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## **Entrepreneurs' perceptions of official sporting events' capacity to promote their business in the long term**

Academic literature includes numerous studies on the assessment of the economic impacts of sporting events. Some of these impacts are only temporary and don't produce a lasting effect on the productive fabric, while others lead to long term developments. Even though residents' reactions to the long term impacts of these events have been broadly studied, the views expressed by entrepreneurs located in the area of the event remain to be investigated. This article analyses perceptions of entrepreneurs located near the Sierra Nevada Ski and Mountain Resort in Spain relating to their assessment of the long term effects of hosting the 2017 Snowboard and Freestyle Ski World Championship. This paper makes use of a mixed-methods. The qualitative and quantitative analyses reveal a positive assessment of the event's impact both concerning the promotion of the mountain resort and in terms of its international positioning as a snowboarding and freestyle sports destination.

**Keywords:** perception; entrepreneur; winter sports; official event; legacy.

### **Introduction**

Academic research on the impact of sporting events has developed extensively over the years, including analyses focusing on both economic and non-economic aspects. Also, numerous proposals have been put forward for methods and models to measure the economic impacts associated with these events (Dolles and Söderman 2008). Moreover, given the broad nature of the potential non-economic impacts, a growing body of literature has been generated focusing on their study and analysis (Balduck et al. 2011; Jefferson 2002). Considering the positive potential inherent in these events, there are various justifications for hosting them, and organisers should identify the objectives supported by a particular sporting event, given that the spectrum of potentially affected stakeholders is broad (Schnitzer et al. 2017). For this reason, event organizers and policy makers must define the interests that should be primarily promoted (Parent 2008; Parent et al. 2013).

In relation to the above, it is important to consider the perceptions of the principal stakeholders involved (Guaita et al. 2020), assuming that the tourism component of these events will require the support of local establishments to guarantee their success (Martín 2019). A successful increase in visitor-tourist flows is very important, given the connection between tourism and development (Sigalat-Signes et al., 2020). Although residents' reactions to sporting events have been broadly analysed (Karadakis and Kaplandidou 2012; Kim et al. 2006; Gursoy and Kendall 2006; Fredline and Faulkner 2001), there is very limited research focused on the perception of such events by other stakeholders involved (Schnitzer et al. 2017); this article aims to contribute knowledge to fill this research gap. Specifically, the focus is on the analysis of perceptions of entrepreneurs located in the area of influence of the event, a group that has received little or no attention even though, as Bazzanella et al. (2019) point out, the various stakeholders are crucial in the development of sporting events. Given the important role of entrepreneurs in the generation of wealth, their opinion should be taken into account (Metallo et al. 2020; Kummitha, 2019; Nyame-Asiamah, 2020; Canestrino et al. 2020). As Turulja et al. (2019:2) state “entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as the primary driver of economic growth and the reduction of unemployment”, with a clear importance within the tourism sector (Hernández-Pelines et al. 2019). In this sense, collaboration between entrepreneurs and other stakeholders is decisive (Leckel et al. 2020).

Great speculation about the real economic impacts typically arises at the time a country is selected to host a sporting event (Wasilczuk and Zawadzki 2013). To a large extent, this speculation stems from experiences which, as will be discussed later, demonstrate that in many cases an event's economic effects are not as significant as initially foreseen. In view of this uncertainty, it is important to understand the assessments

behind the opinions of the different stakeholders (Fredline 2005) and attempt to determine the reasons that support these views in order to identify strategies that benefit the different groups involved (Ritchie et al. 2009). Although public authorities often take a special interest in an event's economic aspects (Kim and Petrick 2005), the nature of the anticipated impacts, the stakeholders affected, and above all, the expectations of these groups remain to be determined.

The outcome of a sporting event is rarely clear and academic research focused on measuring the final economic and social balance is poorly developed (Short et al. 2000). Similarly, there is little research aimed at evaluating the real capacity of sport-related investments to maximise long term benefits of the productive fabric (Gratton 1999; Coalter et al. 2000; Hall 2004). It is this particular niche that will be addressed in this investigation as it provides information originating from entrepreneurs' perceptions. This research focuses on the concept of social utility described above, enhancing our understanding of entrepreneurs' assessment of an official sporting event's potential impacts and sets out the reasons that may justify such an assessment. Therefore, as described above, the research gap analysed is clearly defined. Specifically, two research questions are addressed: RQ1. How do entrepreneurs perceive the long-term effects of a sports event? RQ2. Which of these effects will be felt in the long term? The objective of the second question is to justify entrepreneurs' strategic positioning before the event.

The study is based on a sporting event associated with winter sports, on which academic literature is limited, if not non-existent. In particular, perceptions arising from hosting the 2017 Snowboard and Freestyle Ski World Championship in the Sierra Nevada Ski and Mountain Resort in Spain are analysed. Important information relating to the assessment of the event's long term impacts was gathered by conducting structured interviews with entrepreneurs located in the area of the mountain station. Since the data

collection was made during the event, the focus on the long term will be based on the interviewees' expectations. For these purposes, this paper makes use of a mixed-methods approach. Both a qualitative and a quantitative analysis are combined so as to obtain a more detailed overview of the case study with which this research is concerned. From a quantitative point of view, it is interesting to be able to provide a description encompassing the opinions of the interviewees. This knowledge is further enhanced by the collection of individual qualitative and freely expressed assessments, which inspired the application of a qualitative methodology in data analysis.

### **What effect on entrepreneurship may be expected from holding sporting events? A review of the literature**

Hosting of sporting events has been used for both the promotion of sport and for the socioeconomic activation of environments in which they are held (Parra-Camacho et al. 2020; Guaita and Carracedo 2018), thereby accepting and recognizing their economic dimension. Evaluation of the economic impact derived from sporting events has generated very extensive and diverse literature (e.g. Balduck et al. 2011; Chen et al. 2018; Prayag et al. 2013; Kim et al. 2006; Waitt 2003), including cultural (Calabuig et al. 2014), urban (Hiller 2006) and environmental (Collins et al. 2007) impact assessments. It is assumed that, to a greater or lesser extent, the holding of sporting events has the potential to generate economic effects on the local or regional productive fabric. Also, academic literature focused on the analysis of sporting events' impacts draws on tourism studies (Parra-Camacho et al. 2020). It is understood that such occasions show certain commonalities with other purely tourism-oriented events (Balduck et al. 2011) to the extent that infrastructure development is required, passenger journeys are generated and spending patterns are largely similar. The concept of tourism impact is associated with

how interactions generated by tourism activity are realized in the environments in which they develop, be they of economic, socio-cultural, or environmental nature (Martín et al. 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). These impacts, in many cases but not in all, have the capacity to alter the value system, behavioural patterns, community structures, lifestyle and wellbeing (Hall 1992; Martín et al. 2014). Finally, the changes produced will depend on the persistence of the event that generates the impacts; therefore, the real challenge is to achieve permanent changes from sporting events. This is certainly a desirable objective and, according to academic literature, a feasible one in many cases (Parra-Camacho et al. 2017).

The temporal component of these effects, or in other words the persistence of positive impacts, is therefore a key factor in the success of such events. The most recent studies on the development of sporting events differentiate between impacts generated solely throughout an event and other long term impacts, which may also be considered a legacy. Agha et al. (2012) offer a very detailed description of the long term impacts associated with the concept of legacy, such as improvements or alterations in the image of the event venue, sustained momentum of tourism flows, infrastructure development and other social changes. Furthermore, some studies differentiate between tangible legacies, such as improvements in infrastructure and remodelling of urban environments (Hiller 2006), and intangible legacies, related to improvements in the city's image (Bull and Lovell 2007), as well as social or cultural changes (Haynes 2001). Consequently, the planning of such events has often been used as a marketing tool to improve the external image of a city or country (Ritchie and Smith 1991; Preuss 2007), and even to strengthen national pride (Bruni and Porta 2007; Kaplanidou 2012; Leng et al. 2014; Wicker et al. 2012).

Set against these lasting positive effects or legacy, which may be enhanced by a region's tourism competitiveness (Guaita et al. 2020a; Guaita et al. 2020b; Salinas et al. 2020), the development of sporting events is often associated with short term impacts that may also lead to undesirable long term consequences (Hall 1992; Essex and Chalkley 1998; Eisinger 2000). The initial effects of a sporting event correspond to the investment and preparation stages (Wasilczuk and Zawadzki 2013), although these impacts have limited temporary potential. In addition to this, the initial increase in visibility, publicity and recognition of the city and region are identified as an expansion in media impact and publicity (Hiller 2000; Jones 2001; Malecki 2004). It is important to note here that the magnitude of an event will certainly condition the short and long term impacts. Wilson (2006) suggests that the economic effects of medium-scale events can be irrelevant; nonetheless, the non-economic benefits generated for the local community can still be significant. Also, the literature on medium-scale events, such as that referred to in this study, is not as extensive as the literature available on large events (Bazzanella et al. 2019).

Perception analysis is a subcategory within studies on the evaluation of sporting events, which examines opinions concerning the impacts of such occasions. These studies have mainly focused on the opinion of residents of the area in which the event takes place (Ritchie et al. 2009). The objective of this kind of analysis is a comparison of costs and benefits associated with an event and the establishment of a specific positioning based on individual evaluation. A critical review of pertinent literature indicates that entrepreneurs' evaluation of the impacts of sporting events has not been conducted, except in very specific cases. This is particularly striking considering that the organization of sporting events usually results in job creation and economic development (Pugh and Wood 2004). One of the few studies developed for this purpose concerns the evaluation of

entrepreneurs' attitudes toward the development of Eurocup 2012 in Poland (Wasilczuk and Zawadzki 2013). That being said, the study presents a major problem, and it's the fact that the related fieldwork was carried out three years before the event. Still, the research highlights entrepreneurs' great passivity towards the opportunities that the event could generate but it does not investigate their perceptions about the event's capacity to bring about lasting improvements. With the aim of contextualizing this work within the research on entrepreneurship, we take as a reference the classification proposed by Ferreira et al. (2017). Specifically, we can claim that this work falls within the line of research related to creation and networks theory. For more information on the new lines of research associated with entrepreneurship, see Kraus et al. (2020) and Morales et al. (2021). It is important to highlight the role of entrepreneurship in the context of sports. Certain values specific to entrepreneurs can strengthen the organization of sports institutions, so the consolidation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem can boost sports associations and their objectives (Hammerschmidt et al. 2019).

### ***Conceptual framework***

When evaluating perceptions about the impacts of sporting events, the approach methodology used is essential. In this study, we have applied the conceptual and analytical framework used in previous research to residents. However, our focus only encompasses entrepreneurs, which are referenced by the term "respondents".

Initial studies on perception analysis were based on a previous categorization of impacts into negative and positive. However, such studies can influence residents' assessments given that the impacts are already categorized into what is assumed to be negative or positive (Andereck et al. 2005). Furthermore, the cost-benefit analyses implemented with the proposed objective show a similar pattern by associating the



expected costs with a negative attitude and the potential benefits with the residents' support, subject to the previous categorization of impact items (Lee 2013). The problem associated with these approaches is evident: they do not consider respondents' free assessment (Gursoy et al. 2010). A more advanced strategy is known as the 'domain related costs-benefits approach' and analyses the positive or negative perceptions related to three domains or categories: economic; socio-cultural and environmental. Therefore, it is based on categorising and subdividing impact items into costs and benefits. This method proposes a direct relationship between residents' support and the anticipated benefits, and between expected costs and the rejection level, all of which are linked to the dimensions considered (Dyer et al. 2007). As can be seen, none of the above approaches offer residents the freedom to indicate whether an impact in question is perceived as positive or negative, seeing as only a level of agreement is confirmed on a pre-codified scale of positive or negative statements (Andereck et al. 2005).

Methodologies such as the 'non-forced approach' attempt to overcome the problems described above by supplying respondents with a series of neutral phrases without categorizing them as positive or negative impacts (Andereck et al. 2005). In this manner and presented with a neutral description of an impact, it is the respondents who position the impact item on a positive-negative scale. It is understood that the more positive the assessment of the expected impacts, the greater the support of the event under consideration will be. Following this approach, the perceived nature of the anticipated effects is reflected in individual assessments along a positive-negative scale of perception, where residents can position each one of the proposed impacts in a neutral way (Deccio and Baloglu 2002).

The above describes how questionnaires should be presented to respondents; however, it is also necessary to understand the conceptual framework used as a reference

to describe how respondents form their perceptions (Martín et al. 2018; De Castro et al. 2019; De Castro et al. 2020). Among the theories present in academic literature, many of them derived from the tourism economy, the one that best corresponds to the subject of this study is the 'Social Exchange Theory' (SET). It may be said that SET offers the most accepted theoretical framework to explain residents' reactions to tourism development or massive events (Prayag et al. 2013). This theory postulates that residents form their opinion of an activity by assessing the difference between its projected benefits and the associated costs (Ap 1992). If the surveyed group perceives that the positive impacts outweigh the potential negative effects, based on individual assessments of costs and benefits, a supportive attitude can be expected (Lee 2013).

This theory implies that the groups affected by an event are willing to assume the associated costs in return for some form of compensation. These rewards may adopt various forms, such as job creation, income increases, development of new infrastructures, etc. However, in the event that the anticipated benefits do not meet expectations, a feeling of rejection may be generated (Ward and Berno 2011). Also, this theory has inspired the study of residents' and public officials' perceptions about the development of sporting events (Koenecke and de Nooij 2016; Bull and Lovell 2007; Gursoy and Kendall 2006; Fredline and Faulkner 2001; Chen et al. 2018; Prayag et al. 2013). It is therefore expected that residents or entrepreneurs, who are positively and directly affected by an event, will have a more favourable attitude toward the idea (Fredline 2004). Waitt (2003) points out, however, that this assessment is not static; therefore it would be interesting to evaluate residents' perceptions before, during and after an event. Also, it is anticipated that in some cases the level of support may diminish over time, especially if expectations are not met or if the costs incurred during an event exceed the initial forecasts.

## **Context of the study**

The Sierra Nevada Ski and Mountain Resort is located in the province of Granada in south-eastern Spain and is the most southern ski resort in Europe, situated 90 kilometers from the Mediterranean coast of Spain. It is also the highest ski resort in Spain, with a maximum skiable altitude of 3,300 meters and a minimum of 2,100 meters. Its geographical position with respect to height and orientation guarantees snow cover for a ski area with 104.58 kilometres of marked runs. Also, its geographical position offers excellent weather conditions with sunshine all year round, which attributes to it a special differential value, very much appreciated in the Spanish and international markets. Furthermore, the station is located 40 km from Granada's city centre, one of the main cultural tourism destinations in Spain (Martín et al. 2019a), which receives 5 million visitors annually (Statistics and Cartography Institute of Andalusia 2020). It should be noted also that the region of this mountain station is highly dependent on tourism (Jiménez et al. 2014).

The 2017 Snowboard and Freestyle Ski World Championship in Sierra Nevada Economic Impact Report (Jiménez et al. 2017), highlights the information provided below. The holding of these Championships from 7 to 19 March 2017 produced an economic impact of 16.14 million euros, based on investments estimated at 6.62 million euros. During the six months, this event generated a total of 8,500 news items in the national press, on Spanish television channels, and national and international websites. 1,600 competitors from federations attended this event, of which 690 were sportspeople and the rest were technicians. Also, 114,400 skiers attended the event, 24% more than the average of the last three seasons during the same dates. Therefore, there were sportspeople who came to the resort attracted by the appeal of this event and who could be considered spectators. In addition to these visitors, there were other 14,970 who visited

the station but did not practice any sport, 26% more than the previous year during the same weeks, and who are also considered spectators of the event. Hotel occupancy was 28% higher than the previous year during the same period (Jiménez et al. 2017). As indicated in the above-mentioned impact study, one of the objectives of this event was to position the mountain resort as an international benchmark for snowboarding and freestyle sports, after many years of substantial investments concerning the adaptation to these sports.

## **Method**

### ***Sampling and data collection***

During the 2017 Snowboard and Freestyle Ski World Championship in Sierra Nevada Ski and Mountain Resort in Spain, a total of 50 face-to-face interviews were conducted with entrepreneurs whose businesses were located within a 20km radius of the event's venue. According to Mathenson's (2006) criteria, the study should focus on the area closest to the event. As for the selection of entrepreneurs, an approach proposed by Cuervo et al. (2007, 1) was taken as reference: "The individual entrepreneur detects or creates business opportunities that he or she then exploits through small and medium-sized firms, normally participating in funding the capital for that firm, carries out the role of arbitrator, or simply 'sells the idea' of the business project". Based on this idea, surveys of businesses not managed by an entrepreneur or integrated into chains were ruled out (Martin and Guaita 2020). The starting date of the businesses was not recorded, but only businesses that were less than 10 years old were included in the sample. The interviews were conducted face to face by professionally trained interviewers throughout the event, based on a list of establishments with economic activity in the selected area. According to this list, a total of 78 establishments met the requirements of the study, so that they

could be considered as businesses driven by an entrepreneur. Therefore, the number of interviews conducted represents 64% of the universe. According with the aim of this study, a convenience sampling approach was applied (e.g. Kim et al. 2006; Lorde et al. 2011; Parra-Camacho et al. 2016; Prayag et al. 2013). Also, prior to the implementation of the survey, the interviewers received training to ensure the neutrality of the process and to consider the specific objective of each question. The objective during the survey process was for the sample to be indicative of the distribution of activities present in the area.

Following the recommendations of Martilla and James (1977), it is necessary to carry out a comprehensive literature review of the measurement items used in the fieldwork. Given limited literature on entrepreneurs' perceptions of sporting events, as an alternative, studies that focused on residents' perceptions were used to prepare the interviews (Karadakis and Kaplandidou 2012; Schnitzer 2013; Balduck et al. 2011; Fredline et al. 2003; Kim and Petrick 2005; Kim et al. 2006; Ritchie et al. 2009; Zhou and Ap 2009). Karadakis and Kaplanidou (2012) describe the main legacies that an event often leaves on the population, some of which may produce lasting impacts for the commercial sector. Preuss (2007, 2015) distinguishes between short and long term legacies, the last one being the most interesting from a business perspective. In this manner, some questions were added which, according to the authors, were considered necessary to specify the level of support from a business perspective. Furthermore, the measurement items used were associated with the event's effect on socio-economic development, flows of visitors, infrastructure improvement, international image, recognition and advancement of the sport. Research studies that examine the impacts of sporting events on the community (Getz 2005; Hall 1992; Ritchie 1984), on the local economy (Hagn and Maennig 2007) and, of course, on tourism (Preuss et al. 2010; Thöni

and Philippovich 2008) proved especially helpful as well. The interview began with two open-ended questions: What may be the long term legacy of this event from an entrepreneurial perspective and, what negative effects, if any, could be associated with this effect? The open-ended questions were formulated first, followed by those categorized into specific measurement impact items so as not to influence the open-ended answers by the indicated impacts. Also, before starting the conversation, the interviewers made an introduction by focusing on the items exposed and on the implications for the future development of the particular company. In this manner, the term ‘legacy’ was emphasized.

A mixed-methods approach —both quantitative and qualitative— was considered to be the most appropriate for the analysis of the available data, providing us with the biggest amount of information. Accordingly, the questionnaire was divided as follows: the first part collected basic data on the entrepreneur and his activity; in the second part, space was provided for a qualitative assessment of the long term effects of the event on their commercial activity and the strategic positioning of their business in sporting events, based on the two questions described above; in the third part, neutral statements were presented according to an unforced approach to analyse assessments of the event’s long term impacts on commercial activity. These measurement items, as described before, drew from previous studies on residents’ perceptions and about entrepreneurship.

### ***Data analysis***

In an effort to reduce personal and methodological biases, the analysis undertaken employed a data triangulation technique that aims to achieve convergence of the results for which the use of different perspectives or types of data is required (Yang 2011). Moreover, triangulation is a system that improves the credibility, confidence and

objectivity of the results of a study (Decrop 1999). Methodologically, triangulation involves both a quantitative and a qualitative approach, which in this case would correspond to the numerical survey results and the qualitative assessments captured in the interview. The quantitative information provides a completely objective view of the event under study, although its exploitation is merely descriptive as it lacks a larger number of surveys that would allow other types of analysis to be carried out. The complementary qualitative information, on the other hand, facilitates in-depth analysis of the phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln 2000).

This methodology is recommended in contexts where the nature of quantitative data does not allow for complex analysis to be carried out and it is necessary to complement it with qualitative assessments that can illustrate the subtleties of the process and the context (Creswell 1998), for the purpose of generating deep and rich information about human activities, including concepts, beliefs and values (Riley and Love 2000). When both the qualitative and quantitative methods produce similar findings, the validity of the results increases (Yang 2011). The numerical data were coded and examined using the software SPSS. To begin, an analysis of percentages based on a scale created from each neutral statement: very negative; negative; neutral; positive; very positive, was developed. In this way, entrepreneurs' assessments of the impact items associated with the event could be known by analysing each entrepreneur's positioning on this scale (Saqib 2019). Furthermore, answers to the two qualitative questions were transcribed and examined using a concept association analysis to detect assessments associated with long term legacy and negative opinions. It should be noted that each of these assessments was reflected separately in the two open-ended questions posed. Also, factors associated with a benefit or a problem were analysed in each case, generating an extended model that

allowed for a better understanding of the opinions. Finally, a frequency count was applied to this model.

## **Results**

By adopting the above mentioned unforced approach, the entrepreneurs surveyed were presented with a series of items that assessed their perception of the event's short and long term impacts (Table 1).

With regard to short term assessments, the most notable impacts related to a temporary diffusion of the event's image in the media, which was corroborated by data on the number of mentions in accredited media and the press; 92% of respondents considered these effects to be positive or very positive. Attracting short term visitors was also seen favourably, seeing as 45% of entrepreneurs viewed the increase in flows as positive and 18% as very positive. However, the effect on sales was not assessed with the same optimism, given that only 34% considered it to be positive or very positive. This could derive from the following opinion expressed repeatedly in the respondents' evaluations: 'The surroundings of the station have been crowded with visitors these days, many of them spectators. This has bothered the athlete who only wanted to practice sport, so many have left and as a result, the sales have dropped'.

Regarding the potential long term effects - the main objective of this study – one-third of respondents showed a clear positive attitude. This assessment, representing the sum of all the positive and very positive evaluations, reached 47% with regard to entrepreneurs' attitudes toward the ski station's long term international recognition. Furthermore, positive opinions related to the event's capacity to support the opening of new source markets add up to 45%. In addition, one-third of entrepreneurs declared that the event would help position the ski resort as a benchmark for snowboarding in the long



term and that it would have an impact on the flow of visitors in the future. Overall, 36% of entrepreneurs were confident that the holding of this sporting event would produce long term benefits. The following statement reflects an idea that was repeated in numerous interviews: 'This event has positioned the Sierra Nevada resort on the international map as a specialist snowboarding destination, with facilities designed especially for this sport'.

[Table 1 near here]

If a distinction is now made between the entrepreneurs according to their business activity, it was found that those who valued the long term impacts most positively participated in the trade and rental of sports equipment, followed by those involved in sporting schools (Table 2). The following idea was voiced by many of these entrepreneurs: 'Attracting snowboarding enthusiasts will enhance the services geared towards this type of user'.

By comparison, the opinion of entrepreneurs involved in catering and accommodation services was quite different. Qualitative assessments indicate that they associated snowboarding and freestyle sports with users who have lower purchasing power, usually young people.

[Table 2 near here]

Analysis of the qualitative opinions expressed in the two open-ended questions relating to the event's legacy and negative evaluations was carried out by first categorizing the main assessments provided and then by applying a frequency count. In addition, two key terms associated with the main assessment were identified and validated (Table 3). With respect to the legacy of the event, 41 out of 50 respondents viewed infrastructure development as beneficial and associated it with an improvement of the station's positioning strategy in snowboarding and with the possibility of distinguishing

the station from other mountain resorts. In this regard, mention should be made of the views expressed about the impact on the projected image of the mountain station, which was also associated with the station's improved positioning in the snowboarding market and with the image conveyed about the ability to organize future events. Furthermore, some of the entrepreneurs interviewed stated that there would be an impact on promotion that could be sustained over the long term, helping to invigorate markets and open new ones. Also, according to 15 entrepreneurs, the impacts on the station's image would extend to the city of Granada itself, which is a first-class international tourist spot and would gain in popularity as a result of the combination of tourism and sport, increasing tourist flows at the same time. By contrast, 6 out of 50 entrepreneurs responded that the sporting event would not produce any long term impacts, and 3 of them regarded it as useless.

[Table 3 near here]

Negative assessments drawn from the open-ended questions were grouped into 4 items (Table 4). The most significant item indicates that the event did not deliver any benefit to the regional economy since it was perceived as a short term effect with little impact on local companies. A group of entrepreneurs, in a manner consistent with the assessments already mentioned, reported that the development of the event interfered with the daily life of the area, reducing sales or upsetting customers. The development of the event was also associated with the use of public funds, although there is little information on how it was financed. Lastly, 8 entrepreneurs stated that the event did not create any added value for the station nor the city of Granada.

[Table 4 near here]

## **Discussion and conclusions**

Sporting events have been used by policy makers as an opportunity to achieve objectives related to urban and infrastructure improvement, in order to enhance a city's image or to stimulate its economic development. Such events produce effects of a diverse nature, which have been measured from various perspectives. However, the outcome is rarely clear, especially concerning the analysis of long term legacies. This has influenced perceptions of the different stakeholders involved with regard to a sporting event's real benefits and therefore has determined their degree of support. Assessment studies have traditionally focused on analysing residents' opinions, without giving sufficient consideration to the views expressed by other stakeholders. This is a major weakness, assuming that one of the objectives of planning for such events is the reactivation of the productive fabric; therefore, it is necessary to capture the views expressed by local entrepreneurs with regard to an event in order to understand their expectations and their degree of support.

Academic literature has revealed numerous potential impacts, both tangible and intangible, associated with the hosting of sporting events, whose prevalence could determine an event's social and economic success. In many cases, these types of impacts are limited to the short term, which could result in long term investments being under-utilized or in their costs becoming a liability. Also, entrepreneurs' perceptions of an event's potential impacts may be influenced by their forecasts of the event's long term effects on their business. In this manner, they are able to compare the costs and long term benefits they expect to derive from it. It is interesting to gain insight into an entrepreneur's vision, based on a direct opinion, and capture their views on the nature of the real long term impacts.

“In Spain, the legislature has recognized the importance of an entrepreneurial spirit” (Garrido-Yserte, 2019:7). Entrepreneurs' assessments should be structured based on an unforced approach to facilitate the evaluation of the potential benefits and costs of an event. Thus, perceptions about an event's ability to produce long term impacts and about the specific sectors affected by them could be taken into consideration by policy makers. Therefore, this investigation is of great importance, given that the organizing of such events is often justified based on their ability to generate long term economic impacts.

The above results provide an answer to RQ1: How do entrepreneurs perceive the long-term effects of a sports event? Impacts related to the promotion and improvements of the image of the mountain resort were widely acknowledged and acknowledged as the most valued effect by entrepreneurs, consistent with data on media impacts. This assessment is in line with the effects described by several authors (Hiller 2006; Ritchie and Smith 1991; Preuss 2007). The idea of connecting the value of a sports event to the promotion of the destination and the positioning or repositioning of its image is reinforced. Therefore, it appears that entrepreneurs were able to anticipate effects which would not be corroborated until weeks after the event. This information is valuable because it indicates which impacts are really valued by the entrepreneurs and which are dismissed.

Also, regarding the evaluation of the event's impact on long term promotion of business activity, addressed by the RQ2: Which of these effects will be felt in the long term?, 33% of respondents expressed a positive opinion. On the other hand, the main criticisms voiced concerned the event's inability to stimulate the local productive fabric in the long term. Finally, some pessimism arising from the event's short term impacts could also be observed, since the positive effect on sales was not clearly documented.

Those entrepreneurs who were most enthusiastic about the event's positive long term impacts were convinced of its ability to reposition the mountain resort into a rising destination for snowboarding and freestyle sports. In this case, it would appear that the main reason for this optimistic assessment was the station's investment over the years in strategies geared towards attracting new kinds of athletes. This is in line with the long term impacts described by Agha et al. (2012). It should be mentioned that this event could mark the closing of this investment period since the media impact produced will allow the station to improve its positioning strategy, this being the key factor for entrepreneurs. However, it should be noted also that a high percentage of entrepreneurs were not very enthusiastic about the event, represented by those less closely associated with attracting long term visitors or those who did not believe in the impacts related to this type of visitor. Our findings support the ideas already voiced in previous works, i.e. that the impact of these events can be directly associated with the investments prior to the development of the event itself and the media coverage of the destination.

The results obtained allow us to draw conclusions that answer our two research questions. In fact, it has been found that the perception of the effects of these events is conditioned by the time window considered by the entrepreneur. The above results are directly linked to the objective that this work set out to achieve. The aim is to analyze the opinion of the entrepreneurs on the benefits of this type of event. Thus, the detailed analysis of the qualitative responses indicates the following: those who focus on short-term effects consider the benefits of the event to be very limited, even reducing sales and wasting public money. By contrast, those entrepreneurs with a focus on the long term have a more positive outlook. These entrepreneurs embrace the potential of this event to attract new visitors, to differentiate the mountain resort from its competitors and to demonstrate to the international community its capacity to host events of this kind. The

above would be in line with Wilson (2006), who points out the importance of non-economic effects, such as those associated with the region's image, its capacity to organize events or the improvement of the station's positioning. Likewise, it has been pointed out that the investments made as a result of this event will have a positive long-term effect and will help to differentiate this station from other competitors. The above results therefore indicate that the key to the outcome of the evaluation is the entrepreneur's short or long-term vision. This is what conditions their attitude. In fact, the entrepreneurs who evaluate the event most positively are those whose activity is conditioned by the capacity of the mountain resort to attract new visitors in the future. In this sense, young snowboarding and freestyle enthusiasts will become potential customers in the long run. This finding is interesting and can be taken into account when planning future sports events. Internal communication campaigns should focus on the long-term effect of the event, rather than on the short term. This philosophy of communication needs to be applied to the justification of public investment too. In this case, the investment made was partly intended to provide the station with new infrastructure. This new infrastructure would help to attract new customer segments and help to differentiate this mountain resort from others. This explanation could reduce the negative assessments of many entrepreneurs.

It is also interesting to note that a part of entrepreneurs highlighted the effect of the event on the tourist destination as a whole, this being an idea previously emphasized in the literature (Wilson, 2006). This conclusion, already pointed out in previous studies, considers the effects of this type of events as beneficial for the region as a whole, not for the mountain resort alone. That is, the effect of the event goes beyond the benefit that goes to the mountain resort. In this case, there is an effect on the nearby city of Granada, an international tourist destination that benefited from the promotion generated by this

event. The above considerations lead us to believe that entrepreneurs who value the overall effect of the event over the immediate and localized effect on their business are the ones who have a more positive opinion. These entrepreneurs are the ones with a less short-sighted and selfish planning.

The findings of this study may provide a good example for public policy direction. As explained above, the development of sporting events will receive greater support from entrepreneurs when they are confident that a positioning strategy has been put in place following the planning of an event. The data demonstrates that most entrepreneurs place a high value on the event's media impact, making its usefulness conditional on a clear message being communicated internationally. However, the long term impacts of such a message on the local productive fabric remain to be analysed. It would be interesting to carry out studies that analyze the medium- and long-term changes in the perception of entrepreneurs, once the events have taken place. On the other hand, this line of research would benefit from studies that determine what factors can increase the support of entrepreneurs for this type of event. Finally, this line of research could be pursued further with complementary studies associated with other types of events so as to contrast the conclusions obtained from this investigation.

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## Tables

Table 1. Assessment of short and long term effects associated with the event.

<b>Short term effects</b>	<b>Very negative</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Very positive</b>
Variation in sales in the short term	11%	21%	34%	30%	4%
Variation in the number of visitors in the short term	10%	19%	8%	45%	18%
Temporary diffusion of the mountain station's image	0%	2%	6%	18%	74%
<b>Long term effects</b>	<b>Very negative</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Very positive</b>
Variation in the number of visitors in the long term	0%	1%	68%	22%	9%
Change in the station's positioning	2%	2%	62%	24%	8%
Changes in the mountain station's international recognition	1%	1%	51%	35%	12%
Impacts on new source markets	1%	7%	47%	33%	12%
Contribution in promoting my business in the long term	0%	0%	64%	25%	11%

Table 2. Assessment of the event's impact by type of entrepreneur's activity.

<b>Contribution in promoting my business in the long term</b>	<b>Very negative</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Very positive</b>
Sporting goods trade	0%	0%	40%	39%	21%
Equipment rental business	0%	0%	52%	34%	14%
Restaurant and café business	0%	0%	81%	14%	5%
Accommodation	0%	0%	74%	19%	7%
Sports schools	0%	0%	65%	22%	13%
Others	0%	0%	72%	22%	6%

Table 3. Analysis of frequencies and words related to qualitative responses. Analysis of legacy.

<b>Legacy of the event</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Associated words</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Associated words</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>
Tourism promotion with long term impacts	15	Opening of new markets	4	Strengthen existing markets	11
Changes in the mountain station's projected image	16	Improved positioning in snowboarding	16	Capacity to organize future events	12
Changes in the projected image of Granada	15	Tourism/sport image	12	Increase in tourism flows	15
Return on investment in sports equipment	41	Positioning snowboarding	39	Differentiate from other stations	38
Promotion of winter sports in the home market	14	Attracting new sportsmen	12	Snowboard promotion	14
No long term legacy will be generated	8	The effect has been short term	6	The event was useless	3

Table 4. Analysis of frequencies and words related to qualitative responses. Negative opinions.

<b>Negative effects associated with the event</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Associated words</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Associated words</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>
Use of public funds	9	Expenditure with no clear effect	6	Waste	9
No benefit to the local economy	16	No long term benefit	12	Does not affect local companies	9
Interferes with life in the area	14	Reduction in sales	11	Customer inconvenience	8
Does not create added value for the station or the city of Granada	8	No clear effect	8	An occasional event	8