Special Issue**Introducing Sport Tourism: New Challenges in a Globalized World**

Guest Editors:

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Sport tourism emerged in the last decade of the twentieth century as a set of practices belonging to both the fields of sport and tourism. "The intersections between these two social phenomena have been gradually increasing and, in this regard, sport tourism has become a field of interest recognized by both academia and commerce" (Melo & Sobry, 2017, p. 2). Sport tourism gained marked attention through a growing body of knowledge that was published specially from mid-1990s, by the publication of regular papers or special issues in scientific journals, and books (Melo & Sobry, 2017). Governments have also introduced sport tourism initiatives to encourage tourism related to sport, and the commercial sector is increasingly operating in this sector (Gibson, 2003). In line with the increased academic and practical attention to this form of tourism, higher education institutions have added sport tourism to their curricula (Gibson, 2003). Sport tourism theme is also now relatively well represented on the circuit of international conferences (Weed & Bull, 2004).

This special issue is the outcome of an invitation by the European Journal of Tourism Research to publish some of the best papers that resulted from the Sport Tourism Conference 2014 (STC'14) held at Coimbra Education School, Coimbra, Portugal, between the 10th and the 12th December 2014. This was the second edition of a series of conferences about sport tourism, developed within the scope of the International Research Network In Sport Tourism (IRNIST) - an international

network of academics and professionals working in the sport tourism field, created in 2010. The purpose of IRNIST is to develop international and interdisciplinary collaboration to create strategies and methodologies, and to disseminate knowledge, in order to enhance local sustainable development through sport tourism. STC'14 aimed to gather researchers, professors, students and professionals interested in sport tourism, to stimulate research and to disseminate scientific knowledge. It provided a platform for inter-disciplinary discussions and comparative approaches, enhancing knowledge and experience while promoting scholar cooperation and collaborative work between researchers from all over the world. STC'14 offered a wide variety of topics related to sport tourism studies within the theme of "Sport Tourism: New Challenges in a Globalized World". Thus, this special issue aims to reflect on the new challenges imposed by the globalized world. The eight papers included are expected to function as open doors for sharing knowledge and as a platform for reflection on these issues.

In the first paper, Sorina Cernaianu and Claude Sobry present a historical perspective about the development of winter sport tourism, before, during and after the communist regime in Romania. Based mainly on bibliographic documentation and statistical data, the study underlines especially the development of some particularities of winter sports tourism for each period of time, regarding infrastructure, ski resorts, winter sports competitions, legislation,

government or European policies. The authors conclude that the intense political, social and economic transformation experienced by Romania during the first years following the Revolution of 1989 led to a lower demand of tourism services which affected the development of winter sport tourism. However, in the recent years Romanian government is making a big effort to develop the ski activity which will positively influence the evolution of winter sports tourism.

The second paper, developed by Jasenka Kranjčević, aims at contributing to the discussion whether functional relationships existed between tourism and sport in the Croatian part of the Adriatic Sea in the late 19th and early 20th century as they do today and whether they were interconnected. In addition to contributing to the knowledge of the history of functional relationships between sport and tourism, the paper raises the question of how much the relationship between tourism and sport has changed in the last hundred years. The research contributes to a better understanding of sport tourism history, sport tourism heritage and sport as a touristic attraction.

Margarida Mascarenhas, Rita Silva and Elsa Pereira's paper aims to characterize the sports animation services offered by resorts in the Alentejo Coast, using semi-structured interviews for collecting data. The results show that the services of sporting activities in resorts located in this region are still underdeveloped. The majority of such resorts have a small amount of services, equipment and human resources, and the search for these services are meager, despite their gratuitousness nature. Results of this work allow presenting some recommendations for the management of sports services in the tourist offer of the region of Alentejo Coast.

In the fourth paper, João T. Lopes and Pedro Bicudo used Madeira Island as a case study for developing the topic of surfing tourism plan. Using the SOS – *Salvem o Surf* (Save the Surf) practical model, based in geography, geology and meteorology aspects, and support infrastructure and services, the study aimed to identify characteristics of Madeira's surf spots and surf industry services. The study provides

a better understanding of surf tourist's choice patterns, which benefits both surfers and the tourism industry, and allowed confirming that Madeira Island possesses several surf spots, with diverse degrees of difficulty, allowing surfing from beginner to advanced levels.

Ana Cristina Portugal, Francisco Campos, Fernando Martins and Ricardo Melo, in the fifth paper, seek to analyse sport tourism participation from the perspective of serious leisure in the context of surfing activities. Using an online questionnaire to a casual sample of surfers in Portugal, the study allowed confirming that surfers' present high levels of serious leisure, they have a strong disposition to travel for surfing, and value mainly the surfing natural conditions when choosing a surf travel destination. The data obtained provides important information that can be used to strengthen management strategies by surf tourism industry providers.

Eurobasket 2013 is the topic of the paper number six, developed by Miha Lesjak, Eva Podovšovnik Axelsson and Janez Mekinc. The authors examined the main reasons of sporting event spectators to visit Municipality of Koper, Slovenia, using questionnaires from international and domestic sport event tourism spectators. The authors concluded that older tourist and those coming from non-neighbouring countries are more likely to visit the country organising a major event than younger tourists coming from neighbouring countries. Results of this study enable regional and national tourism planners, event organizers, and destination tourism suppliers to prepare a strategic planning of tourism products for different segments of sport event tourists in the region.

In the seventh paper, Ana Lúcia Falcão, António Sérgio Damásio and Ricardo Melo present a work that aimed to understand geocaching participation. Collecting data from an online questionnaire, the study allowed determining the socio-demographic profile, travel behaviour and motivations of the Portuguese geocachers, and to examine if those variables are associated with socio-demographic characteristics of responding geocachers. The study allowed to confirm that geocachers present a strong disposition for

travelling, highlighting the potential of geocaching for sport tourism. The paper also presents a discussion about management and marketing implications for sport tourism operators and destinations.

The final paper in this special issue seeks to understand nature sports participation. Ricardo Melo and Rui Gomes surveyed 1126 Portuguese nature sports participants about their practice behaviours, motivations and constraints for participating in those activities. Despite nature sports are one of the fastest growing segments in active sport tourism, currently our knowledge of participation in these activities worldwide, and particular in Portugal, is limited and, in this regard, the data obtained in this study allows augmenting the management and marketing intelligence for owners and managers of nature sports-related businesses, as well as agencies and organizations promoting nature sports (tourism).

This special issue provides important theoretical and applied insights into sport tourism, contributing to expand the body of knowledge into this rapidly growing field, which is in constant change and challenged by globalization. Altogether these papers investigate some of the most important current research interests about sport tourism, and some of the challenges faced in a globalized world. As such, this special issue represents a valuable reference, providing an important understanding into this dynamic field for professors, students, researchers, and professionals.

References

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