholars that focused on the green human resource management (GHRM) of hotels' employees, and on the other hand, scholars centred their attention on the technical activities that accommodations can adopt.

Pham et al. (2019) highlighted that the interaction of three GHRM practices (training, performance management and employee involvement) can enhance employees' voluntary green behaviour, depending on the level of green performance management and green employee involvement. In addition to GHRM, Nisar et al. (2021) introduced the concepts of green intellectual capital and pro-environmental behaviours in the domain of environment management, proving their importance. Irani et al. (2022) suggested that green hotel management should promote GHRM practices throughout their organisations to enhance employee involvement in environmentally sustainable activities.

From the technical perspective, Trang et al. (2019) indicated energy efficiency interventions as the most popular actions among green hotels. Other practices, as reported by Han et

al. (2018) involved water conservation and waste reduction management. There is a strong relationship between the green practices adopted by hotels and the green image of hotels. In particular, consumer green satisfaction and green trust have a significant influence over the word-of-mouth intention for hotels with environment-friendly operations (Hameed et al., 2022).

As proven by Chung (2020), social responsibility hotels can increase consumer loyalty to the image of the hotel through green marketing. However, the trust building process depends on a traveller's environmental values, independently of the trip purpose (Gupta et al., 2019). Moreover, it is important that all the actions are robust and reliable, because, as proved by Rahman et al. (2015), consumer scepticism about hotels' environmental claims influences consumers' intention to participate in green hotel programs and intention to revisit the hotel.

These findings are confirmed also by Chen et al. (2019) that showed that perceived greenwashing had a significant negative influence on green trust.

Nevertheless, most of these studies never specifically focused on sport tourism. Moreover, most of them were done in a specific geographical area (e.g., South-East Asia). Thus, to extend the geographical context and to shed some lights on fans behaviour for the selection of green accommodation, we stated our research questions as following:

- ⚙️ RQ1: What are the drivers in the selection of green hotels?
- ⚙️ RQ2: What is the best way to communicate to supporters about green hotels in a particular city?
- ⚙️ RQ3: What are the most relevant hotels' green practices for fans?
- ⚙️ RQ4: What are the most relevant behaviours when fans attend sporting events?

3. METHODOLOGY

To analyse fans' behaviour for the selection of green accommodation, we used data collected through questionnaires administered within the ERASMUS+ project ACCESS (Achieving Circularity in Cities through Environmental Sustainability of Sports). The survey was carried out between September and December 2023 in Italy. The data were collected through the online platform, Survey Monkey. The access to the online survey was open, so anyone had the possibility to access the website and submit their contribution. In this way, we were able to use the potential of social networks and media channels to boost survey dissemination. We used several channels in parallel to garner opinion from as many fans as possible, raising the expectation of wide-ranging fan feedback from more diverse parties that might otherwise not be possible. To minimise the common method bias that can affect a questionnaire survey, we used the most diffused procedural remedies such as: guaranteed anonymity; avoiding the use of ambiguity, vague concepts, complicated syntax and unfamiliar questions; use of simple, specific and concise questions; use of different response formats and use of methodological item separation. Lastly, we deem it important to highlight that all the comparisons and the statements made in the paper are valid exclusively for the sample considered in our study and that they cannot be generalised to the whole universe of Italy or other European States.

Table 1 shows the sample distribution per age, gender, level of education and annual household income.

Table 1. Sample demographics

Variable	Characteristics	N	Share
Age	15-24	18	6.16%
	25-34	118	40.41%
	35-44	72	24.66%
	45-54	60	20.55%
	>55	24	8.22%
Gender	Male	192	65.75%
	Female	100	34.32%
Level of education	Less than High School	13	4.45%
	High School	132	45.21%
	Bachelor's degree	56	19.18%
	Master's degree	73	25.00%
	Doctorate	18	6.16%
Annual household income	Less than €15,000	32	10.96%
	€15,000 - €25,000	56	19.18%
	€25,000 - €35,000	76	26.03%

4. RESULTS

Figure 1 illustrates the priority levels that the respondents assigned to various attributes when choosing accommodations for sporting events. A significant majority indicated that the quality of the hotel, along with web recommendations and price are critical factors in the choice of a hotel. Environmental sustainability, while not the top priority, still shows a noteworthy preference rate of more than 50%, suggesting a growing consciousness towards eco-friendly living standards.

Figure 1: Hotels' characteristics considered during consumers' choice

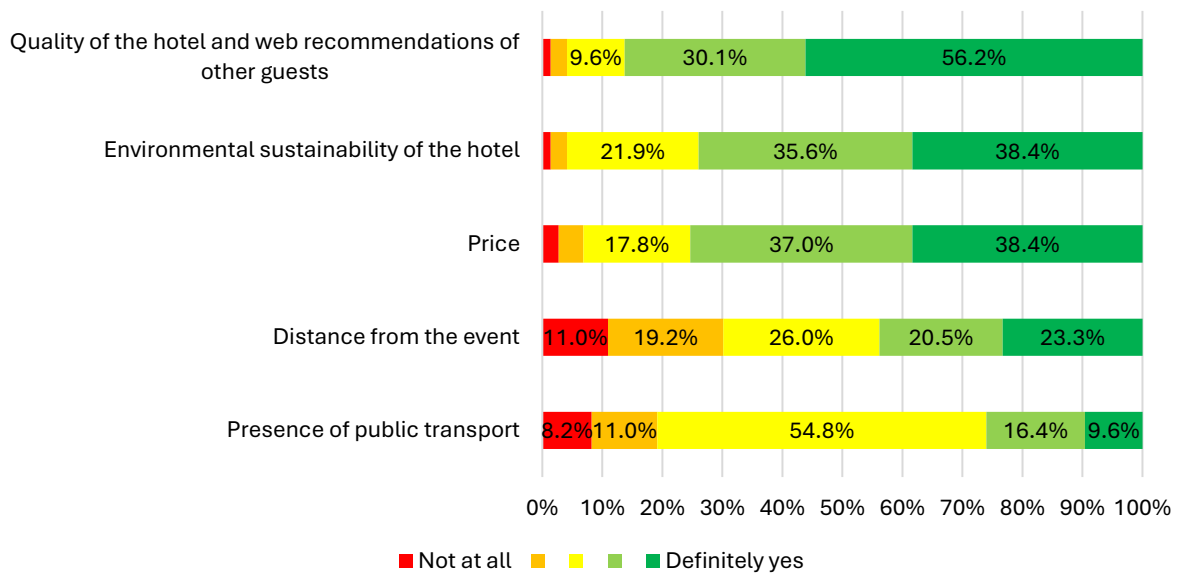
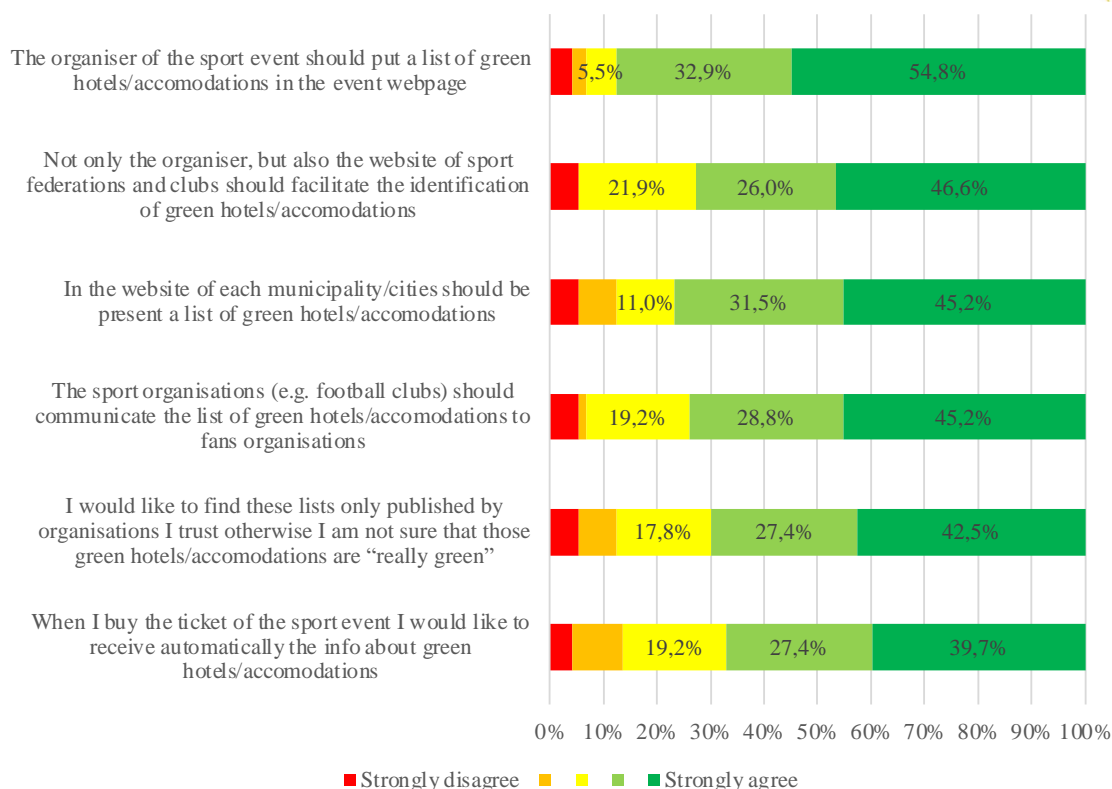


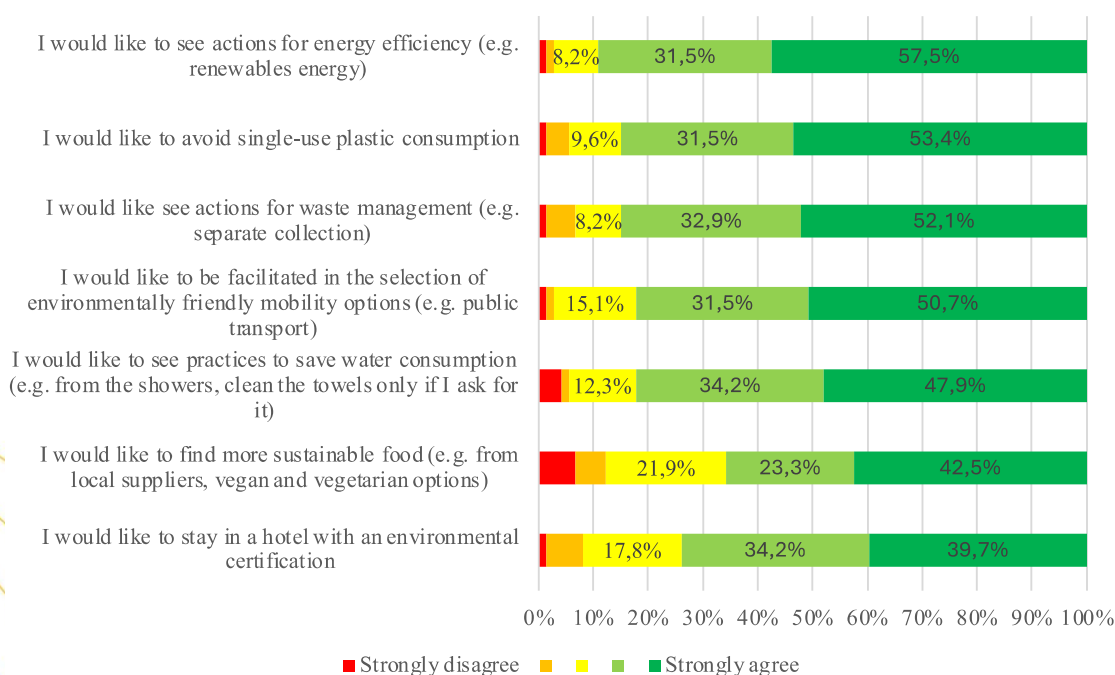
Figure 2 addresses the preferred communication channels through which participants would like to receive information about green hotels. A notable trend from the data is the desire for trustworthy sources and official communications. The majority of respondents expressed a preference for receiving information directly from sporting event organisers or through trusted organisations, underscoring the importance of credibility in environmental claims.

Figure 2: Preferred methods for communicating green accommodations.



Preferences for specific green features within hotels were also explored. Figure 3 shows a strong support for environmental certifications and sustainable food options. Moreover, water-saving practices and waste management were highly favoured, indicating a significant inclination towards comprehensive sustainability in lodging facilities during sporting events.

Figure 3: Best way to communicate to supporters about green hotels/accommodations.



The survey further explored the willingness and perceived ability of attendees to engage in green behaviours during sporting events. Responses revealed a generally positive attitude towards adopting green behaviours, with a noticeable openness to participating in green events and staying at environmentally friendly hotels in the future. The data indicates a favourable shift towards environmental responsibility among sports event attendees.

Figure 1: Feelings towards green behaviours.

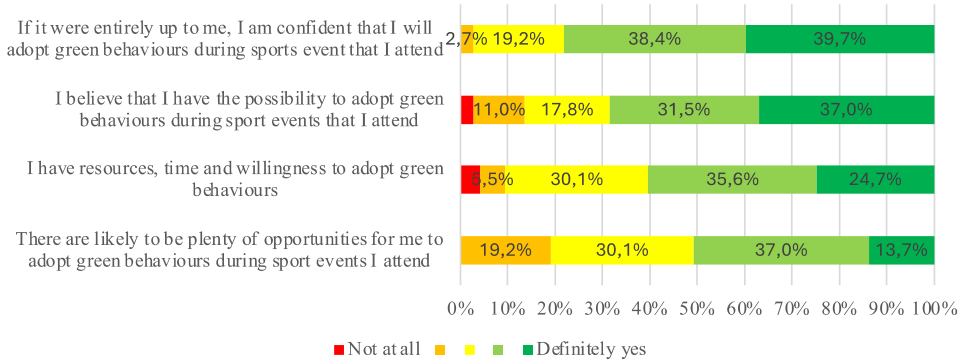


Figure 2: Influence on the adoption of green behaviours.

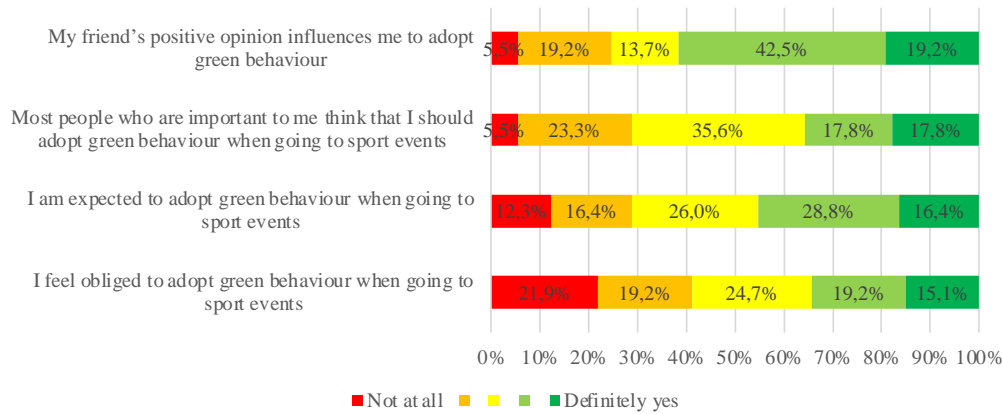
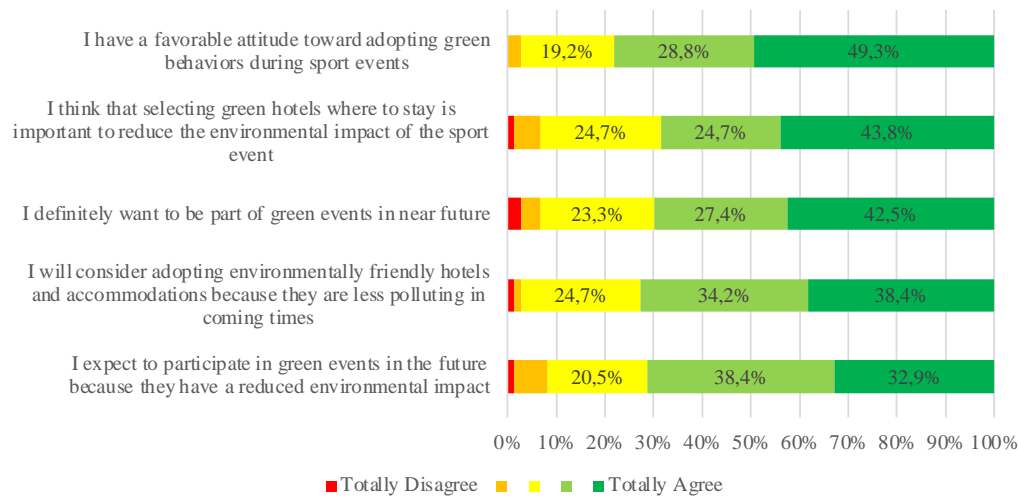


Figure 3: Attitudes towards green behaviours.



5. DISCUSSION

When considering the behaviour of fans in selecting green accommodations, especially in the context of attending large-scale events such as sports competitions or music festivals, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) offers a robust framework for understanding the decision-making process (Ajzen, 1991). According to TPB, an individual's behaviour is driven by three fundamental determinants: their attitudes towards the behaviour, the subjective norms surrounding them, and their perceived behavioural control over performing the behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). This theoretical approach can be utilized to dissect how and why fans might choose environmentally friendly lodging options. This essay delves into this behaviour, examines the intention-behaviour gap, proposes strategies for event organisers and policymakers to enhance sustainability, and discusses the academic implications of studying such behaviours.

Fans' attitudes towards green accommodations often depend on their personal beliefs about the importance of environmental conservation and their perceptions of the benefits associated with staying in such lodgings, such as reduced environmental impact and a healthier living space (Rahman and Reynolds, 2019). However, these positive attitudes might not always translate into booking green accommodations due to various barriers (Ray et al., 2023). Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behaviour. If fans believe that their peers, influential figures, or social groups value sustainability, they are more likely to emulate this behaviour. The role of celebrities or athletes advocating for environmental responsibility can significantly influence fans' choices (Gionfriddo et al., 2023). Perceived behavioural control involves the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour, influenced by past experiences and anticipated impediments. Factors like availability, affordability, convenience, and knowledge about green accommodations impact this component. Limited availability or higher costs of green accommodations can deter even the

most environmentally conscious fans (Ahn and Kwon, 2020). Despite positive attitudes and norms, an intention-behaviour gap often exists. Fans might intend to book green accommodations but fail to do so due to various barriers. Fans might not have sufficient information about the availability or benefits of green accommodations. Often, green accommodations are perceived as more expensive than conventional ones. Fans may revert to booking familiar, non-green options out of convenience or habit (Chan et al., 2020).

To bridge the intention-behaviour gap and promote sustainable choices, event organisers and policymakers can implement several strategies (Umrani et al., 2020). Initiatives to educate fans about the environmental impacts of their accommodation choices and the benefits of green accommodations can positively shift fans' attitudes. Subsidies or discounts for green accommodations can make them more financially attractive. Policymakers could incentivize accommodation providers to adopt sustainable practices, making green options more widely available and affordable. Utilizing influential figures to promote green accommodations and showcasing stories of fans who have made sustainable choices can strengthen subjective norms. Integrating green accommodations into mainstream booking platforms and ensuring they are as easy to book as conventional options can enhance perceived behavioural control (Yin et al., 2020). Environmental certifications can be powerful solutions to ensure reliability and robustness of the environmental practices adopted by hotels (Khan et al., 2021)

Studying fan behaviour in the context of selecting green accommodations also provides several opportunities for academic exploration and contribution. Researchers can test and refine the TPB by incorporating additional variables that might influence sustainable accommodation choices, such as environmental concern, knowledge, or identity. Scholars could develop new methodologies or mixed methods approaches to capture the complex interplay of attitudes, norms, and

perceived control in real-world settings. Academics can examine the effectiveness of different policy interventions and incentives designed to promote sustainable tourism, providing valuable feedback for policymakers. Conducting studies across different cultural contexts can uncover universal and unique drivers of sustainable behaviour in the selection of accommodations, enhancing the generalisability and applicability of findings.

Understanding and influencing fans' behaviour in the selection of green accommodations is a multi-faceted challenge that requires the

coordinated effort between event organisers, policymakers, and the academic community. By applying theories such as the TPB and addressing the intention-behaviour gap through strategic interventions, stakeholders can foster more sustainable practices that not only benefit the environment but also enhance the overall experience of event attendees (Srivastava et al., 2023). Moreover, scholarly research into these behaviours offers valuable insights that can drive policy changes and promote sustainability in the tourism and events industry (Daddi et al., 2022; Aldulaimi et al., 2023).

6. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the comprehensive examination of fan behaviours regarding the selection of green accommodations within the realm of sport tourism reveals a robust intersection of environmental consciousness and consumer choice. This study, grounded in the principles of the TPB, underscores the multifaceted nature of decision-making processes that are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Our findings demonstrate a significant inclination among sports fans toward eco-friendly lodging options, reflecting a broader commitment to sustainability in the context of major sporting events.

Attitudes towards green accommodations are largely favourable, with many fans recognizing the environmental benefits and contributing positively to the host community's sustainability. However, this positive attitude sometimes contrasts with actual booking behaviours, which can be hindered by factors such as availability, cost, and lack of information. It is here that the role of subjective norms becomes pivotal; the influence of peers, media, and particularly influential figures in sports can drive or deter the eco-conscious lodging choices.

Perceived behavioural control also plays a critical role. The ease of finding and booking green accommodations, influenced by factors such as the visibility of green options on popular booking platforms and the affordability compared to traditional lodging, can significantly impact consumer behaviour. Our study found that when green options are both visible and competitively priced, the likelihood of their selection increases.

To bridge the gap between positive attitudes towards green accommodations and actual behaviour, several strategies can be employed. Event organisers and policymakers are encouraged to promote greater awareness of the availability and benefits of green accommodations through targeted campaigns. Additionally, integrating green lodging options into the main booking systems can enhance their visibility and ease of access. Incentives such as discounts or loyalty benefits could also be offered to encourage bookings at environmentally friendly accommodations.

Moreover, the results of this study can serve as a catalyst for further research in different geographical contexts and within various segments of the tourism industry. Understanding the drivers behind the selection of green accommodations can help refine marketing strategies and policy approaches, aiming to foster a more sustainable tourism sector globally.

In essence, fostering sustainable practices among sports fans is not merely a trend but a necessity in the face of global environmental challenges. By making sustainable choices more accessible and appealing, stakeholders in the sports tourism industry can lead by example, promoting environmental stewardship while enhancing the overall experience for attendees. This approach not only supports the global sustainability agenda but also ensures the longevity and viability of sport tourism as a dynamic contributor to economic and cultural exchange worldwide.

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ANNEX

The 7th International Conference on Business, Management and Finance (ICBMF, 07-09 June 2024) organised by Acavent – a worldwide organiser of scientific conferences, workshops, and exhibitions based in Vilnius, Lithuania, with nine years of experience in the events industry – took place at the Møller Institute at Churchill College, University of Cambridge. The Conference encourages numerous networking opportunities and guarantees paper publication opportunities to all accepted and registered abstracts. The Conference programme featured oral and poster presentations, virtual presentations, as well as a walking city tour.

During the first day, after the Conference check-in and a welcome coffee accompanying the poster presentations, the first in-person session started and almost all the 23 speakers, joined by their colleagues, took their seats. The morning session primarily focused on communication issues across various levels (e.g., public service media, social media, communication between different cultures, etc.). Post-lunch discussions shifted to financial analysis and market dynamics, as well as global trade and economic development. Within this session, after a brief networking and refreshment break, ACCESS project was presented offering an overview of the study on “Fans’ behaviour in the selection of green accommodations”. Finally, the day concluded with presentations on workplace dynamics and human resources. At the end of the day, 21 oral presentations were discussed by scholars from many different countries, such as Spain, Czech Republic, Serbia, Australia, Hong Kong, India, and so on. The 6 poster presentations briefly (15 minutes each) explored measurement and planning approaches related to both urban spaces and business practices.

On the second day, a walking city tour was organised to visit important highlights of historic Cambridge, providing a casual networking atmosphere, too. The visit included 8 main hotspots: the historic Eagle Pub, St Benets Churc, the Cavendish Laboratory, Queen’s College, Kings College Chapel, Great St Mary’s Church, the Senate House, and the Trinity College. In the afternoon, the virtual

presentation session started with the keynote speaker intervention on how the dominant stakeholder strategically manages an innovative public policy. After, a series of presentations from scholars focused on business and financial studies. Virtual presentations continued as well in the morning of the third day, disclosing about communication issues.

The ICBMF allows all the accepted submissions of the conference to different publication opportunities, including Conference Abstract Book, Conference Proceedings, Plagiarism Policy & Publication Ethics, Paper publication opportunity in peer-reviewed indexed journals, Book Chapter Publication, and Monograph Publication. The publication of the study on “Fans’ behaviour in selecting green accommodations” will occur through Conference Proceedings. Paper submissions for Conference Proceedings are published electronically with a DOI number, as well as an ISBN number, and they can be submitted for publication to various indexed international journals, such as Scopus and Google Scholar. The submission process involves a (double-blind) peer-reviewed by an internal panel on a rolling basis; therefore, the publication of the full paper on “Fans’ behaviour in selecting green accommodations” will occur once acceptance notification is issued.





7th International Conference on **BUSINESS,**
MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE



07 – 09 June, 2024
CAMBRIDGE, UNITED KINGDOM

Date: 20-May-24
Number: IMF7-6608

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Confirmation of payment and invitation to attend at ICBMF

Dear Annamaria Pesci,

On behalf of the 7th International Conference on Business, Management and Finance, I am pleased to inform you that the paper entitled “**Fans behaviour for the selection of green accommodation**” has been accepted by the ICBMF Technical Committee after review for technical merits. As part of the publication requirements, it is a mandatory requirement that you attend the conference to present the paper and discuss your work. Please make the necessary travel arrangements and visa applications as early as possible to be able to present your paper and lead the subsequent technical discussions. The conference will be held at The Møller Institute at Churchill College, University of Cambridge with the Address: Storey’s Way, Cambridge, CB3 0DE on 07 – 09 June 2024.

ICBMF provides an opportunity for academics, practitioners, consultants, scholars, researchers and policy makers with different backgrounds and experiences, to present their papers in the conference and to discuss their experiences, new ideas, research results, as well as any practical challenges encountered and/or the solutions adopted during their work. Please note that we are unable to cover the costs of any of the fees related to your participation in the event. Costs related to travel, accommodation or transportation will be your own responsibility. Conference fee is paid.

ACAVENT is a worldwide organizer of scientific conferences, workshops and exhibitions. Our international company headquarter is based in Vilnius, Lithuania, company code 304744558. We organize conferences within the European Union. Our events are planned and organized in collaboration with faculty deans, professors, academic journals, research scientists, engineers, scholars, managers, university postgraduate and undergraduates. For any inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Finally, we would like to further extend our congratulations to you and we are looking forward to meeting you in Cambridge, The United Kingdom.

Yours sincerely,
Gintare Chakherlouy
Executive manager





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