

# Wimbledon and Beyond: A Data Snapshot of UK Sports Events and Their Impact

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## INTRODUCTION

The UK, often credited with inventing some of the world's most popular sports—such as football (or soccer, depending on which side of the Atlantic you're on), rugby, and tennis—has long been a global hub for sporting events. From tennis grand slams and historic motor races to world-class rugby matches and premier football fixtures, the UK has solidified its status as one of the top destinations for sports fans worldwide.

What's often overlooked, however, is the broader impact these events have on local economies. The sporting events sector alone accounts for **almost £9.753 billion** out of a **total £28.053 billion** spent on leisure and outdoor events in the UK, making it the top spending category within this subcategory (Source: [UK Events Report 2024](#)).

While these events undoubtedly draw large crowds, it's worth asking, what effect do they have on tourism? How do they influence local economies, visitor spending, and accommodation rates?



To better understand how major sporting events influence tourism in the UK this summer, we're exploring some of the country's top events and identifying the types of insights we can gather in terms of:

- **Visitor spending:** How much are people spending—and where? We explore how spending shifts around event dates and across categories like accommodation, food & beverage, and transport.
- **OTA rates and saturation:** Accommodation trends offer important clues. We examine how OTA rates and occupancy shift around venues.
- **Sentiment and popularity:** How does the public perception of a city or venue change in the lead-up to, during, and after a major event?

We've also included a set of actionable tips for those working in destination management, offering practical strategies to help destinations effectively prepare for and handle the challenges and opportunities presented by large-scale sporting events.

# THE BIG PICTURE:

## A summary of the event's impact by category based on spending

CATEGORY	Nº EVENTS	ATTENDANCE	TOTAL SPENDING
Sports	3,231	24.6M	£2.2 billion
Expos	2,005	12.1M	£1.5 billion
Concerts	14,569	15.9M	£1.1 billion
Festivals	2,725	10.9M	£715.1 million
Conferences	7,106	2.2M	£99 million

*Period analysed: April 2025 - October 2025*

**Sports events** lead the way in overall economic impact, generating £2.2 billion in spending across more than 3,200 events and attracting nearly 25.6 million attendees.

Despite having fewer events,  **expos** punch above their weight with £1.5 billion in predicted spend—suggesting high-value, business-focused audiences.

**Festivals** and **concerts** draw similarly large crowds (10–15 million), but their spending impact is comparatively lower, pointing to more budget-conscious or shorter-duration attendance.

**Conferences**, while numerous, have the lowest total spend, likely due to smaller-scale gatherings and limited public participation.

The data reveals a clear hierarchy: scale alone doesn't drive value—audience type, event format, and purpose all shape spending outcomes.

This breakdown shows that when it comes to economic impact, not all events are created equal.

It's not just about how many people show up—it's about who they are and why they're there. Expos, for example, host fewer people than sports or concerts but generate far more spend per head, likely due to business deals, networking, and longer stays.

Meanwhile, conferences and concerts may be high in volume but lower in per-capita spending. **For destinations and organisers, the insight is strategic: curating the right mix of events—those that attract high-value audiences or generate broad public engagement—can be far more effective than simply aiming for crowd numbers.**



# Top Events UK: Festivals vs. sporting events: A comparison of impact based on attendance and spending

Festivals and sports are the top two event types by attendance, and they can reveal a great deal about visitor behaviour, travel trends, and economic impact. Their ability to draw large, diverse crowds makes them especially valuable for understanding how different experiences drive tourism and for shaping more effective destination strategies.

## Top 10 events by attendance

TITLE	ATTENDANCE	SPENDING <u>TOTAL</u>	SPENDING <u>PER ATTENDANCE</u>
<b>Blackpool Illuminations</b> (festivals)	<b>3.5M</b>	<b>£185.9M</b>	<b>£53</b>
<b>Notting Hill Carnival</b> (festivals)	<b>2M</b>	<b>£177.8M</b>	<b>£89</b>
<b>London Pride Parade</b> (festivals)	<b>1M</b>	<b>£75.9M</b>	<b>£76</b>
<b>Pride in London</b> (festivals)	<b>1M</b>	<b>£70.5M</b>	<b>£70</b>
<b>TCS London Marathon</b> (sports)	<b>800K</b>	<b>£69.5M</b>	<b>£87</b>
<b>Wimbledon Tennis Championships (full)</b> (sports)	<b>526K</b>	<b>£224.8M</b>	<b>£427</b>
<b>Bristol International Balloon Fiesta</b> (festivals)	<b>500K</b>	<b>£28.8M</b>	<b>£58</b>
<b>British Grand Prix</b> (sports)	<b>480K</b>	<b>£188.6M</b>	<b>£393</b>
<b>BST Hyde Park</b> (festivals)	<b>450K</b>	<b>£40.0M</b>	<b>£89</b>
<b>Edinburgh Festival Fringe</b> (festivals)	<b>420K</b>	<b>£25.2M</b>	<b>£60</b>

Period analysed: April 2025 - October 2025

## Top 10 events by spending

TITLE	ATTENDANCE	PREDICTED SPENDING	SPENDING PER ATTENDANCE
<b>Wimbledon Tennis Championships</b> (Sports)	<b>526K</b>	<b>£224.8M</b>	<b>£427</b>
<b>British Grand Prix</b> (Sports)	<b>480K</b>	<b>£188.6M</b>	<b>£393</b>
<b>Blackpool Illuminations</b> (Festivals)	<b>3.5M</b>	<b>£185.9M</b>	<b>£53</b>
<b>Notting Hill Carnival</b> (Festivals)	<b>2M</b>	<b>£177.8M</b>	<b>£89</b>
<b>The Gemini Boat Race</b> (Sports)	<b>250K</b>	<b>£175.2M</b>	<b>£701</b>
<b>The Open Championship</b> (Sports)	<b>250K</b>	<b>£104.8M</b>	<b>£419</b>
<b>London Pride Parade</b> (Festivals)	<b>1M</b>	<b>£75.9M</b>	<b>£76</b>
<b>Pride in London</b> (Festivals)	<b>1M</b>	<b>£70.5M</b>	<b>£70</b>
<b>TCS London Marathon</b> (Sports)	<b>800K</b>	<b>£69.5M</b>	<b>£87</b>
<b>Randox Grand National</b> (Sports)	<b>150K</b>	<b>£57.8M</b>	<b>£385</b>

Period analysed: April 2025 - October 2025

When comparing the UK's most popular events, a clear divide emerges between festivals and sports: **festivals attract the biggest crowds**, while **sports events deliver the highest spending per person**. *Blackpool Illuminations*, *Notting Hill Carnival*, and *London Pride* top the charts for attendance, each drawing in between one and three million visitors. These events are free, open to all, and often deeply embedded in local culture—making them highly accessible to a broad audience, especially locals and day-trippers.

Sports events, on the other hand, attract fewer people but deliver significantly more in terms of economic impact. *Wimbledon* is expected to generate over £224 million from just over half a million attendees—amounting to £426 per attendance.

Other major events like the British Grand Prix and The Open Championship follow the same pattern. These events typically involve ticketed entry, planned travel, and overnight stays, resulting in much higher individual spending.

The **structure and duration** of the events also play a key role. Multi-day sporting events, such as tennis tournaments or golf championships, create opportunities for extended stays and sustained spending in the local area. In contrast, many festivals are either one-day affairs or spread over time in a way that doesn't require continuous presence—visitors come and go, often without the need for accommodation or significant purchases.

There's also a **difference in intent**. Festivals are often about celebration, community, and cultural expression. They create atmosphere and identity, helping build civic pride and destination appeal. Sports events are more commercially structured, appealing to dedicated fans and international audiences. They rely on fewer visitors but make up for it with higher yields per person, media coverage, and global reach.

Generally speaking, **festivals bring scale, while sports bring spend**. Cities and destinations benefit from both: festivals amplify brand and visibility, fostering inclusivity and engagement; sports events deliver strong economic returns and attract high-value tourism. A well-rounded event strategy doesn't pit them against each other—it leverages their different strengths.



# Top-spender sports events and the UK: Key insights from their economic impact

We're now taking a closer look at some of the UK's biggest sports events. By examining the top 5 events in terms of predicted spending, we can uncover valuable insights into how these events impact local economies, tourism, and hospitality.

The data highlights the different ways events drive spending and the broader financial benefits they bring to cities and regions.

It also helps us understand how event organisers can maximise the economic impact by targeting the right audience and offering the right experiences.

## Top 5 sports events based on spending

*Period analysed: April 2025 - October 2025*

	ATTENDANCE	PREDICTED SPENDING HOSPITALITY	PREDICTED SPENDING F&B	PREDICTED SPENDING TRANSPORTATION	PREDICTED SPENDING TOTAL
Wimbledon Tennis Championships <small>From June 30 to July 13, 2025</small>	526,455	£155.3M	£60.0M	£9.5M	£224.8M
British Grand Prix <small>From July 4 to July 6, 2025</small>	480,000	£143.6M	£39.5M	£5.5M	£188.6M
The Gemini Boat Race <small>April 13, 2025</small>	250,000	£138.8M	£32.7M	£3.7M	£175.2M
The Open Championship <small>From July 13 to July 20</small>	250,000	£82.1M	£19.8M	£2.9M	£104.8M
TCS London Marathon <small>July 27, 2025</small>	800,000	£21.0M	£35.7M	£11.9M	£69.5M

## Event spending: No one-size-fits-all

Wimbledon tops the list of UK sporting events by predicted spending, drawing over **£224 million** over almost two weeks—driven largely by its premium hospitality offering, which alone accounts for **£155 million**.

Closely following is the *British Grand Prix*, with a total predicted spend of **£188 million**, 76% of which is also dedicated to hospitality, reflecting its status as a high-end spectator event.

Surprisingly, *The Gemini Boat Race*—despite a smaller crowd of **250,000**—ranks third in overall spend (**£175 million**), indicating an exceptionally high per capita investment, especially in hospitality. This is probably due to the event's exclusive nature, attracting high-net-worth individuals, including alumni and supporters from prestigious universities. The smaller, engaged crowd spends significantly on premium hospitality, VIP experiences, and bespoke services, boosting per capita spending.

In contrast, The Open Championship and the *TCS London Marathon* show more balanced spending profiles, with the latter standing out for its massive attendance (**800,000**) and high transport and F&B costs, pointing to its broader public appeal and city-wide footprint.



These figures highlight how different formats and audience profiles shape spending patterns—whether through exclusive experiences, city-scale participation, or heritage appeal.

So, what does this all mean?

Simply put, not all sports events drive economic impact in the same way.

While some, like Wimbledon and the British Grand Prix, rely heavily on premium hospitality and exclusive experiences, others like the TCS London Marathon generate value through sheer volume and public engagement.

The Gemini Boat Race stands out as a niche, high-spend event despite lower attendance—highlighting the power of concentrated, affluent audiences.

For cities, sponsors, and event organisers, the takeaway is clear: understanding the unique spending dynamics of each event is key to maximising both revenue and reach.

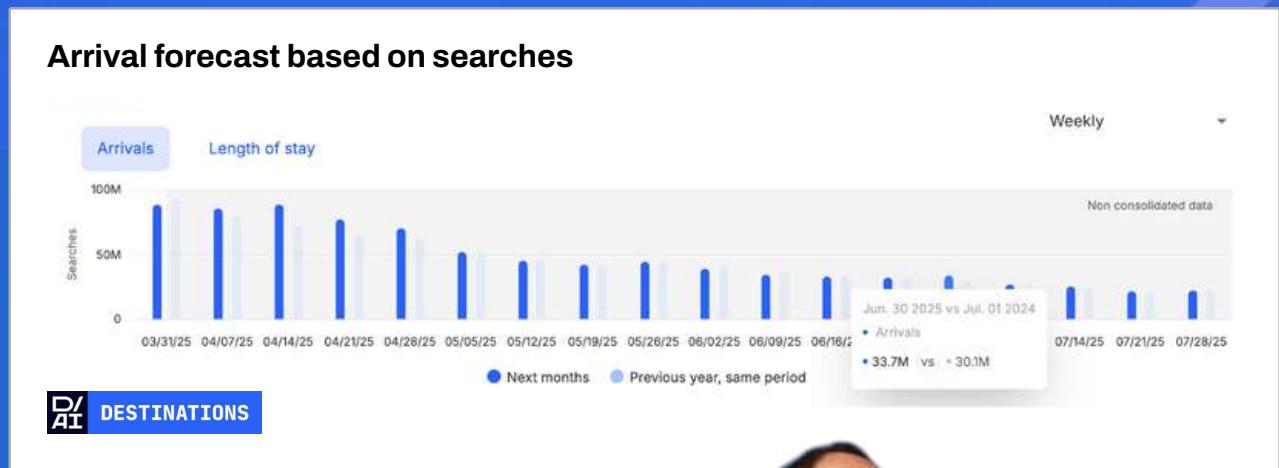


## Flight data: The dual impact of elite travellers and local audiences

### Wimbledon (30 June – 7 July)

Despite a **slight dip in arrivals the week before** the event, *Wimbledon* still saw a net increase of **+3 million travellers compared to the same period in 2024**, reinforcing its global appeal. This suggests a strong international pull, with late bookings potentially reflecting confidence in flexible travel or a high-spend audience that books closer to the date.

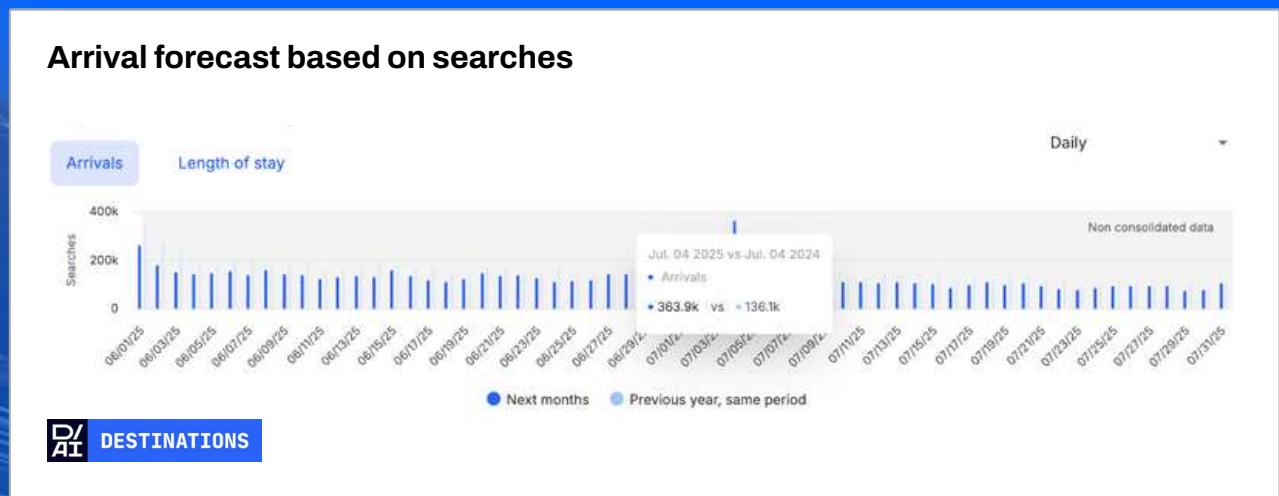
Destinations could leverage this “elite late-booker” behaviour by optimising last-minute luxury offerings and private concierge services in the lead-up.



## British Grand Prix (4–6 July)

Arrivals into Birmingham are expected to triple year-on-year on July 4, reflecting both the draw of the Grand Prix and a coinciding spike from U.S. travellers celebrating Independence Day.

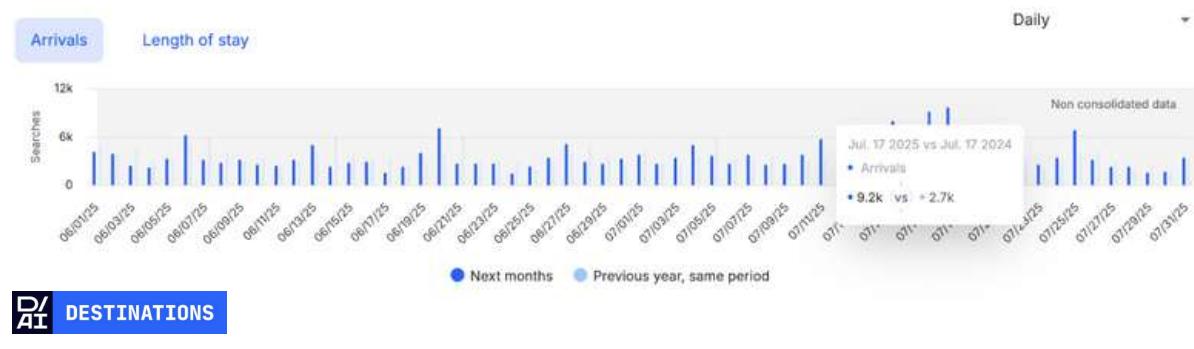
Multi-event weekends (sports and cultural) can amplify travel volumes. DMOs could explore marketing tandem experiences for peak ROI, especially when international calendars align.



## *The Open Championship (16–20 July, Royal Portrush)*

Travel to Derry surges ahead of this event, despite the remote location. Even rural areas can capture international traffic with the right infrastructure and pre-event visibility. A single world-class venue can drive regional awareness—if supported by transport, storytelling, and accommodation.

### Arrival forecast based on searches



### *Events with no flight uplift:*

*Gemini Boat Race* and *London Marathon* don't show air travel peaks, possibly because they rely on local audiences or domestic train/bus networks (especially Gemini boat race which is between Cambridge University Boat Club and the Oxford University Boat Club).

These events may still have significant impact—just not on long-haul markets. Targeting regional travellers and focusing on ground mobility data may yield more useful insights here.

# OTA saturation/rates: Accommodation pressure and booking patterns

Accommodation data reveals fascinating contrasts between **supply saturation** and **rate behaviours**, giving insight into how travellers book—and how destinations respond.

## Wimbledon

By March 2025, OTA saturation was already **extremely high** for the tournament dates—but surprisingly, rates were lower than expected.

There seems to be a disconnect between what's listed and what's actually booked, likely because high-spending visitors often use private channels, corporate packages, or member-only clubs. This means traditional metrics, especially those from OTAs, may underestimate the true economic impact.

Many properties, due to the event's historical importance, prefer to sell rooms directly and limit their OTA allotments to avoid commission fees. To gain a more accurate understanding, it's essential to incorporate tailored hospitality data alongside the standard metrics.

### Average rates and OTA saturation



## The Open Championship

Despite its distance from Derry Airport, OTA rates and saturation rise across the area.

High-value events extend their influence **beyond the immediate venue**, creating regional lift. This highlights an opportunity for **satellite towns to benefit**—if they're marketed correctly and transport is streamlined.

### Average rates and OTA saturation



## London Marathon

Accommodation rates in London show a **broad peak from April to mid-June**, suggesting the Marathon contributes to a seasonal uplift.

### Average rates and OTA saturation



While not as flashy as other events, marathons bring stable, predictable demand—especially among repeat participants. Cities can use this to build long-term loyalty packages tied to annual endurance events.

## OTA data gaps

No OTA insights were available for the British Grand Prix, Gemini Boat Race, or other events outside London.

This might reflect a **data blind spot in regional and rural areas**, where accommodations may be listed on alternative platforms or managed independently. Cities and venues in these areas should consider **data partnerships** to fill in the picture.

## Sentiment and popularity – How people felt about the event

### Wimbledon

With sentiment rising from 85 to 92, Wimbledon clearly delivers an emotional and reputational boost. This uplift likely reflects the tournament's unique blend of tradition, world-class competition, and premium experiences—from its seamless organisation to its iconic setting and global visibility. Its reputation as a polished, high-end event attracts both loyal fans and high-profile guests, reinforcing its place as a cultural staple in the UK's summer calendar and deepening its emotional pull year after year.

Wimbledon Sentiment & Popularity



## *No measurable sentiment uplift: Marathon, Boat Race, Grand Prix*

These events showed little to no change in sentiment. But that's not necessarily a negative outcome. For destinations, high foot traffic often increases the risk of negative sentiment due to operational friction like crowding or delays. In that context, holding steady is a win. While a sentiment lift is always preferable, stability under pressure still reflects success.

**In some cases, low emotional engagement may stem from the nature of the event itself—more observational than immersive—or from limited digital and social amplification.** Carefully curated, contained experiences like Wimbledon tend to generate stronger emotional responses and clearer online signals than sprawling public events. This highlights an important point: attendance alone doesn't define impact—the quality and design of the experience matter just as much.

That's especially true for large-scale sports events. While they bring substantial economic benefits, they can also place significant strain on local infrastructure and communities. Striking the right balance means designing experiences that not only attract crowds but also sustain positive sentiment and minimize disruption. Growth and preservation must go hand in hand.



## ***Data and sports events: actionable insights***

How can destinations ensure an exceptional experience for participants while safeguarding the environment and quality of life for residents?

Data plays a pivotal role in managing events at the destination level. Real-time data analysis and insights provide valuable information that helps optimize event planning. Here are some actionable suggestions based on data insights:

### **Prepare for crowd dynamics with predictive data**

Large sports events can attract massive crowds, often with significant variations in attendance at different times. Using data-driven insights, destinations can predict crowd sizes and movement patterns, allowing for better crowd control, safety measures, and more efficient use of resources. This ensures a smooth experience for both visitors and local residents.

### **Optimise infrastructure and public services for increased demand**

High attendance at sports events puts pressure on local infrastructure and public services. Data analysis can help identify areas most affected by large crowds, allowing cities to scale services such as waste management, transportation, and utilities in real-time. By anticipating service demands, destinations can provide a higher level of service without overwhelming their systems.

### **Support local businesses with targeted resource allocation**

Understanding the flow of visitors and their spending behaviour enables cities to direct resources where they are most needed. By focusing on high-footfall areas and tracking where the highest spending takes place, local businesses can be supported more effectively. This also helps maximise revenue opportunities without creating bottlenecks.



## **Implement sustainable practices and minimise environmental impact**

Sports events often have significant environmental impacts, especially in terms of waste and transportation. By analysing real-time data, cities can optimize waste management systems, transport routes, and energy usage. Sustainable practices, such as limiting emissions and promoting eco-friendly transportation options, are essential to ensure that large-scale events leave a minimal environmental footprint.



## **Collect and analyse post-event feedback for future improvements**

After any large sports event, collecting feedback from attendees and local residents provides valuable insights into what worked well and what didn't. Analysing this data helps refine strategies for future events, ensuring that both the visitor experience and the local community's well-being are continuously improved.



## **Plan for higher-spending visitors by customising offerings**

Sports events often attract visitors with higher spending potential, whether it's for premium seating, hospitality services, or local experiences. By analysing visitor demographics and spending habits, destinations can tailor offerings to meet these expectations, ensuring that high-spending attendees have an exceptional experience while boosting local revenues.

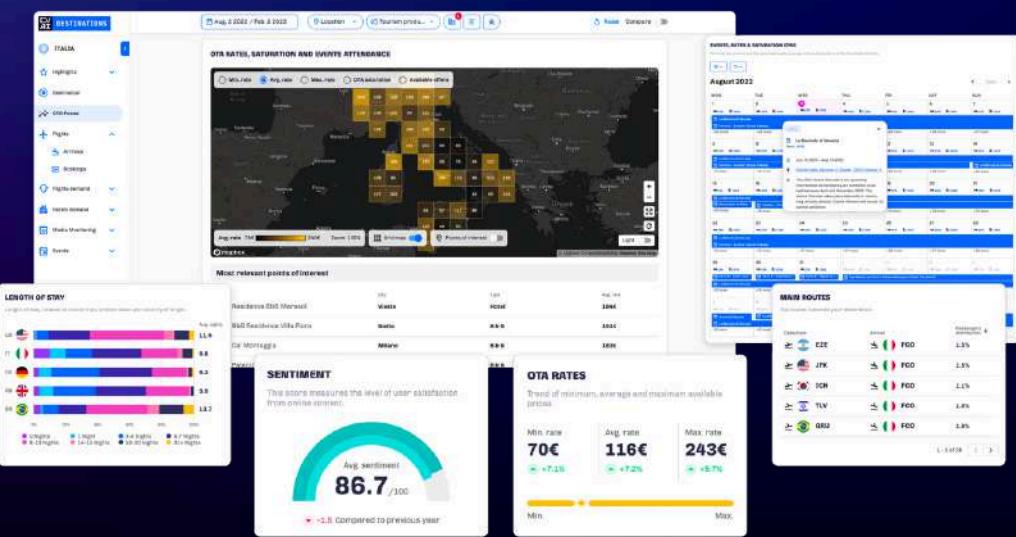
These suggestions are designed to help cities and destinations manage large-scale sports events effectively by using data to anticipate challenges, enhance the visitor experience, and ensure sustainable practices that protect both the environment and the local community.

**By integrating these data-driven strategies, destinations can not only host successful sports events but also maintain a balance that supports both the economic vitality of the area and the well-being of its residents.**

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