

Concepts and Patterns of Destination Leadership and Their Application in Sports Tourism: A Scoping Review

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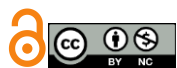
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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to conduct a scoping review of research related to the concepts, models, and capabilities of leadership in tourism destinations, particularly in the context of sports tourism, and to address questions that can contribute to leadership development in these destinations.

Methodology: The research method was designed based on the five-step framework by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), with data extracted from three credible databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, and reviewed following PRISMA guidelines. After eliminating duplicates and applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 48 articles were selected for final analysis.

Findings: Results indicate that researchers are increasingly focused on a novel paradigm emphasizing network leadership over individualistic and hierarchical models. However, no unified or shared definition of leadership in tourism destinations has emerged. Leadership models proposed for success in tourism destinations include systemic, distributed, collective, and shared leadership. Additionally, essential capabilities for destination leadership include networking, analytical skills, influence, economic acumen, vision development, strategic planning, and generating enthusiasm. Finally, the relationship between sports and tourism destinations can be analyzed through three dimensions: "destination as a product" (active sports tourism), "venue for product delivery" (sporting events), and "part of the product package" (sports as a destination attraction).

Conclusion: Within the framework of the network relationship paradigm, three leadership models—inter-organizational, inter-sectoral, and intra-sectoral—can be proposed.

Keywords: *destination leadership, sports tourism, stakeholders, scoping review, stakeholders*

1 Introduction

Sports tourism, as one of the specific and dynamic branches of the tourism industry in recent years, is growing rapidly. According to estimates, this sector is experiencing an annual growth rate of over 14%, and by 2030, the number of sports tourists will increase significantly (Cheng et al., 2023). Since sports tourism involves sporting activities and events that can be considered an integral part of the tourism destination, effective management of sports tourism destinations emerges as a key challenge in this domain (Ronaghi et al., 2024; Taherkhani et al., 2024). This management must specifically focus on the destination's impact on tourists' experiences and on how destination stakeholders interact (Cronjé & du Plessis, 2020). Accordingly, there is a growing need for effective leadership models and frameworks in sports tourism destinations. Destination leadership, particularly in the context of sports tourism, is among the novel and complex concepts in tourism studies, yet there is still no comprehensive, unified definition for it. Some studies have referred to models such as systemic, distributed, shared, and collective leadership, all of which could be applied to tourism destination leadership. However, none of these models has been specifically tested in sports tourism. Meanwhile, many studies have focused on individualistic and hierarchical leadership patterns; yet, given the complexities of interactions among various stakeholders in sports tourism destinations, attention to network-based and multilateral leadership models appears more necessary than ever (Fyall & Garrod, 2020). Alongside attention to leadership models, another issue concerns the capabilities required for effective leadership in sports tourism destinations. These capabilities include networking, analytical skills, influence, economic acumen, and vision development, all of which can be beneficial in successful management of sports tourism destinations and in maintaining their competitive advantage (Huang et al., 2023). These capabilities not only help destination managers identify and address future challenges but also enable them to secure new advantages for attracting sports tourists within an increasingly competitive market. Additionally, given the rising global competition among sports tourism destinations, analyzing the relationship between sports and destinations from different perspectives is crucial. Sports tourism destinations, as a combination of locations hosting sporting

events, can bolster destination branding and attract tourists. Hosting sporting events is recognized as one of the key tools for attracting tourists and creating a distinctive experience (Morfoulaki et al., 2023). Therefore, accurately understanding these relationships can help destination managers develop better strategies for advancing sports tourism and enhancing tourists' experiences.

Researchers argue that destinations act as a pull factor in attracting tourists, influencing them in answering questions such as "Where to go?", "How long to stay?", and "What can be done?" (Lee & Xue, 2020). Given this critical role, the concept of destination has evolved over time. Evidence suggests that early research primarily focused on the geographical features of tourism destinations (Jovicic, 2016). From this viewpoint, in addition to understanding the destination as a geographical area, tourism destinations must meet specific criteria—such as attractions, accommodations, and transportation to, from, and within the destination—to be considered successful (Pearce et al., 2008; Pearce, 1992). Consequently, by considering this set of criteria, destinations were perceived as an aggregate of attractions and services. This perspective, which emphasized the individual or combined supply of hospitality and tourism services, did not adequately acknowledge the importance of stakeholder collaboration or the role of tourists as key players, thus framing tourism destinations merely as territories for providing travel and accommodation services (Jovicic, 2016).

In the second viewpoint, the idea of an industrial district is presented as a suitable model for understanding destination development, particularly where multiple tourism attractions, businesses, and services are located to generate wealth, employment, and well-being for local communities. Adapted from Marshall's industrial district model (1920), this approach envisions travel and tourism industries—often small or medium-sized—in close proximity, supported by the rationale that service clusters must collaborate, and local communities play a vital role. As a result, the tourism destination is considered a tourism industrial district (Hjalager, 2000). Nevertheless, since the product offered in tourism destinations is often intangible and non-storable—differentiating it from typical industrial goods (Vanhove, 2005)—and given that tourism destinations rely on tourists' creative participation/consumers in experiencing locally based cultural products, researchers like Russo and Segre (2009)

have further expanded the definition of industrial districts to emphasize the importance of cultural, physical, and social dimensions of destinations, highlighting the need for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and skill-sharing among diverse stakeholders (Russo & Segre, 2009).

In the next step, and in the mid-1990s, researchers began promoting a systemic approach in tourism, emphasizing a more holistic understanding of destinations. Accordingly, tourism destinations came to be viewed as a collection of businesses providing services under certain degrees of cooperation and competition among stakeholders and needing to be managed to ensure sustainable development. In a more comprehensive definition offered by the research community, the tourism destination is seen as a market-based system in which, on the demand side, tourists activate production mechanisms, and on the supply side, destination actors facilitate holiday experiences through first-level resources (e.g., nature and culture) and second-level resources (e.g., infrastructure and tourism services), thereby involving tourists and destination actors in co-producing an experience (Reinhold et al., 2023). This model pays closer attention to the economic, legal, cultural, environmental, and technological aspects of the tourism process. Faced with environmental instability and less predictable variables, destinations are regarded more complexly as open, dynamic, and adaptive networks in which system components may be nonlinearly interconnected. Consequently, a change caused by certain external/internal factors in one subsystem does not necessarily match the same change in other subsystems or arise from the same factors; when numerous nonlinear relationships exist in such a complex system, predicting stakeholder behavior becomes challenging yet more essential (Backer & Hing, 2023).

Although studies have highlighted the diversity of objectives and motivations in sports tourism and the need for segmentation (Hungenberg et al., 2016; Terzić et al., 2021), similar to other sectors of the tourism industry, destinations play a highly significant role in shaping the experience of a sports trip (Moradi et al., 2022; Sato et al., 2018). The relationship between sports and destinations is twofold: on one hand, by providing products and services that meet the needs of sports tourists, destinations play an essential role in tourists' enjoyment of a trip or in their decision-making (Chen et al., 2023); on the other hand, previous studies have described sporting events as catalysts for tourism, effective tools for destination branding, and producers of financial, social, and environmental impacts related to tourism in host destinations (Bazzanella et al., 2023; Kennelly & Toohey,

2014). However, it seems that combining destination services with the requirements of hosting sporting events increases both the volume and complexity of stakeholder relationships. Similar to delivering memorable services in destinations, a successful event also requires an efficient and effective stakeholder network behind it (Parent, 2008; Parent & Séguin, 2008). Accordingly, in the sports event literature, stakeholder relationships are considered either to understand event success or failure (Parent & Séguin, 2008) or as part of tourism outcomes associated with those events (Sallent et al., 2011). At the same time, in certain instances, the unsuccessful relationship between sports and tourism sectors, particularly concerning large-scale sporting events—despite their recognized tourism potential—becomes evident. Sports tourism partnerships emerging around large-scale sporting events are often short-term, uncoordinated, or in some cases practically absent (Kennelly & Toohey, 2014; Weed, 2003).

According to Beritelli and Bieger (2014), the literature on leadership in the context of tourism destinations is limited and has only begun to be directly emphasized in destination studies since early 2000 (Beritelli & Bieger, 2014; Beritelli et al., 2007). Similarly, some researchers underscore that leadership in tourism has not yet received sufficient attention (Hristov et al., 2018; Hristov & Ramkissoon, 2016; Hristov & Zehrer, 2015; Pechlaner et al., 2014). As a result, it is believed that explaining collaborative mechanisms in the leadership process is necessary for achieving a well-functioning system or network capable of generating effective outcomes for the destination. Some research findings indicate that the concept of leadership in tourism destinations is fluid and can rest in the hands of an individual, an organization, or even the destination community itself. For example, in emerging destinations, leadership may be attributed to a dominant entrepreneur if a destination management organization is not deliberately in place (Zmyslony, 2014). Another study by Beritelli and colleagues (2007) revealed that in twelve destinations in the Swiss Alps, two main forms of governance models exist, each requiring different leadership styles. These models were labeled as corporate and community-based. Corporate-based destinations were primarily influenced by one or more major companies with significant power bases. Community-based destinations were influenced by social networks shaped by interpersonal relationships and the level of trust among network actors (Beritelli et al., 2007).

For several decades, scientific debates on tourism destinations mainly focused on their marketing,

management, and, more recently, on their governance. All three approaches have contributed to a better understanding of the structures and processes that enable more efficient and effective coordination, planning, and marketing of tourism destinations (Pechlaner et al., 2014). However, it has become increasingly clear that achieving these goals depends not solely on structures, institutions, and processes. For instance, including leading entrepreneurs at the destination level remains an urgent matter. Additionally, understanding who is capable and willing to lead destinations may explain differences in competitive strength among destinations, particularly in times of economic turbulence. Thus, within the scope of this scoping review, the present examination seeks to identify and analyze the existing literature on destination leadership and integrate it with sports tourism. The expectation is that the findings of this research will first contribute to the tourism destination literature through identifying and synthesizing various leadership studies, and second, based on its results, propose a research agenda to pinpoint future directions and opportunities for destination leadership studies in sports tourism.

Since previous studies have emphasized the importance of destination leadership in the tourism industry, the question of how effective leadership models can be applied in sports tourism remains unanswered. The existing research gap in this area includes the absence of a shared definition of destination leadership, the lack of a comprehensive and practical model for implementing leadership in sports tourism, and insufficient attention to the role of communication and interactions among different stakeholders in this particular type of tourism.

Considering the complex, multifaceted dimensions of leadership in sports tourism destinations, this research seeks to answer the questions of which leadership concepts and models can contribute to the development and success of sports tourism destinations and how these models can be utilized to create synergy and cooperation among diverse stakeholders. This study also aims to identify the essential capabilities for effective leadership in sports tourism destinations and assess how they influence tourist attraction and the enhancement of sports travel experiences.

2 Methods and Materials

A scoping review is an ideal tool for determining the scope or coverage of a body of literature on a given topic, providing a clear indication of the volume of literature and existing studies, as well as a broad (or detailed) overview of

the topic (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Scoping reviews are particularly useful for exploring emerging evidence when it is not yet clear what more specific questions might be posed or addressed through a more precise systematic review (Munn et al., 2018). Essentially, a scoping review is a preliminary synthesis of knowledge used to chart a scholarly path on a topic and identify key concepts, theories, sources, and research gaps (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015).

This study followed a five-stage framework introduced by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), which includes: (1) identifying the initial research questions, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) selecting studies, (4) charting the data, and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

In the first stage, the focus of this review was on conceptualizing the models and capacities of destination leadership and their impact on the effectiveness of governance and management practices. To ensure that a substantial range of relevant literature was captured, the following research questions were formulated to guide the search:

- How is destination leadership conceptualized in the tourism literature?
- Are there specific models proposed for destination leadership in tourism?
- What capabilities does the existing literature identify as essential for destination leadership?
- How is the relationship between tourism destinations and sports formulated?
- How can knowledge related to destination leadership be extended to sports tourism?

In the second stage, and to collect an "appropriate coverage" of existing literature, a broad definition of keywords for search terms was adopted (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Key concepts and search phrases were selected to gather literature related to destination leadership. Thus, combinations of search terms included "destination leader," "tourism destination leader," "sport tourism destination," and "sport event destination" in titles/abstracts/keywords. The first two search terms were designed to address the first three research questions, while the latter terms guided findings related to the fourth and fifth research questions:

"destination leader*" OR "tourism destination leader*" OR "sport tourism destination*" OR "sport event destination*"

In the third stage, 314 articles were identified using the defined search descriptors. Of these, 167 duplicate articles were removed across the databases. In the next step, 27 relevant studies were identified based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Full-text versions of the articles were

obtained, and each article was reviewed and approved by the authors as needed. This process allowed for the identification of additional relevant literature through reference list reviews, leading to the inclusion of 21 more articles in the final list, bringing the total to 48 articles.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Reviewed Articles

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Justification
Articles focused on destination leadership in tourism	Articles not focused on the concept, model, or capabilities of destination leadership	Peer-reviewed articles ensure reliability and validity
Peer-reviewed full articles published in indexed journals	Viewpoints, editorials, book chapters, books, theses, dissertations, research notes, and conference proceedings	English is the primary language for publishing scientific articles
Articles written in English	Articles not written in English	Outside the scope of the study

The fourth stage of the scoping review framework involved charting the selected articles. A summary of each article was prepared, including author(s), year, study location, study design, study methods, sample size, and brief notes on the limitations and recommendations of the selected studies.

In the fifth stage, the findings are reported.

3 Findings and Results

The first question of this review addressed the conceptualization of leadership in tourism destinations. A summary of viewpoints for formulating the concept of destination leadership in tourism is presented in [Table 2](#). Overall, it appears that researchers tend to avoid using a fixed, enumerated definition for destination leadership and instead emphasize key elements, the necessity of “context-dependent leadership,” and its dynamic nature. One major reason for not having a standardized, framed definition may be the fluid nature of leadership and the emergence of organizational leadership networks under formal structures. On the other hand, leadership is reflected in shaping the direction of destination management and development by

engaging a network of diverse destination management organizations in essential issues such as power and influence, communication, and leadership motivation ([Stilling Blichfeldt et al., 2014](#)).

In this regard, there is a primary emphasis on paradigm change ([Pechlaner et al., 2014](#)). This implies a shift in leadership from an individual-centric model to a collective process. From this perspective, rather than focusing on an individual leadership role, attention is given to how intertwined relationships among members and networks are guided, influencing overall performance outcomes. This process can involve peer leadership networks for resource access, organizational leadership networks to increase performance and influence, policy-field leadership networks that shape the environment, and bottom-up collective local leadership networks that emerge through self-organization ([Hristov et al., 2018](#)). Therefore, any form of network leadership (described in the discussion of models) is proposed to inspire, enhance, and promote the capacity of destination stakeholders and contribute to improved outcomes ranging from individual benefits to the sustainable development of tourism destinations and the well-being of local communities.

Table 2

Summary of Definitions for Leadership in Tourism Destinations

Source	Conceptualization
Beritelli & Bieger (2014), Haven-Tang & Jones (2012), Kozak et al. (2014), Bennett et al. (2003), Hristov & Zehrer (2015)	An influence relationship between destination leaders, followers, and stakeholders aimed at shaping the direction of destination management and development through stakeholder collaboration and by engaging a network of diverse destination management organizations to achieve a common goal and shape the destination's future.
Platow et al. (2015), Fang, Nguyen, & Armstrong (2022), Komppula (2016)	A process that not only inspires others with a vision and direction but also engages and empowers them to take collective and sustainable action in pursuing sustainable development goals through shared resources and unified destination offerings.

Hristov & Zehrer (2019), Bennett et al. (2003), Naumov, Ramkissoon, & Hristov (2021), Zehrer et al. (2014)

A paradigm shift from individual leadership to collective forms of leadership, emphasizing collaborative and network-based processes that align with emerging management practices and the dynamic nature of tourism destinations.

In response to the second question, the review of articles indicates that since delivering a total product to visitors depends on how stakeholders interact with one another, all proposed models of destination leadership are influenced by the understanding of stakeholder performance, collaboration, and its significant implications for managing tourism destinations. Table 3 lists and explains four models to which authors have most frequently referred. Similar to the presented definitions, all models emphasize moving away from traditional and hierarchical views toward a network-oriented approach. Leadership networks originate from the broader organizational literature and promote strategic collaboration to achieve results and organizational or network-wide impact (Hristov et al., 2018).

This concept can be extended to destination management organizations and defined leadership networks, along with

the broader policy framework of organizations that hold interest in the destination and participate in its leadership. Consequently, leadership at the organizational level and across destination management organizations becomes a collective activity, entailing a fluid sharing of leadership roles that is integrated into formal governance structures (Hristov & Ramkissoon, 2016). From this standpoint, leadership in destination management organizations is viewed as a symbol of collectivism, in which all network members have the opportunity to shape the strategic direction of the destination. Leaders accept that different and distinctive perspectives on destination management, governance, and leadership can complement one another (Hristov et al., 2018).

Table 3

Proposed Models of Leadership in Tourism Destinations

Leadership Model	Explanation
Shared Leadership	Rather than a single person imposing power and knowledge on others, this model focuses on shared power and knowledge among individuals (C. L. Pearce, Conger, & Locke, 2008). The literature shows that shared leadership is built around high-performing teams. As organizations change their structural patterns, teams replace hierarchies (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009).
Collective Leadership	A dynamic process in which a defined leader, or set of leaders, selectively utilizes the skills and expertise within a network as needed. In other words, the formal leader's role remains relevant and important, but unlike the traditional hierarchical status, the leader shares various leadership roles or supports others in emerging as informal leaders (Friedrich, Griffith, & Mumford, 2016).
Distributed Leadership	Distributed leadership primarily focuses on leadership functions rather than roles. It equates to shared, collective, and broad-based leadership action that generates the capacity for change and improvement. Distributed leadership involves mobilizing leadership functions at all levels of tourism destinations to create greater opportunities for transformation and build capacity for progress (Naumov, Ramkissoon, & Hristov, 2021).
Systemic Leadership	In this approach, the focus is not solely on individuals or internal organizational issues but rather on the inter-organizational perspective. Therefore, systemic leadership can be useful in understanding destinations that consist of multiple stakeholders with varied and often diverging interests, yet still influence one another and ultimately aim for destination development (Beritelli & Bieger, 2014).
References	Valente et al. (2015), Hristov & Naumov (2015), Coles et al. (2014), Beritelli & Bieger (2014), Zmyslony (2014), Hristov & Zehrer (2019), Naumov, Ramkissoon, & Hristov (2021), Fang, Armstrong, et al. (2017)

The third question pertained to the capabilities that leaders of tourism destinations need to possess. In regional development, capability is defined as the ability to address a particular issue and as the capacity to use existing resources and create new ones (Sotarauta, 2016). The core capabilities of leaders identified in the literature include networking, analytical abilities, influence capacity, developing a vision for the destination, and influencing stakeholders by motivating change, along with economic potential and legitimacy (Zmyslony, 2014).

The reviewed literature does not compare the priority or weight of these capabilities. It appears that, just as the preferred leadership style may depend on the specific context of each destination, the mentioned capabilities may also vary depending on the life cycle stage of a destination, for instance, mobilizing followers for destination development, fostering collaboration and innovation, exchanging information, or implementing joint projects. Table 4 lists the types and explanations of capabilities emphasized by researchers.

Table 4*Essential Capabilities for Destination Leadership*

Leadership Dimension (Capability)	Features Emphasized
Networking	Stakeholder communication; collaboration; bringing stakeholders together; engagement skills; linking; coordination; stakeholder involvement; promoting inter-sectoral connections; establishing an organizational environment; fostering cooperation
Analytical	Planning considerations; thinking in the destination context; long-term perspective analysis; risk calculation ability; sharing the mission; ability to perceive a network horizon; and outlining the potential for achieving a sustainable destination advantage
Influence	Initiative for development; impacting stakeholders; facilitating tourism development; inspiring followers; knowledge sharing; creating shared knowledge; recognizing the importance of collaborative actions; being innovative; agency; integrating toward higher collaboration; and personal talent
Economic	Financial resources; economic power and role in a destination; position in the tourism value chain and in financing a destination
Legitimacy/Reputation	Reputation; credibility; trust; acceptance by others
Excitement Generation	Creating creative tension between dominant thought patterns and the necessity to be different; dreaming; ability to achieve short-term success to maintain motivation within the network; ability to spur actors to a “development rebellion;” motivating individuals to engage in various developmental efforts
Vision Development	Capacity to present a vision of a different future; creating a sense of urgency; combining developmental efforts with a sense of urgency, a credible story, and credible people
Inspiration	Mobilizing people and resources in a non-prescriptive process across intra- and inter-organizational boundaries to fulfill a shared dream
References	Zmyslony (2014), Pechlaner, Kozak, & Volgger (2014), Fang, M., Nguyen, T. H., & Armstrong, A. (2022), Kozak, Volgger, & Pechlaner (2014)

To address the fourth and fifth questions, no article was found that directly focused on “leadership in sports tourism destinations” by title. However, coastal, mountain, and rural destinations, which either have sports tourism capacities or are specifically considered sports tourism destinations, have been the subject of research (Beritelli & Bieger, 2014; Beritelli et al., 2007; Saraniemi & Komppula, 2019; Zmyslony, 2014).

In extending the literature on leadership to sports tourism and answering the fifth question, it is noteworthy that while early attempts to conceptualize sports tourism grappled with prioritizing or merging sports and tourism as distinct social constructs, over time and through researchers’ efforts, various forms of sports tourism and diverse types of sports tourists have been recognized (Gibson et al., 2012; Gibson et al., 2018).

Research now confirms that, first, demand for sports tourism does not consist of a homogeneous group of individuals with identical motivations (Terzić et al., 2021). Therefore, if destination managers aim to achieve greater benefits, they must determine a mix of services related to sports tourism by identifying the reasons for travelers’ journeys (Ito & Higham, 2020). Second, since differentiating motivations highlights an important distinction between “sports tourism” and “tourism sport,” destination managers and marketers must identify the

primary and secondary motives behind consumer behavior (Gammon & Robinson, 1997; Robinson & Gammon, 2004).

According to this notion, the relationship between tourism and sports can be categorized based on the primary and secondary reasons for travel. In sports tourism, sports serve as the main motivation for travel, and individuals or groups journey outside their usual environment, staying in destinations to participate actively or passively in competitive or recreational sports. In this definition of sports tourism, tourists include both those who actively or passively engage in a competitive sports event and those who travel primarily for active recreational participation in a chosen sport. By contrast, “tourism sport” applies to individuals for whom holiday or visitation is the main motivation for travel, yet as a secondary activity, they actively or passively participate in a competitive or recreational sport (Robinson & Gammon, 2004).

Based on this motivation and tourist classification, the relationship between destinations and sports can be envisioned in three ways:

1. **Destination as the Main Product in Sports Tourism:** The notion of the destination as the main product is not new, yet it bears special importance in sports tourism. According to various tourism development models, a destination is defined as a fusion of products and services available in one place, capable of attracting visitors from beyond its

spatial boundaries. However, because tourism is not just a collection of inputs but rather a singular experience, it is essential to grasp the relationship between the destination's product mix and perceived quality and value among visitors (Murphy et al., 2000).

In many cases of sports tourism, the destination is the primary product, such as in active sports tourism or adventure sports tourism, where sports are the primary reason for travel. Naturally, the sports-related attributes of such destinations reflect their core product. Yet, crucial peripheral attributes—such as the quality and diversity of facilities, the destination's reputation, unique associations for the tourist, and creating a distinct experience alongside a wide range of expected physical, psychological, and social benefits—shape the competitive advantage of a sports tourism destination (Happ, 2021; Newland & Aicher, 2020).

Delivering these benefits in a sports tourism destination requires collaboration among various service-providing organizations. Thus, employing effective intra-organizational leadership styles, along with network leadership among destination management organizations, is essential for achieving integration, fostering constructive stakeholder engagement, and promoting sustainable development (Pechlaner et al., 2014; Wäsche & Woll, 2013).

2. **Destination as the Venue for the Product in Sports Tourism:** Hosting events—whether commercial, artistic, cultural, or sporting—is a significant driver of tourism development, where destinations serve as the chosen venue (Getz & Page, 2016). Sports events are more attractive and impactful because they evoke powerful imagery and elicit strong emotional responses from spectators. In fact, sports can be a potent catalyst in generating an image, reimagining an image, or branding places, even if in some cases only a few positive attributes are transferred and some negative associations remain after the event (Chalip & Costa, 2005; Richelieu, 2018).

Here, the role and relationship of sporting events with tourism and destination leadership can be analyzed at the intersection of two levels: repetition (frequency) and scope (range). In terms of repetition, sporting events may be one-time, occasional, or regular; in terms of scope, they range from local to global events. Within this framework, mega-events like the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games are global in their orientation, occur once for a specific location, and require a competitive bid to “win” hosting rights.

Conversely, hallmark events such as the Tour de France cycling race or Wimbledon tennis championships, which are held regularly, cannot exist independently of their host communities. Meanwhile, “local” or “regional” events are, by definition, rooted in a particular location and are primarily appealing to residents.

Although research often focuses on the role of large-scale sporting events in tourism development and small-scale sports events generally attract fewer spectators and limited media attention, findings indicate that a set of small-scale sports events that align with community infrastructure and human and cultural capital can constitute a suitable form of sustainable tourism development (Gibson et al., 2012; Gibson et al., 2018).

In any case, as the number, size, and significance of events grow, more attention must be paid to the dynamics, coordination, and interaction of stakeholders. A lack of communication between sports organizations on one hand and tourism entities on the other can lead to adverse outcomes for the event image and the destination (Wäsche & Woll, 2013). Sporting events, particularly large-scale events, offer business leaders and policymakers a catalyst for (re)development of economic and urban environments, helping them shape the legacy they envision. To ensure sound governance and reassure both internal and external stakeholders, there must be accountability, participation, performance, and transparency (Richelieu, 2018).

Furthermore, because success in securing the hosting rights for and staging mega-events involves high sensitivity due to global visibility and requires inter-network collaboration among sports and tourism sectors, destination leadership at these levels should be considered an inter-sectoral practice.

3. **Sports as a Destination Attraction:** Regardless of its form, recreation is an integral part of the tourism product that significantly affects tourism development and visitor satisfaction. Moreover, for destination marketers to capitalize on sports as part of the destination's attraction mix, they must identify how sports contribute to attracting tourists and how each sports element interacts with other attractions and activities in the destination (Harrison-Hill & Chalip, 2013).

In this respect, recreational facilities constitute an inseparable part of the physical infrastructure, which is a crucial pillar of overall economic and tourism development. Alongside other amenities, recreational/sports facilities enhance tourism development by increasing the appeal and

competitiveness of a destination, and findings suggest that growing demands and expectations regarding infrastructure and facilities in a given destination can be linked to its positioning and tourism development (Mandić et al., 2018).

From a holistic perspective, city, regional, and national managers and policymakers should consider the economic, commercial, and social dimensions of sports while

developing place-branding strategies (Richelieu, 2018). Based on the literature on destination leadership, and given that in this interpretation of the destination, sports constitute part of the product mix, the proposed models include network leadership in intra-organizational and inter-organizational stakeholder relationships.

Table 5

Integration of Destination, Leadership, and Sports Tourism Findings

Leadership Models	Product Attribute	Type of Relationship	Destination-Sports Relationship
Inter-organizational and Intra-organizational Leadership	Destination as the Product	One-way	Special Sports Tourism Destination
Inter-sectoral Leadership	Destination as the Venue for the Product	Two-way	Destination + Sporting Events
Intra-organizational and Inter-organizational Leadership	Sports as a Competitive Element of the Product (Destination)	Whole-Part	Destination + Sports Attractions

In this study, the concept of leadership in tourism destinations was analyzed particularly from the network-based and collective perspectives. The results indicate that destination leadership is largely influenced by contextual and emerging management paradigms. Instead of a fixed framework, leadership is dynamically presented as a network of relationships among diverse stakeholders, including destination management organizations, government agencies, and the private sector, in collective, synergistic processes. This highlights the importance of strategic collaboration and cohesion in achieving sustainable tourism destination development.

Moreover, in response to the study's questions, it was observed that all models of destination leadership emphasize stakeholder collaboration and interaction. These models, taking a network-oriented perspective with a focus on resource management and performance impact for tourism destinations—especially in sports destinations—were central. Regarding the capabilities of destination leaders, the findings show that success in destination management requires capabilities such as networking, analytical thinking, and influence, all of which may vary depending on the destination's life cycle and changing environmental needs.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

This article focused on the field of destination leadership research. By mapping and synthesizing what is known in this research domain, the study provides insights into the current state of research on leadership in tourism destinations. Findings from the scoping review of published articles

emphasize that tourism destinations are complex networks where various service providers play a key role. No single entity, whether public or private, can independently control all stages of the tourism value chain, while tourists typically expect integrated destination offerings.

Thus, creating a memorable experience in the minds of tourists and establishing competitive advantages for tourism destinations requires stakeholder collaboration. In this regard, moving beyond traditional individual-centered leadership concepts, one of the key roles in achieving destination integration is the understanding of leadership as a process. This process must inspire, set a collective agenda, and coordinate stakeholder efforts to achieve competitive advantage. To strengthen collaboration between public and private organizations, researchers have proposed network-based leadership models, including shared, distributed, collective, and systemic leadership practices at destinations. Such leadership models must possess capabilities like influence, integration, networking, vision-setting, and excitement generation.

Moreover, just as the optimal leadership model for destinations depends on context, extending these leadership models to sports tourism destinations is contingent on the categorization of relationships between sports and tourism. From a recreational perspective, sports—whether in terms of facilities or programs and offerings—can serve as an attraction for a specific destination. A destination may also be considered the primary product in sports tourism when it regularly hosts tourists traveling for sports, usually active participation. In such destinations, leadership models similar

to intra-sectoral, network-based, or collaborative models proposed for other destinations are applicable, with the distinction that in sports tourism destinations, the core product revolves around sports.

Destinations can also be viewed as venues for delivering products in the intersection of events and tourism. Previous studies have explored the development of destinations for sports events from a policy perspective, and the adoption of concepts like "sports cities" by some governments highlights the significant impact sports can have on tourism development (Mackellar & Nisbet, 2017).

In this context, adopting a strategic portfolio approach, which includes bidding for hosting major sports events as well as developing and implementing local or regional events, can ensure visitor satisfaction with both the core product (the event) and peripheral services (hospitality). Leadership in such scenarios, particularly for large-scale or hallmark events, becomes more complex due to the necessity of involving organizations and coordinating an inter-network of stakeholders related to the event and tourism services, necessitating inter-sectoral network leadership models.

Overall, based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that leadership in tourism destinations—especially in sectors related to sports tourism—should be considered networked and collaborative. This form of leadership, particularly in destinations requiring collaboration among various organizations and stakeholders, can enhance performance and ensure the long-term sustainability of the destination. In essence, destination leadership should focus not on individual leadership but on empowering and strengthening relationships among stakeholders to effectively manage the resources and assets of the destination.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Comparative Research on Different Tourism Destinations:** Future research can focus on comparing leadership models across various types of tourism destinations, such as coastal, mountain, and rural destinations, and analyzing their alignment with the specific needs of each destination.
2. **Research on the Impact of Network Leadership Models on Sustainable Development:** There is a need for further investigation into how network leadership models affect the sustainable

development of destinations and their relationship with the well-being of local communities.

3. **Examination of Leadership Styles in Sports Tourism Development:** Future studies are encouraged to explore the impact of different leadership styles in sports tourism destinations and their distinctions from other destination leadership models, with a particular focus on various types of sports tourists and their motivations.
4. **Comparative Study of Leadership Capabilities Across Destination Life Cycles:** Future research can examine the prioritization of leadership capabilities at different stages of the destination life cycle to identify the best approaches for resource management at each stage of destination development.
5. **Expansion of Leadership Literature in Sports Tourism:** As highlighted in this study, there is a need to further develop the literature on leadership in sports tourism destinations. Future studies can focus on conceptualizing this type of leadership and its impact on the growth and advancement of sports destinations.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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