

## **Improving Sports Tourism with Technology**



Source: Pexels (2019)

### **Background**

Sports tourism is a rapidly growing sector within the hospitality industry, attracting millions of enthusiasts worldwide. The hosting of live sporting events not only contributes to local economies but also fosters cultural exchange. As technology advances, sports tourism has evolved in ways that enable fans to connect with their favourite sports like never before.

While sports tourism has already benefited from digital ticketing, tools to follow sporting events while enjoying the city have also become more accessible with mobile technology (FTN News, 2024). For example, with the launch of its Race Guide App, Formula 1 helps race lovers discover all there is to see and do through an interactive map showing points of interest such as grandstands, shops, hospitality suites, food stalls, car parks, and train stations around each circuit (Formula 1, n.d.). Such technology helps event participants receive live updates about the match and explore nearby attractions during event downtime.

Moreover, the viewership experience at live sporting events has been revolutionized by augmented reality (AR) technology. AR has been utilized to overlay real-time match information or player statistics over the ongoing match (HS Insider, 2024). In addition, AR has also been used to enhance fan experiences, such as the 'Pose with the Pros' photo booth created by the Dallas Cowboys (LinkedIn, 2021). These adaptations of AR technology not only enrich the live spectating experience for sports enthusiasts but also engage fans with opportunities to interact virtually with their favourite players.

On the other hand, virtual reality (VR) technology is capable of bringing the game to fans who cannot attend in person. For example, the Apple Vision Pro recently introduced a 3D Tabletop View feature within the official National Basketball Association (NBA) app, offering a real-time, 3D miniature perspective of the game alongside the standard broadcast (Apple Insider, 2025). This technology empowers fans to access live sporting events through VR and support their favourite teams without having to travel to the stadium.

### **Challenges**

Despite its ability to enhance the tourist experience, the integration of technology in sports tourism comes with several challenges. Not all sporting events are as popular or resourceful as Formula 1 or the NBA, making it difficult for smaller events to develop tech-savvy ancillary services. It is also

worth considering whether it is worthwhile to invest in costly technology for temporary events, such as the Olympics, since cities seldom get the chance to host similar events again. Additionally, while sporting events contribute to local economies by attracting visitors, the rise of VR spectatorship could contradict this principle. If fans are able to enjoy events from home through immersive technology, it may reduce the number of attendees at physical venues, potentially diminishing local economic benefits.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What factors have contributed to the rapid growth of sports tourism in recent years
2. How has the integration of mobile, AR, and VR technologies transformed the sports tourism experience for fans and local economies?
3. Should cities invest in expensive technology for temporary events like the Olympics? Why or why not?
4. How can sports organizations balance the benefits of physical attendance with the growing trend of virtual spectatorship to maximize both fan experience and economic impact?
5. What are some emerging trends in sports tourism that could shape the industry in the coming years?

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### **Keywords**

- Sports Tourism
- Mobile application
- Augmented reality (AR)
- Virtual reality (VR)
- Spectatorship
- Fan experience
- Event technology