

Sport Tourism and the Economic Multiplier Effect: A Critical Review of Marathon Events and the Structural Challenges of Large-Scale Sport Event Management in Indonesia

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to critically examine how marathon events generate economic multiplier effects, identify the structural factors that limit these mechanisms in Indonesia, and propose strategic directions to strengthen marathon-based sport tourism.

Method: This research employs a critical literature review using peer-reviewed sources from Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. The review synthesizes 29 key references on sport tourism, economic impact, sustainability, governance, and destination branding. Thematic synthesis is used to analyse how multiplier effects operate and why they often underperform in the Indonesian context.

Result: The findings reveal three major themes. First, marathon events theoretically generate economic benefits through direct spending, supply-chain activation, induced income circulation, and long-term destination branding. Second, these mechanisms are constrained in Indonesia by leakage to non-local firms, weak MSME integration, short visitor stays, displacement effects, governance fragmentation, and limited community acceptance. Third, the study highlights strategic pathways including evidence-based evaluation, stronger local procurement, improved multi-stakeholder governance, enhanced participant experience, and community-driven branding to maximize economic outcomes.

Contribution: This study advances knowledge by integrating economic, governance, sustainability, and branding perspectives to explain why Indonesian marathon events yield modest multiplier effects. The review provides policymakers and event organizers with practical frameworks to improve event planning, strengthen local economic linkages, and support sustainable tourism development. It fills a gap in the literature by offering a structured, context-specific analysis of marathon events in an emerging tourism economy.

Keywords: marathon event, sport tourism, economic multiplier, governance, MSME integration

Introduction

Sport tourism has evolved into a strategic instrument for economic development and destination competitiveness, with marathon events increasingly recognized as high-impact drivers of tourism flows, city branding, and local economic stimulation. Prior research highlights that consumer behavior and service perception during major sport events can significantly influence tourist experiences and destination outcomes (Agrusa et al., 2009). Marathon events, in particular, have been shown to generate substantial socio-economic impacts through visitor expenditure, supply-chain activation, and long-term image enhancement (Lapeyronie, 2014; Papanikos, 2015). At the global level, mega-sport events and large participation races such as the Olympics, FIFA World Cup, and urban marathons have been widely analyzed for their economic benefits and sustainability implications, revealing both opportunities and tensions in how destinations leverage sport events for development (Al-Muhannadi et al., 2024; Parent, 2012; Toohey, 2008).



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From a theoretical perspective, economic impact and multiplier effects have been central to debates in sport-tourism literature. Early work by Preuss (2007) emphasizes that major sport events can shape long-term tourism impacts, while (Matheson, 2006) argues that economic benefits may be overstated due to displacement, substitution, and leakage effects. Similarly, Crompton & Love (1995) warn that commonly used evaluation models often inflate economic projections by failing to distinguish between gross and net benefits. These critiques highlight the need for more rigorous and context-specific analysis, Matheson (2006) especially in emerging tourism markets. Meanwhile, studies on recurring sport events demonstrate their ability to create place attachment, strengthen behavioral intentions, and contribute to destination image formation (Kiki et al., 2012; Yan, 2025). Marathon events thus operate at the intersection of economics, branding, and community identity, illustrating their multidimensional value for destinations.

In Indonesia, marathon events such as Borobudur Marathon, Maybank Bali Marathon, and Jakarta Marathon have gained prominence as part of national sport-tourism development. These events are strategically positioned to enhance destination attractiveness, stimulate MSME participation, and integrate cultural narratives into sport experiences (Pitanatri et al., 2025). However, empirical evaluations of their economic impact remain limited. Although marathons are often promoted as economic catalysts, challenges related to governance, stakeholder coordination, infrastructure readiness, and sustainability planning restrict their potential to generate significant multiplier effects. The Indonesian context presents several systemic barriers, including fragmented inter-agency collaboration, limited local supply-chain integration, regulatory inconsistencies, and uneven distribution of benefits among local communities issues also echoed in global studies on event sustainability and strategic planning (Kersulić et al., 2020).

Despite the growing volume of literature on sport events, critical assessments of how marathon events generate (or fail to generate) multiplier effects within developing tourism economies remain scarce. Few studies have examined Indonesia's marathon events from a structural perspective, particularly regarding economic leakage, MSME involvement, governance fragmentation, and participant experience disparities (Burke et al., 2025; Fredline, 2005). Furthermore, while international studies provide rich conceptual frameworks, their direct applicability to Indonesia is not well established, revealing a gap in context-specific critical analysis.

To fill this gap, the present study conducts a critical review of marathon events in Indonesia by synthesizing theoretical perspectives on sport tourism, economic multipliers, sustainability, destination image, and event governance. The objectives are: (1) to examine how marathon events theoretically generate economic multiplier effects; (2) to analyze the structural factors that constrain these mechanisms within the Indonesian context; and (3) to propose strategic directions to strengthen the economic and developmental impact of marathon-based sport tourism.

The main contribution of this study lies in its integration of economic, social, governance, and sustainability dimensions into a single analytical framework, enabling a deeper understanding of why marathon events in Indonesia produce modest or uneven economic impacts compared to global benchmarks. By identifying underlying structural barriers including leakage patterns, weak MSME integration, governance fragmentation, and inconsistent stakeholder coordination this paper advances the literature on sport-tourism development in emerging economies and provides actionable insights for policymakers, organizers, and destination managers.

Research Method

This study employs a critical literature review to examine how marathon events generate economic multiplier effects and to analyze the structural challenges that limit their development within the Indonesian tourism context. A critical review is appropriate because existing research on marathon economics in Indonesia remains fragmented and conceptually

dispersed, requiring integrated analysis across sport tourism, economic impact, governance, sustainability, and destination-branding perspectives. Relevant literature was collected through Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate using keywords such as sport tourism, marathon event, economic multiplier, leakage, event governance, destination image, and MSME integration. Inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed studies addressing marathon or mass-participation events, economic impact models, multiplier effects, sustainability considerations, stakeholder dynamics, and city-branding perspectives, resulting in the selection of 29 key references spanning 1995 to 2025.

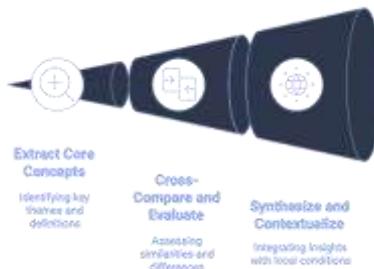


Figure 1. Research Analytical Procedure

Source: Author (2025)

The analytical procedure followed a thematic synthesis approach, beginning with the extraction of core concepts from each study, followed by cross-comparison to evaluate convergences, contradictions, and methodological limitations. The synthesis was then contextualized within Indonesia's unique structural conditions such as governance fragmentation, limited MSME integration, infrastructural constraints, and uneven participant experience to assess the real potential of marathon events in generating meaningful multiplier effects. As a literature-based study, this research does not include primary data collection; however, it provides a comprehensive conceptual foundation for future empirical work using economic modelling, participant surveys, or governance-network analysis.

Result and Discussion

The results of this critical literature review are organized into three major thematic findings, each of which directly addresses the research objectives of the study. These findings cover: (1) theoretical mechanisms through which marathon events generate economic multiplier effects, (2) structural factors constraining these mechanisms in the Indonesian context, and (3) strategic directions necessary to strengthen the economic and developmental contributions of marathon-based sport tourism. The discussion synthesizes insights from sport tourism, economic impact, sustainability, governance, and destination-branding literature.

Theoretical Mechanisms of Economic Multiplier Effects

The literature demonstrates that marathon events generate economic benefits through direct, indirect, and induced multiplier effects. Direct impacts result from participant and spectator spending on accommodation, food, transportation, race equipment, and leisure activities (Agrusa et al., 2009; Sato et al., 2014). Indirect impacts occur when this spending activates supply-chain linkages across logistics, timing systems, merchandising, printing, F&B provisioning, and event operations (Kersulić et al., 2020). Induced impacts emerge when employees and businesses reinject additional income into the local economy, contributing to broader regional welfare (Lapeyronie, 2014; Papanikos, 2015).

Marathon events also contribute to destination image and long-term tourism competitiveness. Recurring events strengthen perception, stimulate place attachment, and reinforce destination identity through the experiences of active sport tourists (Kiki et al., 2012; Yan, 2025). The growing role of new media further amplifies city branding potential, as collaborative content creation as seen in (Ma et al., 2023a, 2023b) can transform local

phenomena into national tourism assets. These elements collectively confirm that marathon events have strong theoretical capacity to generate significant economic multipliers and branding legacies, as also suggested by the long-term tourism impact perspectives of Preuss (2007).

Structural Constraints Limiting Multiplier Effects in Indonesia

Despite these theoretical benefits, multiple structural barriers hinder the realization of strong multiplier effects in Indonesia. Leakage emerges as a major constraint, as a large portion of marathon-related spending flows to non-local firms such as foreign-owned hotel chains, global sports brands, and imported event equipment suppliers (Crompton & Love, 1995). This prevents local economies from capturing the full value of tourism expenditure.

Limited MSME integration further weakens multiplier effects. Local businesses rarely enter core procurement streams because specialized event vendors and sponsor-affiliated suppliers dominate essential services (Kersulić et al., 2020). Thus, MSMEs often benefit only peripherally through small bazaars or pop-up stalls.

The short length of stay among domestic runners also restricts direct spending. Many participants travel briefly, spend minimally outside event zones, and do not extend their visit into cultural or leisure activities, consistent with spending patterns identified by Sato et al. (2014). Displacement effects, particularly in popular destinations such as Bali, further reduce net benefits, as regular tourists may avoid congested event weekends (Matheson, 2006).

Governance fragmentation compounds these challenges. Complex coordination among city authorities, police, tourism offices, transport agencies, health services, and private organizers often leads to inconsistent planning, procedural delays, and limited long-term strategizing (Parent, 2012; Toohey, 2008). Additionally, social acceptance issues ranging from road-closure complaints to unequal benefit distribution can undermine community support, thereby reducing sustainability (Fredline, 2005; Al-Muhannadi et al., 2024). These structural constraints collectively explain why Indonesia's marathon events frequently fall short of achieving the economic outcomes observed in more established sport-tourism destinations.

Strategic Directions to Strengthen Marathon-Based Tourism Development

The third thematic finding synthesizes strategic directions to improve event impact. First, evidence-based evaluation practices must be strengthened. Adopting rigorous economic methodologies that differentiate gross spending from net impact is crucial for realistic policymaking, especially given the cautions raised by Crompton and Love (1995), Matheson (2006).

Second, local economic linkages must be deepened. Event organizers should prioritize local procurement, integrate MSMEs into central supply chains, and develop clusters of local producers aligned with event needs, supporting recommendations by Kersulić et al. (2020) and Pitanatri et al. (2025).

Third, governance structures must be strengthened. Clear, stable, multi-stakeholder frameworks and multi-year agreements between event organizers, sponsors, and government agencies are essential to reducing uncertainty and improving service quality (Parent, 2012; Toohey, 2008). Fourth, improving participant experience and operational infrastructure including safety, transport, hydration systems, and heat management can enhance satisfaction and foster repeat visitation (Burke et al., 2025; Agrusa et al., 2009).

Finally, integrating marathons into inclusive city-branding strategies will reinforce identity and community participation. Collaborative storytelling, cultural integration, and resident involvement supported by findings from Ma et al. (2023a) and Yan (2025) can improve social acceptance and strengthen long-term tourism legacies.

Across these three themes, the review demonstrates that marathon events possess substantial theoretical capacity to produce economic multipliers; however, Indonesia faces significant structural challenges that limit these effects. Addressing leakage, MSME integration, governance fragmentation, and participant-experience gaps, while adopting evidence-based

planning and inclusive branding, represents a clear pathway to maximize the economic and developmental role of marathon events in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study advances understanding in sport tourism by critically examining how marathon events generate economic multiplier effects and why these mechanisms often underperform in Indonesia. By synthesizing literature on economic impact, sustainability, destination branding, and event governance, the review identifies key structural constraints including leakage to non-local firms, limited MSME integration, short visitor stays, displacement effects, and fragmented stakeholder coordination that restrict the developmental potential of marathon events. These findings provide a clearer conceptual foundation for policymakers and organizers to adopt more rigorous impact evaluations, strengthen local procurement systems, improve governance arrangements, enhance participant experience, and embed marathon events within inclusive city-branding strategies. This research, however, is limited by its reliance on secondary literature and the absence of primary empirical data from Indonesian marathon participants, communities, and institutions. Future studies should employ empirical approaches such as input-output modeling, CGE simulations, participant surveys, or governance-network analysis to measure actual economic flows and stakeholder dynamics. Comparative analyses across Indonesian cities or between Indonesia and established sport-tourism destinations will also be valuable in identifying best practices and contextual differences that can strengthen the long-term contribution of marathon events to national tourism development.

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