

Exploring Trends in Sports Event Research (2014–2023): A Bibliometric Analysis

Pham, Thanh Anh Khoa

Faculty of Sport Science, Ton Duc Thang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
|--|---|
| Published Online: 18 September 2024 | This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of sports event research from 2014 to 2023, using data from the Web of Science database. The research examines key trends, influential publications, prolific authors, and prevailing themes in the field. This study identifies the core areas of focus and emerging trends in sports event management, sustainability, and economic impacts through a detailed analysis of citations, co-authorship networks, and keyword co-occurrence. The results offer insights for researchers and practitioners interested in advancing knowledge in sports event planning, management, and legacy. |
| Corresponding Author: Pham, Thanh Anh Khoa | |
| KEYWORDS: Event, Sports, Tourism, Bibliometric, Trend | |

1. INTRODUCTION

Sports events, ranging from local competitions to global spectacles like the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, have become significant cultural, economic, and political phenomena. The growing commercialization of sports, alongside the increasing role of mega-events in promoting tourism and economic development, has generated considerable scholarly attention (Chalip, 2018; Preuss, 2019). These events often catalyze urban regeneration, infrastructural development, and international diplomacy, making them central to cities' and nations' strategies to enhance their global profile (Gratton et al., 2017).

The academic interest in sports events spans a range of disciplines, including management, tourism studies, urban planning, economics, and environmental science. Each field brings unique perspectives on hosting large-scale events' benefits, challenges, and long-term implications. For instance, while some studies focus on the immediate economic impacts, such as increased tourism and job creation (Smith, 2009), others delve into the long-term social and environmental consequences, including the legacy of unused infrastructure, environmental degradation, and community displacement (Müller, 2015).

The Rise of Mega-Events and Sports Tourism

Mega-events have emerged as focal points in the scholarly discourse on sports event management, particularly because of their potential to transform urban landscapes and influence regional economies. Events such as the Olympics or the FIFA World Cup require significant investment in infrastructure, including stadiums, transportation networks, and hospitality

facilities. These investments are often justified by the projected economic benefits, which include direct revenue from the events themselves and long-term increases in tourism and international visibility (Solberg & Preuss, 2021). Sports tourism, as a related field, examines the role of sports events in attracting international visitors and stimulating local economies. Chalip (2018) notes that sports events act as "tourist magnets," drawing spectators, athletes, and media professionals, all contributing to the economic boost associated with the event. However, the extent to which these financial benefits are realized and their distribution among different segments of society remains a topic of debate. Some researchers argue that the economic gains from hosting mega-events are often overstated, with the true financial winners being multinational corporations and global sports organizations rather than local communities (Preuss, 2019).

Sustainability and Legacy in Sports Event Research

In recent years, sustainability has become a critical theme in sports event research, reflecting broader societal concerns about environmental protection and social responsibility. The challenge of hosting environmentally sustainable events has led to significant academic inquiry into best practices for reducing carbon footprints, promoting green infrastructure, and ensuring social equity (Müller, 2015). Sustainability considerations now form a crucial part of the bidding process for hosting mega-events, with organizers under increasing pressure to demonstrate how their event will contribute to long-term environmental and social goals.

The concept of "legacy" has similarly gained prominence in the literature on sports events. Legacy refers to the positive

and negative long-term impacts of hosting an event in a city or country (Solberg & Preuss, 2021). Positive legacies include improved infrastructure, enhanced international reputation, and increased sports participation, while negative legacies can consist of financial burdens, underutilized facilities, and social displacement. Understanding the balance between these outcomes has become a focal point for researchers aiming to inform future event planning and policy decisions.

Bibliometric Analysis in Sports Event Research

Despite the wealth of studies on sports events, the field remains broad and fragmented, with research spread across multiple disciplines and subfields. Bibliometric analysis provides a powerful method for mapping the intellectual structure of sports event research, identifying key themes, influential studies, and collaboration networks. By analyzing citation patterns and keyword co-occurrence, bibliometric methods allow researchers to assess the evolution of research areas and detect emerging trends within the academic community (Donthu et al., 2021).

Previous bibliometric studies have been conducted in related areas such as sports management and tourism, but only some have focused specifically on sports event research. This gap in the literature provides an opportunity to systematically evaluate how the field has developed over time, which authors and institutions are driving innovation, and what new areas of inquiry are emerging (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Understanding these trends is crucial for academics and practitioners, as it helps guide future research, informs policy decisions, and supports the strategic planning of sports events.

Study Objectives

This paper aims to fill the gap by conducting a bibliometric analysis of sports event research from 2014 to 2023. Using data from the Web of Science database, the study will explore the publication trends, most cited articles, collaborative networks, and key research themes that have shaped the field in the past decade. Specifically, it will address the following research questions:

1. What are the primary research areas and themes in sports event research between 2014 and 2023?
2. Who are the most influential authors and institutions contributing to this field?
3. How have collaboration patterns among researchers evolved?
4. What emerging trends and future research directions can be identified?

Through this analysis, the study will provide valuable insights for researchers and practitioners interested in advancing the research and management of sports events, particularly in sustainability, economic impact, and legacy planning.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Data Collection

Data for this bibliometric analysis were retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection, which indexes peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers. The search terms included "sports event" from 2014–2023. A total of 1727 publications were identified after filtering based on inclusion criteria.

2.2. Bibliometric Analysis

The data were analyzed using VOSviewer (van Eck & Waltman, 2014). These tools enabled the visualization of keyword co-occurrence. The keyword analyses revealed collaboration patterns and emerging themes.

The core of the bibliometric analysis involved examining the co-occurrence of keywords within the dataset. Keywords are crucial indicators of a body of literature's main themes and topics. The co-occurrence analysis helps reveal relationships between different research topics and identifies which themes are emerging or gaining attention over time.

The keyword co-occurrence network was constructed using VOSviewer. In this network, nodes represent individual keywords, and the edges between them represent their co-occurrence in the same publication. Keywords frequently appearing in the literature are grouped into clusters, revealing major research themes in sports event studies.

In addition to keyword co-occurrence, the study explored collaboration patterns among authors, institutions, and countries. VOSviewer was used to create co-authorship networks, allowing the identification of the most influential authors and institutions in the field. These networks provide insights into the geographic distribution of research activity and the level of collaboration between different regions.

This analysis allowed us to visualize and explore several collaboration patterns and emerging themes. For instance, clusters related to sustainability, sports tourism, economic impacts, and event management were identified, indicating that these are key focus areas in recent sports event research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 General Publication Trends

The bibliometric analysis revealed that sports event research has experienced significant growth from 2014 to 2023 (Figure 1). A steady publication increase was observed, with notable peaks in 2019-2021. This trend suggests a growing academic interest in the field, which may be driven by the increasing prominence of mega-events such as the FIFA World Cup, Olympic Games, and other large-scale sports events that have significant global and local economic, social, and cultural impacts (Preuss, 2019; Solberg & Preuss, 2021).

“Exploring Trends in Sports Event Research (2014–2023): A Bibliometric Analysis”

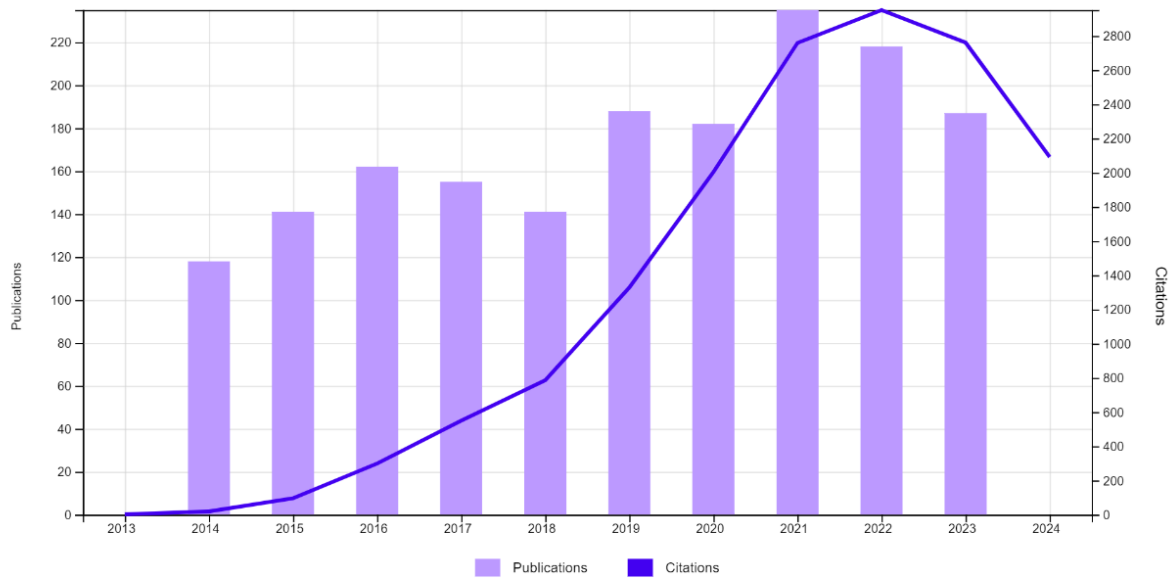


Figure 1. Research trend

The analysis identified several prominent journals in sports event research, with Event Management, Sustainability, and European Sports Management Quarterly leading the field regarding article output (Figure 2). These journals contribute

significantly to the dissemination of knowledge in sports event research and attract high-quality submissions from various disciplines, including tourism, management, and urban studies.

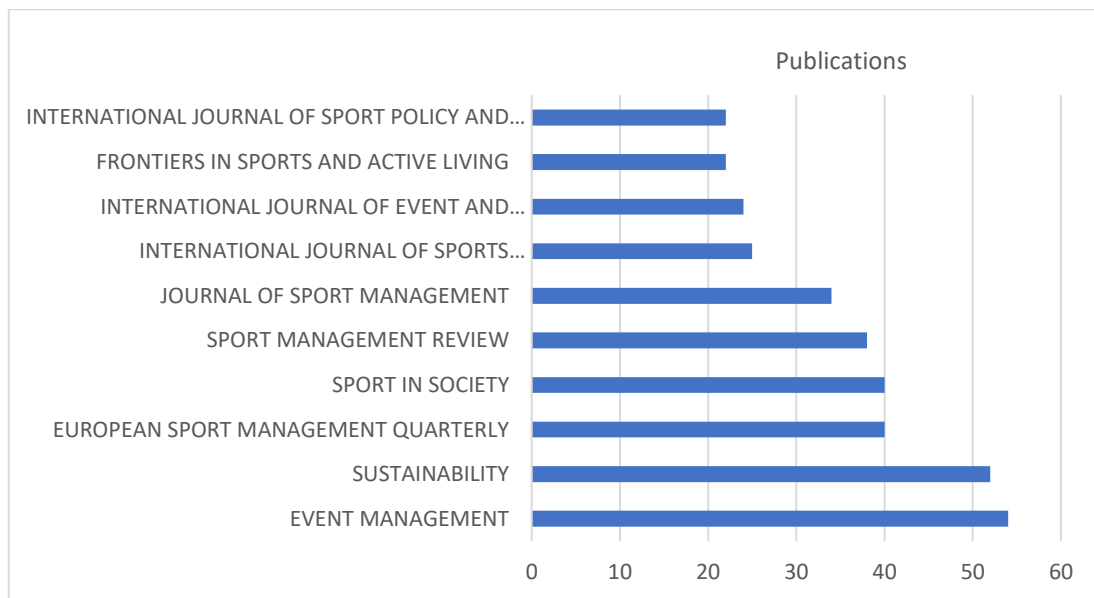


Figure 2. Top publication title

3.2 Most Influential Authors, Institutions and Countries

The data analysis highlighted the most influential authors and institutions contributing to sports event research (Figure 3). Parent M.M. and McGillivray D. emerged as leading figures, with a substantial number of publications and high citation counts. Their work often revolves around themes of economic

impacts, sustainability, and the legacy of mega-events, aligning with the broader focus of the field (Chalip, 2018; Müller, 2015).

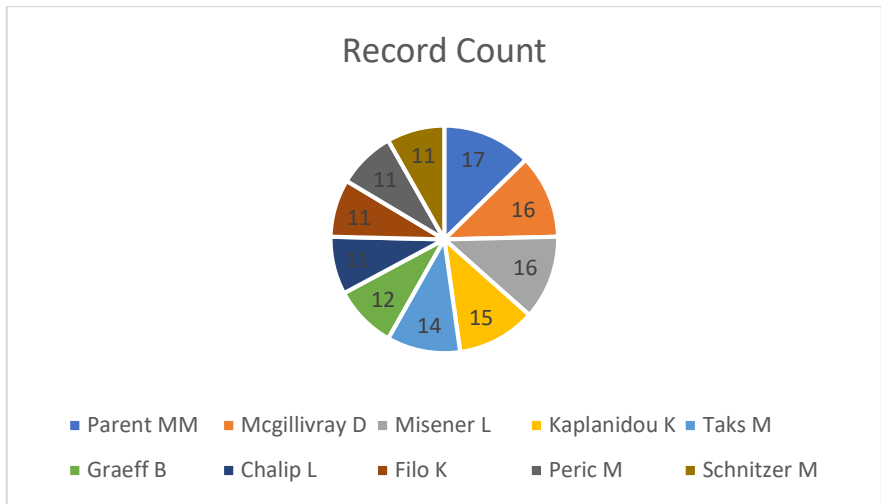


Figure 3. Author productivity

Regarding institutional contributions, universities from the USA, Australia, and Canada dominated the research landscape, with the State University System of Florida, Griffith University, and the University of Ottawa being

particularly prolific (Figure 4). These institutions have developed strong domestic and international collaborative networks, allowing them to shape research directions and influence policy debates around sports events.



Figure 4. Institutes efficiency

The bibliometric analysis of country contributions to sports event research from 2014 to 2023 highlights the dominance of certain countries in the field, as well as the geographic

distribution of scholarly activity. Table 1 presents the top 10 contributing countries in terms of the number of publications.

Table 1. Country efficiency

| Country | Publications | Percentage |
|-------------|--------------|------------|
| USA | 345 | 19,97% |
| China | 239 | 13,83% |
| England | 214 | 12,39% |
| Australia | 154 | 8,91% |
| Spain | 121 | 7,00% |
| Canada | 107 | 6,19% |
| South Korea | 71 | 4,11% |
| Germany | 67 | 3,88% |
| Brazil | 64 | 3,70% |
| Japan | 60 | 3,47% |

The USA emerged as the leading contributor to sports event research, accounting for 19.97% of the total publications. This dominance reflects the country's robust academic infrastructure and role as a hub for mega-sports events and research institutions. Universities such as [insert top universities] have significantly influenced the discourse on sports event management, economic impacts, and sports tourism, further reinforcing the USA's leadership in this area. China ranks second with 13.83% of total publications, reflecting its growing investment in both academic research and the hosting of sports events. The country's increasing focus on mega-events, such as the Beijing Olympics and other large-scale sports competitions, has driven scholarly interest in such events' economic, social, and cultural impacts. Chinese institutions, including [insert top universities in China], are contributing significantly to the development of this field, particularly in areas such as urban regeneration and tourism.

England follows closely with 12.39% of the total publications. English universities, including [insert top institutions], are recognized for their contributions to research on sports management, legacy, and the role of sports in urban and rural regeneration. The nation's long history of hosting major sports events, such as the London 2012 Olympics, has positioned it as a key player in both the practice and study of sports events.

Australia and Spain are also notable contributors to sports event research, with 8.91% and 7.00% of publications, respectively. Australia's focus on sports as a cultural and social phenomenon and its track record of hosting major sports events has helped shape research in areas such as sports tourism and sustainability (Smith, 2009). Spain's contributions are primarily related to sports events' economic and tourism impacts, emphasizing how such events can drive local development.

Brazil (3.70%) and South Korea (4.11%) are emerging markets gaining prominence in sports event research. These countries have hosted significant global events in recent years, including the FIFA World Cup, the Olympic Games in Brazil, and the Winter Olympics in South Korea. This has prompted a rise in academic interest in these regions, focusing on the social, economic, and cultural implications of hosting mega-sports events.

Other countries such as Canada, Germany, and Japan also contribute significantly to the field, with percentages ranging from 3.47% to 6.19%. These nations have strong academic networks and have hosted or bid for major sports events, contributing to a diverse body of literature that spans multiple dimensions of sports event studies.

The global distribution of sports event research reflects the significant role that certain countries, particularly the USA, China, and England, play in shaping the academic discourse. The dominance of these countries can be attributed to their institutional strengths, ability to host large-scale events, and

the growing demand for research on the impact of these events.

However, the increasing contributions from emerging markets like Brazil and South Korea highlight a shift in the global landscape of sports event research. These countries are beginning to play a more prominent role, driven by their experiences as hosts of mega-events and their interest in such events' social, economic, and environmental impacts.

While the USA, China, and England continue to lead, fostering greater collaboration between scholars from developed and emerging markets is crucial to diversifying the perspectives and approaches in sports event research. Such collaboration will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding sports events in different cultural and economic contexts.

3.3 Keyword Co-occurrence and Research Themes

The keyword co-occurrence analysis provided valuable insights into the main themes and evolving trends in sports event research (Figure 5). Using VOSviewer, the co-occurrence of keywords was mapped, revealing five major clusters.

Cluster 1 (Green): Sustainability and Legacy This cluster focused on the growing attention to sustainability in sports event management. Keywords such as "sustainability," "legacy," "carbon footprint," and "environmental impact" were prominent. Research in this area examines how sports events can minimize their environmental footprint while leaving a positive legacy for host communities (Müller, 2015). The increased attention to sustainability reflects global trends toward more responsible event planning and integrating environmental goals into large-scale events.

Cluster 2 (Yellow): Sports Tourism and Economic Impact The second major theme relates to sports tourism and its economic implications. Keywords such as "sports tourism," "economic impact," "tourism development," and "urban regeneration" dominated this cluster. These studies focus on the role of sports events in driving tourism, stimulating local economies, and creating long-term economic benefits for host cities (Chalip, 2018). The findings from this cluster show that sports events are increasingly being leveraged as tools for economic development and destination marketing.

Cluster 3 (Red): Behavior in Event Management. The third cluster centers on event management, with keywords such as "satisfaction," "behavior," "event management," "marketing," and "motivation" being highly represented. These studies emphasize the importance of strategic planning, branding, and effective stakeholder management in the success of behavior in sports events (Smith, 2009). Effective management and marketing have become essential to sports event satisfaction with growing competition among cities and nations to host mega-events.

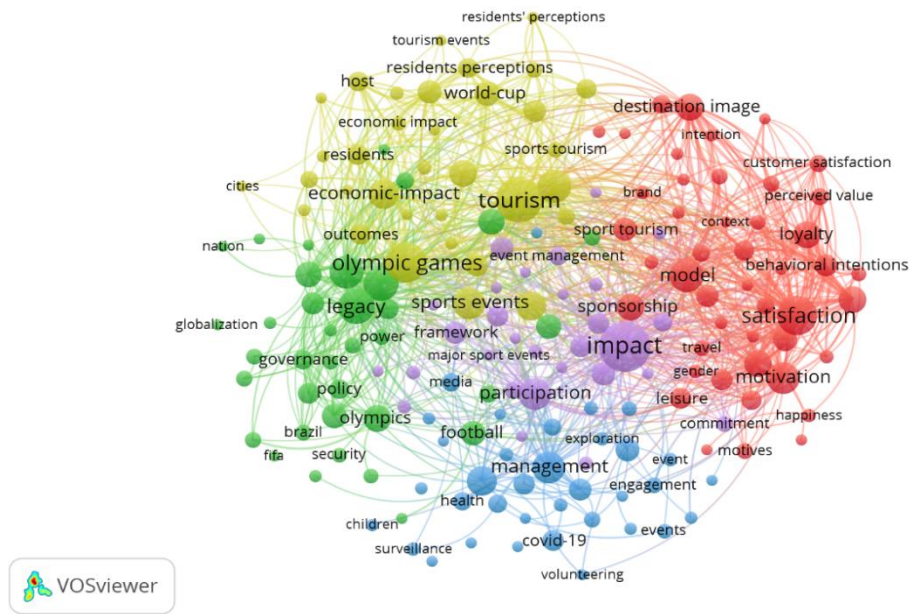


Figure 5. Keyword co-occurrence analysis

Cluster 4 (Purple): Social Impacts and Community Engagement Keywords in this cluster included "social impact," "community engagement," "volunteerism," and "social inclusion." Research in this area focuses on the broader social effects of sports events, particularly how they can foster community engagement, volunteerism, and social inclusion (Preuss, 2019). These studies highlight the potential of sports events to bring people together, promote social cohesion, and address issues of social inequality.

Cluster 5 (Blue): Health and Well-Being The final cluster revolves around the intersection of sports events and public health, with keywords like "well-being," "physical activity," and "health promotion." Research in this cluster investigates how sports events, particularly mass participation events like

marathons, can contribute to public health initiatives by encouraging physical activity and promoting healthy lifestyles (Solberg & Preuss, 2021).

3.4 Emerging Research Trends

Several emerging trends were identified in the keyword co-occurrence analysis (Figure 6). One notable trend is the increasing focus on **impact** and **sustainability**, not only in terms of environmental impact but also in terms of long-term social and economic legacies. As global awareness of climate change grows, researchers are increasingly exploring how sports events can reduce their carbon footprint while still delivering positive social outcomes. This aligns with the broader movement toward sustainable development in sports (Müller, 2015).

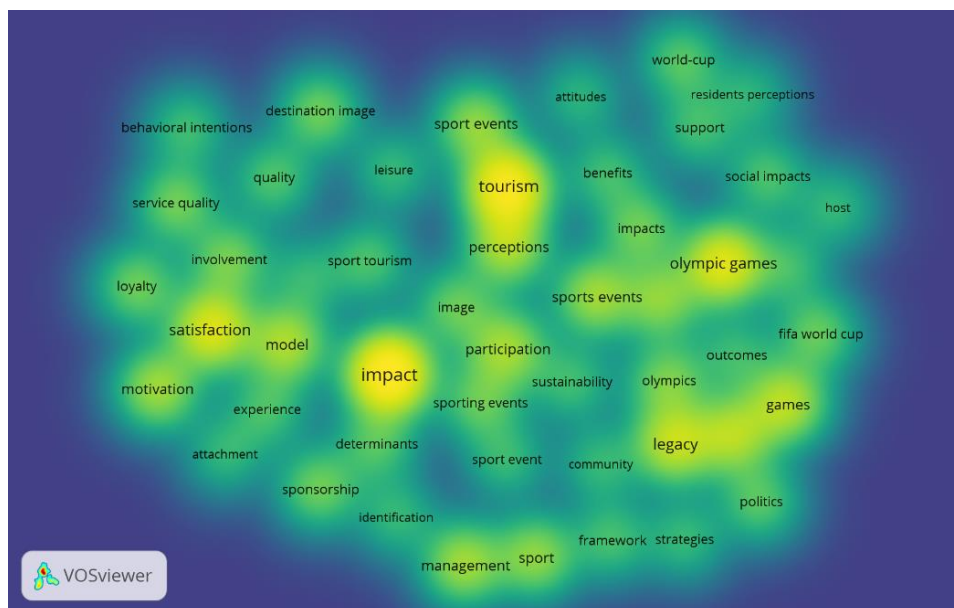


Figure 6. Heat map

Another key trend is the rise of sports tourism, a major area of inquiry. As countries and cities compete to host major sports events, there has been growing interest in understanding how these events can boost tourism, enhance city branding, and drive economic growth (Chalip, 2018). The keyword "sports tourism" was frequently linked with terms like "economic impact" and "urban development," indicating a strong relationship between tourism and broader economic considerations in the literature.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The bibliometric analysis of sports event research from 2014 to 2023 offers key insights into the field's growth, scope, and emerging trends. The steady increase in publications reflects a growing academic and practical interest in sports events, driven by hosting mega-events and their significant economic, social, and cultural impacts. The USA, China, and Canada are the leading contributors, with the USA holding a prominent position due to its robust academic infrastructure and frequent hosting of major sporting events. Emerging markets like Brazil and South Korea are also gaining attention as they host high-profile events, which has increased scholarly focus on these regions.

The analysis revealed that research is concentrated in more than just established academic hubs but increasingly involves diverse geographic contributions, indicating the globalization of sports event research. This global distribution highlights the importance of further fostering collaboration between scholars from different regions, particularly between developed and emerging markets, to diversify perspectives and approaches in sports event studies.

Regarding themes, the co-occurrence analysis identified key research areas such as sustainability, sports tourism, event management, social impact, and health and well-being. These themes suggest that future research will likely continue to explore the role of sports events in promoting sustainability, enhancing economic and tourism development, improving event management practices, and fostering community engagement. Moreover, the growing emphasis on health and well-being, especially about mass participation events, signals a broader trend toward examining the social benefits of sports events beyond their economic contributions.

The findings from this analysis underscore the dynamic nature of sports event research, shaped by the evolving interests of scholars and the demands of a changing global landscape. As the field expands, future research must address new challenges and opportunities, particularly those related to sustainability, social inclusion, and the long-term impacts of sports events on host communities.

REFERENCES

1. Aria, M., & Cuccurullo, C. (2017). Bibliometrix: An R-tool for comprehensive science mapping analysis. *Journal of Informetrics*, 11(4), 959-975.

2. Chalip, L. (2018). Event leverage: Building an event portfolio to foster sports development. *Journal of Sports Management*, 32(4), 371-383.
3. Donthu, N., Kumar, S., & Pattnaik, D. (2021). Forty-five years of Journal of Business Research: A bibliometric analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 132, 536-553.
4. Gratton, C., Shibli, S., & Coleman, R. (2017). Sports and economic regeneration in cities. *Urban Studies*, 42(10), 1235-1246.
5. Müller, M. (2015). What makes an event a mega-event? Definitions and sizes. *Leisure Studies*, 34(6), 627-642.
6. Preuss, H. (2019). Event legacy: Conceptualizing the legacy of mega sporting events. *Journal of Sports & Tourism*, 23(3), 181-195.
7. Smith, A. (2009). The economic impacts of major sports events. *Journal of Sports & Tourism*, 14(3), 209-229.
8. Solberg, H. A., & Preuss, H. (2021). Major sports events and long-term impacts: A systematic review. *Event Management*, 25(2), 265-284.
9. van Eck, N. J., & Waltman, L. (2014). Visualizing bibliometric networks. In *Measuring Scholarly Impact* (pp. 285-320). Springer.