Sport’s Events: Rally de Portugal as a Promoter of Porto Tourism Destination

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Abstract. The objective of this study was to evaluate the role of the Rally de Portugal in the tourism destination Porto, thus answering the question “What is the role of the Rally de Portugal in the tourism destination Porto?”.

In this study it was used a qualitative methodology, and the sampling method for convenience, according to the availability of the participants. Therefore, individual interviews were applied to two of the event organisers. The interview guide was divided into two sections: Planning and Organisation of the Rally de Portugal, and Porto as a Tourism Destination.

The holding of the Porto Street Stage has several positive impacts, being this event a successful one. However, for that to happen, it is necessary to follow three stages during the planning and organization of the event: budgeting, performance, and evaluation. This procedure takes over a year to manage, concerning the Rally de Portugal, or only a few months, regarding the Porto Street Stage. Events influence the economy, environment, culture, society, and politics of a destination [1]. Therefore, as the Rally de Portugal is an event, such influence is also present. However, there are no studies associated with the perspective of stakeholders on the Rally de Portugal as a promoter for the tourism destination Porto, justifying therefore the relevance of the present study.

Keywords: Rally de Portugal · Porto · Tourism destination · Events

1 Introduction

Having been considered by European Consumers Choice as the Best European Destination three times, in the years 2012, 2014 and 2017 [2], tourism is a vital part of the economy of Porto. Consequently, the city of Porto has gained international notoriety, thus contributing significantly to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [3].

According to the Regional Entity of Tourism of Oporto and Northern Portugal (ERTPNP – Entidade Regional de Turismo do Porto e Norte de Portugal), the tourism sector stands out in the economy of Oporto and Northern Portugal more than ever, significantly influencing the interest of visitors, both domestic and foreign. In addition, the Regional Entity of Tourism of Oporto and Northern Portugal (ERTPNP) also states
that this is due to the fact that tourism in the city of Porto is based on the existence of a cultural, historical, natural, and architectural heritage of unique character. Based on this, the ERTPNP developed a tourism marketing strategy for the period of 2015 to 2020. The main objectives of this strategy are to reinvigorate and adjust the quality of supply, improve the tourism indicators; establish an ideal of collaboration with stakeholders so that the destination can be strategically developed and promoted; make the destination more attractive and noticeable; and reduce the existing discrepancies between the sub-destinations [4]. It should be noted that since the implementation of the tourism marketing strategy, the region of Porto and the North of Portugal has grown as a tourism destination [5]. Moreover, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INE – Instituto Nacional de Estatística), the Portuguese region that economically grew the most in 2018 was the North. This growth was influenced by the industry, tourism, and energy, and manifested itself through the 2.9% increase in GDP [6].

It is therefore essential to continue attracting tourists to the city of Porto, and this may be one of the reasons why Porto hosts several events, thus relying on event tourism. One of the events that takes place in Porto is one of the stages of the Rally de Portugal, justifying the relevance of a study of its impact on Porto as a tourism destination. This is the focus of the present study, which is divided into several sections. First, this article presents a literature review on the subject presented, followed by the methodology applied in the study, the obtained results and, finally, the conclusions of the study.

2 Literature Review

Events are limited to a certain space and have a beginning and an end. As such, events are something unique and exclusive, being the reason behind their notoriety [7]. In addition, they can be considered as a tourism product, as they are increasingly popular [8]. Therefore, there is event tourism, being necessary to know its definition, its planning process, and the types of events.

In what matters to its definition, event tourism links the notion of “events” with that of “tourism” [9] and this phenomenon is appreciated by the community for strategic reasons [7], which then adopts a different behaviour than the one normal at the time of the events [10]. This is because event tourism consists of promoting demand and/or satisfying the needs of visitors by creating tourist attractions. Thus, the supply and demand sides must be taken into consideration. On the supply side, “destinations develop, facilitate and promote events of all kinds to meet multiple goals: to attract tourists (especially in the off-peak seasons), serve as a catalyst (for urban renewal, and for increasing the infrastructure and tourism capacity of the destination), to foster a positive destination image and contribute to general place marketing (including contributions to fostering a better place in which to live, work and invest), and to promote and improve specific attractions or areas” [11, pp. 405–406]. In addition, when events get tourists to the destination, there is a rise of local commerce and catering [12]. Demand, on the other hand, concerns consumer behaviour and the trips related to that event, more specifically the reasons why the consumer wanted to participate in the event and the effects that the characteristics of the trip had on the consumer [12]. Therefore, events influence the economy, environment, culture, society, and politics of a destination [1].
Regarding the planning phase, it should first be considered that events must be held during low season [13]. This is because “a larger tourism flow that the destination entails should be avoided” [14, p. 70]. In addition, there are other aspects to consider during the planning of an event, including: the target audience and the location where it will take place [14], considering the accessibility conditions to it, the accommodation that the destination may offer, the climate and tourist attractions, among others [13]. This is fundamental, since the image of the destination is an important factor for tourists, who have expectations about the destination [16]. Additionally, it should also provide a positive experience to the individual, so that they want to repeat the experience [15]. For this, it is necessary that the local government provides support regarding the event planning, whether it is economic funding or locations availability [16].

As for the types of events, these are distinguished by their size [18]: mega events [7, 8, 19, 20], major events [19], hallmark events [8, 18], and local/community events [8]. Mega events are the most important and the largest [7, 8]. As such, they attract a lot of visitors and capture attention worldwide [8], affecting the economy of the destination [19]. However, such events are of short duration [20]. Major events are those capable of attracting many individuals and bringing economic benefits to the destination. Therefore, they mostly focus on sport and cultural events [19]. In turn, hallmark events concern the location where the event takes place, creating a link between the location and the event [7, 8]. These serve to attract a larger number of individuals to a specific destination [8]. Examples are the Oktoberfest in Germany and the Carnaval do Rio de Janeiro in Brazil [19]. Finally, local/community events, also known as “small events” [21], arise from a specific set of people from a community who want to celebrate something related to their way of life and/or history. Thus, they are usually small and organized by volunteers and members of local organizations [8].

The Rally de Portugal is an event which began to be held in Portugal in 1967, under the name of “TAP Rally”, having been organized by Automóvel Club de Portugal (ACP). Six years after its debut, in 1973, the TAP Rally became part of the World Rally Championship, having been awarded in several editions. However, the International Automobile Federation withdrew the TAP Rally from the competition until 2007, when the ACP managed to get the Rally de Portugal back to the championship, and the World Rally Championship was held in Algarve. It was in this city and in Baixo Alentejo that this event was almost always held [22], having been confirmed, with the 2007 edition, that the event presents advantages and disadvantages for the tourism destination Algarve [23]. In 2015, the Rally de Portugal returned to the North and it was recorded a high level of competitiveness and success, aspects that have remained at a high level since then [22].

In addition to the fact that the Rally de Portugal is part of event tourism, it is also part of sport tourism. This type of tourism arose from the existence of an interception between contexts, activities and common practices in tourism and sport over time [24]. It should then be noted that sport tourism is based on two distinct areas of socioeconomic development, which are increasingly important and relate to each other. The first concerns tourism; one of the largest economic sectors in the world. The second relates to sports activities and events, which are globally influential [25]. As a consequence and considering the organization of mega events is strategically important for its positioning in the tourism market, this specific typology of tourism has been the
target of global attention and participation, with sports being considered as a channel of public diplomacy [26, 27]. Besides, one of the most important aspects associated with sport tourism is the location of the sport event [28].

The location where the event takes place influences the overall experience of a visitor [29]. In the case of sport tourists, this happens because their experiences result from their interaction with the location where the event takes place. These experiences should hence happen in locations different from the tourists’ homeland [30], so that the location will seem unique, and have differences and similarities from the tourist’s homeland. These aspects will then influence tourists’ experience [28], turning the location that hosts the event meaningful to the tourist [32]. This determines if a specific location is chosen for hosting the event. In addition, the location must also offer the necessary tourist infrastructures for the event to be successful [28]. Another aspect to take into consideration when choosing the location for the event is that the location must offer the necessary conditions to receive tourists who take part in the event [31].

Holding sport events in a specific location will also impact the destination, being the positive impacts reflected in the importance of holding sport events at the destination. First, the adoption of an active lifestyle through the practice of sport is encouraged, hence increasing society’s participation in sports [31, 37] and in the organization of the event [28]. Thus, there is a professionalization of sport [38], the improvement or construction of infrastructure and sports venues [31, 37, 39], the promotion of safety in urban infrastructure, and the creation of new sports programs [31, 37].

Secondly, there is a positive reinforcement of the international image of the location [2, 38, 40], both in marketing and opportunities [41–43]. This increases the quality of life of the destination society [2, 36] and the tourist influx of the destination [39, 40], fighting seasonality [28]. This is because the events are incomparable phenomena and their dimension attracts the attention of individuals from several countries [44]. An example of this is the Olympic Games, which attract many subjects to the destination where it takes place [38, 44, 45]. There are also some annual sport events that become tourist activities of the destination, being Formula 1 an example of this [46]. In addition, the destination receives not only the help of government and social organizations but also the participation of the community. This results in the attraction of many investments and in an increase in its innovative character, attracting individuals to the destination [44]. Therefore, sport events enable the countries where they take place to spread the cultural diversity and natural features of their tourist destinations [47], internationally positioning themselves [28].

Thirdly, the organization of sport events is reflected in a rise in the economy of the destination [2, 28, 35, 37, 38, 48–50], which results from the realization of the event and the support infrastructures [28]. Thus, the example of the Euro 2004, which took place in Portugal, is presented, since its realization reflected in a profit for the destination, while promoting the country internationally [51].

Finally, sport events promote positive values for society and a feeling of pride and self-esteem, promoting the common good, turning the destination modern and giving it the opportunity to demonstrate its economic dynamism, while also promoting peace [11]. With the organization and realization of the event, the destination also proves to be open to global influences and adaptable to any situation [28]. In addition, there is a stimulus to trade in products and services [31, 36], increased employment [28, 36, 38,
39] and wages [39], the expansion and improvement of technological structures (resulting in economic development), an increase in surveillance and police control technologies (resulting in a greater sense of security), and a focus on entrepreneurship [38]. As such, there is economic and urban restructuring (in devalued areas and in public roads and transport), and an increase in investment in the destination [38].

As for the negative impacts that events have on the destination, these happen at a socio-cultural and security level [33–35]. The insecurity factor links itself to crime and delinquency, which leads to a sense of tourist vulnerability. Nevertheless, this can be the tourists’ feeling, since they can be the cause of disturbances when participating in tourism events [36]. For example, fans who are problematic when supporting their teams and who cause problems with fans of other teams. In addition, there may be damage and some unexpected consequences resulting from the event. These negative impacts will influence both society and its tourism development [2].

Despite the reference of a study mentioning the advantages and disadvantages of holding the Rally de Portugal in Algarve, there are no studies associated with the perspective of stakeholders on the Rally de Portugal as a promoter for the tourism destination Porto, justifying therefore the relevance of the present study.

3 Methodology

This research focuses on answering the question “What is the role of the Rally de Portugal in the tourism destination Porto?” from the perspective of the destination’s stakeholders. Moreover, the main objective of this study was to evaluate the role of the Rally de Portugal in the tourism destination Porto. In this sense, a qualitative methodology was used, and the sampling method for convenience, according to the availability of the participants. Therefore, individual interviews were applied to two of the event organisers: to the Director of Communications of Ágora – Porto (E1) and to the General Secretary of ACP – Automóvel Club de Portugal (E2). The interview guide was divided into two sections: Planning and Organisation of the Rally de Portugal, and Porto as a Tourism Destination. However, the planning and organisation of this sport event was influenced by the global pandemic of the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak, thus being possible to assess the data results as from three categories: sport tourism, pandemic, and tourism destination Porto.

It is then possible to organize that data in Table 1, which is divided accordingly to the previously mentioned categories. This table contains the considered to be the most important questions asked during the interviews and the main conclusions that arose from the answers. Therefore, in some cases the participants are fully quoted, being referred to as “E1” and “E2”.

4 Results

Table 1 summarizes the results of the semi-structured interviews applied in this research, whose main encoders are sports tourism, the pandemic situation, and Porto as a tourism destination.
Table 1. Main conclusions retrieved from the interviews

| Category     | Question                                                                 | Conclusions                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sport Tourism| How long, on average, does it take to plan and organise the Rally de Portugal? | Regarding the Rally de Portugal it takes a “year and a half or two years” (E2) for the planning and organization of the event. However, the planning and organization of the Porto Street Stage begins in “January/February, until the end of May, when the Rally [de Portugal] takes place” (E1) |
|              | Who are the teams involved in organising the Rally de Portugal? Who are the partners in the destination involved in the organisation? | Ágora – Porto, ACP – Automóvel Club de Portugal, GO Porto, Protecção Civil (“National Emergency and Civil Protection Authority”), firefighters, INEM (“National Institute of Medical Emergency”), Municipal Police, PSP (“Public Security Police”), GNR (“National Republican Guard”), STCP (“Porto Public Transport”), Metro do Porto (“Subway of Porto), Comboios de Portugal (“Portuguese Railways”) (E1), Porto City Hall and International Automobile Federation (E2) |
|              | What stages do you identify in the process of planning and organising the Rally? | There are three stages: budgeting, performance, and evaluation (E1)                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|              | What is/are the main reason(s) that make(s) you organise the Rally de Portugal? | Tradition and international promotion of the tourism destination Porto (E1 and E2)                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|              | How did the organisation of the event have to adapt itself to Porto (regarding the resources that the city had to make available for the event)? | It was necessary to “design a circuit that would fit the city, that would also have some spectacular factor for the people watching, and that would also be exciting for the drivers. We have the area of Porto downtown, which has a very particular land surface” (E1) |

(continued)
### Table 1. (continued)

| Category         | Question                                                                 | Conclusions                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  | What do you think are the positive impacts of the Rally de Portugal?     | There is a big proximity between the viewers and the event itself (E1), an international promotion of the city, a rise in the economy of the city (E1/E2) and a rise in the stay duration of the viewers (which allows them to enjoy and get to know the destination) (E2) |
|                  | And the negative impacts?                                                | It is necessary to close roads (E1/E2), some people have difficulties in assisting the event and there is a negative impact on the Ecological Footprint (E2) |
|                  | Is there enough accommodation in the city to accommodate all the national and international committees, and the tourists who come for the event? | Most people involved in the event stay accommodated in Porto, due to the great number of hotels the city has to offer. Besides, the event takes place off season, which allows the city to have enough accommodation for everyone (E1). However, it should be considered that the hotel capacity in Porto decreases (E2) |
|                  | What practices of Environmental sustainability are considered when organising the Rally de Portugal? | There is an environmental certification that all the autarchies have with ACP (E1). Concerning the cars, they are much more environmentally friendly than a few years ago, and they are to be hybrids, and follow all sort of rules that protect the environment by 2022 (E2) |
|                  | How does the Porto Street Stage meet the needs and expectations of tourists? | “There is a very positive perception of who is coming here regarding the destination [Porto]. People would like to come back and perhaps have more time to get to know the city, particularly the Douro region, which is also very beautiful.” (E1) |
| Pandemic         | What impacts did the cancellation of Rally de Portugal, due to the current pandemic, have on the organisation of the event? | The impacts of the cancellation of the event were gigantic (E1), mostly concerning the (now lay-off) revenue that the event provided (E1 and E2) |
Based on the information presented on Table 1, it is possible to conclude that there are many aspects to consider when organizing and planning an event as great as the Rally de Portugal. Besides, Destination Management Organization’s (DMO’s) and stakeholders should also consider that the destination where the event takes place could be seen as a tourism destination.
5 Conclusion

Regarding the organization and planning of the Rally de Portugal, the participants of the present study mainly focused on the Porto Street Stage. First, while the Rally de Portugal takes more than a year to plan and organize, the organization and planning of the Porto Street Stage only begin a few months before the event. Secondly, it is necessary the involvement of several teams, which follow three stages during this process: budgeting, performance, and evaluation, while considering the environmental sustainability. The following of this process allows the destination to have enough accommodation for the teams involved and the viewers, as well as it is possible to satisfy the tourists’ needs and expectations. Therefore, the event is to be successful in a way that the destination where it takes place is internationally promoted, being this, one of its positive impacts, alongside the revenue that comes from it. However, there are also negative impacts that come from the holding of the Rally de Portugal, particularly in what concerns the destination residents’ lives, due to road blockage. Considering that the event did not take place this year due to the global pandemic, on the one hand, the residents of Porto did not have to deal with the negative impacts that come with the Rally de Portugal. On the other hand, there was no revenue to the destination, which must be considered a very negative impact.

Considering Porto as tourism destination, there were many characteristics of Porto mentioned by the participants of the study. It is known that Porto is a city with a significant history and that its community has a huge influence in the holding of the event. That is, since this community is great in hospitality and is extremely proud of and passionate about its city, in a way that is involved in the success of the Porto Street Stage. Nevertheless, this is not the only event that Porto holds which is successful. Therefore, the participants also selected some more events that are important for the city, being the New Year’s Eve and NOS Primavera Sound (a music festival) the most mentioned ones, already considered in previous studies [51, 52].

In conclusion, the holding of the Rally de Portugal is of high importance for Porto as a tourism destination, despite the negative impacts that come from it. Besides, it is known that the community of Porto is one of the reasons for the success of this event.

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