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Cybersort Events As A Trend: A Promising Opportunity For Tourism Offerings

Olimov Davron Olimovich
2nd year Master's student, Kimyo International University in Tashkent

Abstract: Cybersport events are a cutting-edge global phenomena. Because of this, the purpose of this study is to identify the potential of cybersport as a substitute for diversifying tourism events in Guayaquil, Ecuador. It was suggested to examine the circumstances surrounding cybersport events and how visitors view them in the chosen city within the methodological framework of an exploratory-descriptive scope. 384 attendees at cybersport events (possible tourists) who used player community networks and video game rooms around Latin America were given a survey. A questionnaire that was made available online for six months in order to allow for future analysis served as the data collection tool. The foremost discoveries in terms of quality execution of the occasion, discernment of the occasion, goal picture, and fulfillment uncovered four imperative pointers related. Occasion staff, occasion climate, neighborliness, and great sentiments approximately live participation must be taken into thought whereas planning a palatable encounter to coordinated into cybersport into the city's tourism offerings. Participants too communicated their eagerness to return to the city within the future. These comes about contribute to growing the logical writing on the assessment and administration of cybersport occasions for other creating cities and nation

Keywords: cybersport, cybersport events, developing of cybersport, tourism, tourist perception, tourism offer;

1. Introduction

One of the main causes of the tourist sector's enduring strength in the world economy is undoubtedly its adaptability. Drivers such as technology, culture, biology, demographics, and society have influenced traveler demand over time as they seek for novel travel experiences. In order to boost the diversity of the tourism supply, a wide range of alternative tourist activities have been made available, with an emphasis on particular interests like adventure, events, sports, and culture, among others.

In recent years, digital youth culture interests have grown into internet-driven tourism centered around online gaming. Competitive computer gaming or cybersport has evolved from a participant-oriented activity into a worldwide phenomenon, captivating enthusiastic players and massive spectators of professional tournaments around the globe. By 2019, the Newzoo industry report revealed that the number of global audiences for cybersport was 443 million, and the industry made USD 950 million. Other reports have anticipated a USD 1.79 billion industry for 2022, with high expectations to be part of future Olympic games.

Cybersport, often known as electronic sports, is a relatively new type of sports in which players compete individually or as a team in digital games played on any platform, whether online or offline. Many players are able to support themselves in this professional gaming environment by winning tournament prize pools or receiving corporate sponsorship. Furthermore, cybersport is a multifaceted symbol that includes an ecosystem found in both real and virtual contexts (computers, robots, and geographic centers that promote tourism in the host place).

The popularity of cybersport has now consolidated as a truly new traveling motivation for modern entertainment. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has generated a significant increase in the number of spectators and players, whose fandom boosts them into assiduous tourists. These factors have triggered a tourism trend in cybersport, where in-person events have become more frequent in recent years, due to the intrinsic potential in promoting tourism within destinations.

For this reason, several destinations have integrated cybersport events into their tourism offers as a way to channel tourist traffic, especially during the off-season, while partakers compete, spectate, or simply attend organized competitions. Although these events have proven to be profitable tourist attractions in North America, Europe, China, and South Korea, Latin America is rapidly growing into an emerging market with

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the arousal of awareness about the cybersport industry and the improvement in the general tourist infrastructure.

The study's objective was to assess cybersport-related incidents from the perspective of a prospective traveler. In order to learn more about their perspectives and interests about live attendance events and metrics like satisfaction, perception, quality performance, and destination image, a survey was undertaken. The study also aimed to evaluate important aspects for the future growth of cybersport tourism, taking into consideration both domestic and foreign participants.

The article is organized as follows for the remainder of it. The history of cybersport development is covered in Section 2, with a focus on event tourism around sporting competitions and cybersport events. The effects of tourism on the host cities are also examined, as well as the experiences of the location in organizing similar events for emerging markets. The methodological framework, which refers to the components needed for this study to accomplish its goals, is covered in Section 3. The analysis and interpretation of the study's findings are presented in Section 4. The influence of cybersport events on tourism in locations is discussed in Section 5. The study's main conclusions and findings are finally summed up in Section 6.

2. Theoretical Background

Electronic sports (eSports), also known as cybersport or virtual sports, are considered an area of sports activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies through video games. However, not all cybersport are the same; for that reason, they are organized into genres. Popular ones include multiplayer online battle arenas (MOBAs) (e.g., League of Legends or Dota 2), first-person shooters (FPS) (e.g., Counter-Strike or Call of Duty), battle royale games (BR) (e.g., Fortnite or PUBG), collectible card games (CCGs) (e.g., Hearthstone or MTG Arena), real-time strategy games (RTS) (e.g., Starcraft 2 or Age of Empires IV), fighting games (e.g., Guilty Gear Strive or Street Fighter V), sport-based video games (SBVGs) (e.g., FIFA 22 or NBA 2k22), and driving games (e.g., F1 2021 or iRacing).

Video games may now be played on many different platforms, including PCs, gaming consoles, tablets, and smartphones. These settings have facilitated competitions in a hurry, and these have grown in popularity over time. Maybe because of the advancements in network capabilities brought about by technology, gaming has evolved into cybersport. Local area networks (LANs) were first used to link game consoles for extended weekends spent with friends. But as skill levels increased, players felt compelled to advance to more competitive levels inside professional leagues, creating an amazing and official sport framework.

As in traditional sports, the cybersport industry brings together a large number of people, team players, fans, sponsors, and representatives of gaming companies in tournaments. Events in electronic sports (cybersport) gather audiences every year only equal to those obtained by the largest sporting events in the world. Since 2013, the finals of the League of Legends (LoL) championships has surpassed in audience the finals of sports leagues as consolidated as the NBA or the MLB.

The First National Space Invaders Competition, the first significant video game-focused competition, took place in the United States in 1980, which is when cybersport competitions first began. Ten thousand individuals in the US came together thanks to Atari's organization. Many arcade game tournaments were recognized as notable accomplishments during that decade, primarily as a result of their yearly public promotion. These tournaments were broadcast on television alongside other video game-related events and interviews under the Starcade program (accessed on June 18, 2022) (https://www.starcade.tv/starcade/games/index.html).

Cybersport events first started in the United States in 1980 with the First National Space Invaders Competition, which was the first major competition centered around video games. Ten thousand people in the United States united because of Atari's organization. That decade saw the recognition of several arcade game competitions as noteworthy achievements, mostly due to their annual public marketing. Under the Starcade program, these competitions were televised with interviews and other events centered around video games (accessed on June 18, 2022) (https://www.starcade.tv/starcade/games/index.html).

Since then, cybersport competitions have expanded and taken up space at larger events. One such example is the League of Legends World Cup finals, which peaked at 205,348,063 viewers in 2018 and were hosted in Incheon, South Korea. Studying cybersport, which span from video game competitive scenes to its professionalization as a sport, has shown to be quite productive. These days, cybersport are a multifaceted

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ecosystem that include incentives for competition as well as the growth of auxiliary sectors that support event tourism.

Event tourism mitigates the effects of tourism seasonality by scheduling many meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) in times of low tourist influx. Thus, events have the capacity to spread tourist demand geographically, allowing each region to develop its destination image. Leading countries in event tourism around the world are mostly European, with the exception of the United States; however, Europe has the highest number of events per region, followed by Asia and North America. In Latin America, an increase in the number of events between 2013 and 2019 is evident; among the leading countries in this region are Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, and Chile.

It should be noted that one of the most memorable events attracting tourists are the World Cups and the Olympic Games, held every four years, where athletes and fans from almost all sports and from all over the world prepare during that time for the big event. Usually taking place in a single city, these mega-events have an impact on the economy, politics, society, culture, etc., of the host city and country, becoming a historical element. As a matter of fact, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has created a department for virtual sports development, acknowledging cybersport as providing multiple sources of opportunities for its consolidation in society.

Since then, cybersport contests have grown and occupied more room at bigger gatherings. One notable instance is the League of Legends World Cup finals, which were held in Incheon, South Korea, in 2018 and reached a high viewership of 205,348,063. Researching cybersport, which include everything from competitive video game scenes to their professionalization as a sport, has shown to be highly fruitful. These days, cybersport are a complex ecosystem with growing ancillary industries supporting event tourism and incentives for competitiveness.

With the rising interest that cybersport events have generated, the next important issue to take care of is the role of cybersport in the context of sustainable tourism. Therefore, it is vital to explore vital perspectives in the sustainability model, including economic and social approaches. Probably, the economic impact of cybersport events has been mostly addressed in reports through a number of events and revenues, assuring not just the stability of the industry but business growth. For instance, 5.432 cybersport tournaments were held around the world in 2019, with the United States, China, and South Korea as the top three hosts. In addition, since 2018, the total income generated by this market rounds between USD 700 and USD 900 million.

Cybersport events meet a number of attendees' demands in terms of social sustainability. First and foremost, professional players are compensated, recognized, and awarded for their achievements in sports. Regarding the supporters, they consciously allocate their free time and resources to intimately observe the contests, interact with their preferred athletes, and exchange their enthusiasm with other fervent supporters who possess like interests. Cybersport visitors describe attending live events as a singular and remarkable experience that makes them feel snobbish and conceited.

Therefore, because holding events for cybersport visitors incurs costs for lodging, food, drink, and transportation, it directly affects the hospitality sector. Cybersport events are becoming very promising options for tourism destination competitiveness due to the accompanying profits and development of the local economy. Numerous studies look at the services and amenities provided to tourists as factors that improve the perception of the site. Cybersport travelers' opinions of the venue and their propensity to return will undoubtedly be influenced by their positive experiences with the state of the facilities now in place and the high caliber of the services they received.

Consideration must also be given to event facilities in addition to tourist amenities and services. In order to host cybersport events, infrastructure (such as stadiums) and technology (such as computers, consoles, cables, and large-scale displays) criteria must be met while taking into account both public and private involvement. When an event space is furnished with high-quality standards, complimentary components will affect guests' reactions. To get the most out of a place, excellent service, amenities for events, entertainment, and activities are essential. The significance of social and interactive experiences in creating friendships and a perceptual sense of belonging at events is also highlighted by recent research.

Despite the fact that cybersport events are a new trend in the tourism industry, research findings and literature, including systematic evaluation of destinations, are still in their infancy. Few studies have explored indicators or variables linked to successful event destinations. For instance, Iberian Cup 2019 participants in

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Barcelona evaluated the variable "personal of the event" as the most important, while exhibiting good satisfaction with the event and intention to return in the future. In Valencia, service performance variables and brand variables that had a significant influence on the loyalty of users attending cybersport events were general quality, perceived value, and corporate image.

Although the market for cybersport events is largest in North America, Europe, and Asia, Latin America is considered the third fastest-growing region. According to the Newszoo analysis, the use of smartphones to play various franchises helped Latin America and the Caribbean increase profits by 17%, approaching more powerful markets. The growth of this sector has been so great that even in Mexico, in 2020, an event center for cybersport tournaments was inaugurated in its capital, the Mexico City cybersport Arena. Currently, the largest cybersport event in Latin America is the Latin American League of Legends (LOL) event, the 2021 edition of which took place at the referred arena.

According to Pablo Monti, Cybersport Manager at Latam Media Group (LMG), Argentina, 2021, was the year in which Latin American cybersport exploded. Brands were expected to fully enter the ecosystem of competitions, and teams were able to establish themselves as serious and well-organized companies. The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly helped raise awareness of cybersport, and there is much less evangelism to be performed.

In Ecuador, there are leagues and teams with a considerable history in cybersport competition, but never as country representatives. However, 2020 brought interesting shifts: finally, and Ecuadorian teams joined other participating countries of the Latin American League, where Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Chile were already members. The professional league announced its arrival in Ecuador in February 2020, promoting the development of more cybersport tournaments that stir passions from national and international participants.

In fact, in 2020, the Ecuadorian Association of Electronic Sports (AEDE by its acronym in Spanish) was created, with the purpose of professionalizing electronic sports in Ecuador. This organization is a member of PAMESCO (Pan American Electronic Sports Confederation) and WESCO (World Cybersport Consortium), the main objectives of which are the organization, regulation, administration, and promulgation of electronic sports at all levels seeking recognition by the international governing bodies of the sport.

Despite a few national cybersport competitions organized in recent years, to date, there is a reduced offering of these events in Guayaquil city, mainly due to a lack of knowledge about the city's potential to create an image as a cybersport events organizer. However, Guayaquil's infrastructure is suitable as a host destination: its convention centers are the largest and most complete in the country, tourist facilities and services are highly recognized internationally, and there are highly trained professionals in event design and production. In addition, in 2017, the Guayaquil Convention Bureau became a member of the International Congress and Convention Association, ICCA, an important global institution in the MICE market.

Notably, Guayaquil has evolved as a destination for events and congresses, adapting the tourist experience to consolidate itself as an optimal venue for national and international offers. In 2018, the city received the FIEXPO AWARD for being the destination for Congresses and Conventions that grew the most in 2018 in both Latin America and the world. Over the years, events that Guayaquil has hosted have ranged from beauty pageants, forums, fairs, and conventions to events more linked to pop culture such as ComicCon and Budokan (both related to the world of anime, manga, and comics), providing an opening for events related to video games and their competitive cybersport scene. In this sense, it is necessary to evaluate the potential tourists' perception of Guayaquil as a cybersport hub in Ecuador and Latin America.

3. Methodological Framework

The present study contemplated field research evaluating cybersport events as a new option that can potentiate tourism offerings for Guayaquil City, Ecuador. The principal objective was to examine two main variables related to cybersport players' interests and insights towards in-person events, with the premise that players are likely to become potential tourists. The measurement of variables was conducted over a six-month period through a previously tested questionnaire by an analogous investigation carried out in Barcelona.

3.1. Research Scope

Within the framework of this study, an exploratory-descriptive scope was used for analyzing how ybersport events can potentiate an event tourism offering of the city of Guayaquil. A survey was proposed to address this phenomenon, considering conditions related to cybersport events and tourists' perception of them

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in the selected city. Regarding both variables, a survey was conducted within a sample of people who have previously attended a cybersport event. The applied questionnaire contained closed single-choice questions, including dichotomous, multiple choice, and Likert scales (1 to 5).

3.2. Conceptualization and Operationalization of the Variables
The two main variables selected were analyzed as follows.

• **Conditions related to cybersport events:**
– Type: Independent;
– Conceptualization: Set of general aspects on attendance at cybersport events;
– Dimensions:
* Relationship with cybersport:
    · Indicators:
    1. Type of attended events (national and international);
    2. Main reason for travel;
    3. Average number of companions;
    4. Relationship with companions;
    5. Average stay length in destinations;
    6. Type of additional activities carried out.

• **Tourist perception towards cybersport events:**
– Type: Dependent;
– Conceptualization: Set of important considerations that are taken when participating in cybersport events in Guayaquil;
– Dimensions:
    * Quality Performance of the event:
        · Indicators:
        1. Event Staff;
        2. Event logistics;
        3. Information of the event;
        4. Activities and play areas;
        5. Ticket price;
        6. Overall organization.
    * Perception of the event:
        · Indicators:
        1. Event atmosphere;
        2. Emotion associated with the event;
        3. Opportunity to meet people with common interests;
        4. Social interaction with other event participants.
    * Destination Image:
        · Indicators:
        1. Solidarity and hospitality;
        2. Good leisure and entertainment opportunities;
        3. Interesting areas to visit;
        4. Quality versus Price offer.
    * Satisfaction:
        · Indicators:
        1. Good feeling about attending the event;
        2. Future recommendation of the destination to third parties;
        3. Repetition of the experience in another event;
        4. Social media sharing about event attendance;
        5. Future intention to return to the destination.

3.3. Population and Sample
      The universe was considered as the population that has ever attended a cybersport event, mainly amateur and professional players who practice electronic sports.

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Since the number of people that made up the population was not known, for the selection of the sample size, the expression corresponding to infinite population was used as indicated in Equation (1):

$$n = \frac{Z_{\frac{a}{2}}^2 * p * q}{d^2}$$

where n constitutes the sample size, Z_α is the standard normal percentile corresponding to the confidence level, p represents the probability of success or occurrence of an event, q represents the probability of failure or non-occurrence of an event, and d is the maximum admissible error in terms of proportion.

Substituting the expression, the result presented in Equation (2) was obtained:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5}{0.05^2}$$

A value of $Z_{0.05}$ of 1.96 corresponding to the 95th percentile of the standard normal distribution (95% of confidence) was expected, with p and q equal to ensure that the ratio of success or failure is the same, i.e., 0.5. Additionally, a 5% admissible error was considered. The sample size selected was 384 people.

The representative sample was obtained through virtual channels of League of Legends and Fortnite (lobby video game rooms and player community networks in Latin America), which are the most popular video games according to ICCA reports. The employed sampling method was non-probabilistic for convenience. Data were collected from the questionnaire available online, and valid responses were processed with Microsoft Excel and SPSS statistical software for subsequent analysis and interpretation of results.

Frequencies and percentages analyses were calculated for the independent variable (conditions related to cybersport events). The descriptive statistics and mean and standard deviation were calculated for the dependent variable (tourist perception towards cybersport events) together with correlation analysis and t-test for independent groups (participants of national or international events).

4. Analysis and Results

According to the conceptualization and operationalization of the variables indicated in the methodological framework of this study, the conditions related to cybersport events and the tourist perception of these events were investigated, along with seven socioeconomic and demographic questions for mapping the sample profile.

4.1. Sample Profile

According to the country of origin, 39% of the sample were Ecuadorians, 18% Mexicans, 12% Colombians, 11% Argentinians, 9% Peruvians, and 8% Chileans; with less representation, the remaining nationalities included Paraguayans, Hondurans, Nicaraguans, Bolivians, Venezuelans, and Panamanians. Regarding age, around 62% were between 21 and 30 years old, followed by the group of 18 to 20 years old, and, finally, 31 to 40 years old.

Regarding gender, three-quarters of the surveyed sample was male. Around 71% were single, followed by 25% married, and around 4% stated that they were in a de facto union. Regarding occupation, the two largest groups were employees (43.7%) and students (42.5%), with a higher level of education in 92% of cases, and the remaining 8% had an intermediate level of education. Finally, the predominant socioeconomic classes were middle (46.7%) and lower (42%) classes.

4.2. Conditions Related to Cybersport Events

We found that 68% of the sample has mostly attended national cybersport events, while the remaining 32% have attended international events, the main reason being for travel and attendance at cybersport events (81%).

On average, most of the respondents indicated attending events accompanied by one (51.9%) or two (35.6%) people, these being friends (58.5%), relatives (28.4%), and partners (13.1%). Regarding the average stay length in destinations, they pointed out stays of 2 (54.8%) to 3 (27.7%) days.

In addition to attending cybersport events, the respondents mentioned having engaged in entertainment (39%), leisure (29.1%), and cultural (23.5%) activities.

4.3. Tourist Perception towards Cybersport Events

The results evidenced in Table 1 show the quality performance of an eSport event perceived by the respondents. All the items scored high average values out of a total of 5 points, considering that the event staff was the item best evaluated by the attendees with an average of 4.65 ± 0.71 points; however, the price of the

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ticket was the worst evaluated item and the only one that obtained an average value below 4 points (3.25 ± 1.17 points). The rest of the items associated with the event obtained scores between 4.40 and 4.48 points.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the dimension Quality Performance of the event.

Items	Mean	Std Dev
Event staff	4.65	0.71
Event logistics	4.41	0.70
Event information	4.48	0.79
Activities and play areas	4.40	0.74
Ticket price	3.25	1.17
Overall organization	4.46	0.74

Regarding the results summarized in Table 2, the correlation analyses between the descriptive statistics of the dimensions of perception of the event, destination image, and satisfaction were visualized. In the first instance, no strong correlation was observed between different variables. However, the variables *meeting new people–contact with other participants* (r = 0.727), *hospitality–environment* (r = 0.730), and *sharing information on social media–future intention* (r = 0.706) showed a moderate correlation, while the *variables hospitality–contact with other participants* (r = 0.212), *quality versus price–contact with other participants* (r = 0.214), and *meet new people–repeat the experience* (r = 0.220) obtained the weakest correlations.

Table 2. Correlation analysis between the dimensions Perception of the event, Destination image, and Satisfaction.

	Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	Environment	1												
2	Emotion	0.637 *	1											
3	Meet new people	0.349 *	0.368 *	1										
4	Contact with other participants	0.297 *	0.357 *	0.727 *	1									
5	Solidarity and hospitality	0.730 *	0.571 *	0.367 *	0.212 *	1								
6	Leisure and entertainment	0.560 *	0.615 *	0.425 *	0.479 *	0.642 *	1							
7	Areas to visit	0.614 *	0.420 *	0.271 *	0.252 *	0.639 *	0.628 *	1						
8	Quality vs. price offer	0.459 *	0.354 *	0.280 *	0.214 *	0.448 *	0.591 *	0.603 *	1					
9	Sense	0.666 *	0.494 *	0.285 *	0.253 *	0.617 *	0.590 *	0.612 *	0.581 *	1				
10	Recommendation	0.572 *	0.548 *	0.274 *	0.354 *	0.505 *	0.621 *	0.598 *	0.563*	0.611*	1			
11	Repeat the experience	0.565 *	0.551 *	0.220 *	0.389 *	0.458 *	0.510 *	0.530 *	0.406 *	0.542 *	0.598 *	1		
12	Share information on social media	0.512 *	0.448 *	0.291 *	0.310 *	0.391 *	0.452 *	0.477 *	0.465 *	0.441 *	0.623 *	0.600 *	1	
13	Future intention	0.514 *	0.445 *	0.309 *	0.342 *	0.416 *	0.458 *	0.476 *	0.483 *	0.470 *	0.591 *	0.677 *	0.706 *	1

* The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

The indicators evaluated in the dimensions of perception of the event, the image of the destination, and satisfaction for attendees at national and international events were recorded in Table 3. On the one hand, regarding the perception of the event, the item best valued by both groups was the atmosphere of the event, while for those attending national events, the worst valued item in the dimension and in the entire questionnaire was the opportunity to meet people with common interests (3.99 points). On the other hand, those attending international events indicated that the item with the lowest rating was social interaction with other participants, also coinciding with being the worst-rated of the entire questionnaire for this group (3.60 points).

Regarding the destination image, hospitality was the item best valued by both groups (4.58 ± 0.78 points and 4.64 ± 0.70 points) while quality versus price in the offering was the indicator with the lowest scores for the dimension analyzed in both groups (4.32 ± 0.82 points and 4.15 ± 0.88 points, respectively).

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of the dimensions Perception of the event, Destination image, and Satisfaction.

Dimension	Item	Participants of National Events		Participants of International Events		p-Value
		Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	
Perception of the event	Event atmosphere	4.61	0.75	4.7	0.72	0.263
	Emotion associated with the event	4.34	0.7	4.32	0.7	0.761
	Opportunity to meet people with common interests	3.99	0.97	3.7	0.92	0.004 *
	Social interaction with other event participants	4	0.93	3.6	1.27	0.001 *
Destination image	Solidarity and hospitality	4.58	0.78	4.64	0.7	0.459
	Good leisure and entertainment opportunities	4.38	0.75	4.16	0.62	0.005 *
	Interesting areas to visit	4.42	0.78	4.45	0.8	0.76
	Quality vs. Price offer	4.32	0.82	4.15	0.88	0.062
Satisfaction	Good feeling about attending the event	4.68	0.71	4.64	0.7	0.617
	Future recommendation of the destination to third parties	4.48	0.75	4.21	0.68	0.001 *
	Repetition of the experience in the future in another event	4.49	0.73	4.4	0.72	0.269
	Social media sharing about event attendance	4.44	0.81	4.25	0.72	0.020 *
	Future intention to return to the destination	4.52	0.75	4.33	0.66	0.013 *

* $p \leq 0.05$.

Regarding the satisfaction dimension, both groups evidenced the indicator of having a good feeling about attending the event as the item with the highest score; in the case of the group of attendees to national events, it was also the highest-valued item of the entire questionnaire (4.68 points). For the group of participants of national events, the worstevaluated item was posting on social networks about attendance at the event (4.44 points), while for the group of international events, it was the future recommendation of the destination to third parties (4.21 points).

A comparison between the groups of participants of national and international events showed that the participants in the context of events within their own country gave a higher value to most of the indicators analyzed, finding significant differences in six of the items according to the p-value shown in Table 3.

5. Discussion

In this study, the cybersport trend was analyzed as an alternative for event tourism in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Specifically, the tourist perceptions of participants and attendees of cybersport events were evaluated considering Guayaquil as the venue for these events, taking into account four dimensions: quality performance of the event, perception of the event, destination image, and satisfaction, in addition to conditions related to said events and the profile of the sample.

Consequently, the sports, events, tourist, and entertainment sectors have taken notice of the growing demand from consumers for cybersport and the expansion of its global tournaments. Cybersport tourism may be considered a form of sports tourism even if electronic sports do not fit within the traditional sports category because its events draw huge global audiences and serve as tourist attractions within its organization.

In addition to the main attraction, which is the competition, the cybersport events are huge draws. There are rooms where you can test out video games and play with friends, lectures on some new cybersport or video games, and other related activities. Additionally, customers might perceive experiences in special interest tourism through cybersport events.

The two most played video games right now are League of Legends and Fortnite. They both have the longest live streaming durations and the biggest competitive scenes with several leagues and tournaments. This popularity in the cybersport culture suggests that people love playing video games as a kind of exercise as well as being driven to go to events where they can see other participants, especially the best players, interacting in real life.

To carry out this study, a recent evaluation of tourist perception in Barcelona within the context of the Iberian Cup 2019 was taken as a reference; however, this work is not focused on an evaluation of an event specifically, but on the evaluation of the importance of certain key characteristics on expectations for cybersport events in Guayaquil, considering the previous experience of attendees at national or international

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events. The scope of this evaluation remained at the Latin American level to obtain a perspective of potential foreign tourists.

The demographics of individuals who attend cybersport events are comparable to those observed in the Iberian Cup 2019 survey, indicating that men, young people, and singles from lower-middle class demographics predominate in this category. There were variations in the attendees' educational attainment, though, as the majority of those in attendance at the 2019 Iberian Cup had largely intermediate-level educations, whilst the current study showed higher levels, with the majority of participants being between the ages of 21 and 30. Furthermore, the reference research revealed that the majority of the workforce was made up of students. Conversely, the majority of the study's findings were reflective of both workers and students. This may be because the groups under study differed in that European youths have less obstacles when it comes to accessing technology, especially cybersport, and also have the support of their parents. In contrast, Latino youths, even though they are still young, discover the world of cybersport at the university level, when they are employed and able to purchase the equipment needed to play.

All of the study's elements were connected, but only to a moderate or low extent, according to correlation analysis. When assessing how visitors perceive the event, the factors of meeting new people, interacting with other participants, hospitality, surroundings, sharing information on networks, and future intention were shown to have the highest links. However, mood, environment, repeating the experience, recommending the event, interacting with other participants, and meeting new people were the characteristics that showed the highest correlations during the 2019 Iberian Cup. The social interaction that occurs during the event is what unites them all, and while Guayaquil hasn't hosted a large-scale cybersport event, it has organized other notable events wherein it was observed that hosting preparations are made for potential attendees, taking into account necessary infrastructure and other services.

Both studies concur that when it came to the aspect of the event's quality performance, the event staff's caliber was the most highly regarded component. Given that it has been the subject of extensive analysis in the literature on sports tourism, this aspect is crucial for evaluating events. Furthermore, the study found that the second most significant component was the event's information. This aspect is closely linked to the communication quality and is an essential consideration for any athletic event, since these two variables tend to draw the greatest attention from visitors. In this sense, if you want to achieve quality service, these factors are essential for the perception of the attendees about the event.

The research concurred that the event environment item had the greatest score when it came to the impression of the event dimension. The success of cybersport events partly lies in translating what makes this kind of game popular to a real-world setting: lots of players, a persistent virtual world, communication via in-game interactive features (bulletin boards, mail, public and private chats, event calendars, etc.), and player interaction in a supportive setting.

Regarding the destination image dimension, both studies reaffirmed that their best-evaluated item was the one that refers to feeling hospitality in the host city of the event. For this study, all items associated with this dimension were above four on a five-point scale. This definitively reinforces that the knowledge and analysis of the image of the destination are crucial to developing strategies that contribute to the execution, operation, and improvements in events. In addition to this, the literature reports that the image of the destination affects the decisions of sports tourists, especially in their intention to return to the destination and be present in future editions.

Finally, regarding the satisfaction dimension, the study on the Iberian Cup 2019 in Barcelona reported that the items of this dimension scored close to six on a seven-point scale. Similarly, the present study carried out for the Guayaquil context also reported items scoring four on a five-point scale of importance. This dimension in particular has been widely valued by the scientific community, where several investigations carried out within the framework of sporting events have found a relationship between satisfaction with the event and the intention to repeat the experience. In addition, a recent study on the profile of those who visited Guayaquil showed that 98% of them would recommend this city as a tourist destination.

Additionally, the comparison made between the groups of participants of national and international events showed significant differences in six of the items (opportunity to meet people with common interests, social interaction with other event participants, good leisure and entertainment opportunities, a recommendation of the destination to third parties, posting on social networks about attendance at the event,

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and intent to return to the destination in the future). Although all the items were evaluated as important since they scored above 3.50, a more detailed study is required to explore the reason for these differences found.

6. Conclusions

The quality performance of the event, perception of the event, destination image, and satisfaction were the four aspects used to evaluate tourist perception in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in accordance with the expectations created around cybersport events. In order to address these perceptions, a survey was applied to participants and attendees of cybersport events (possible tourists) via player community networks and lobby video game rooms around Latin America.

In terms of the preferred dimensions, four vital indicators were identified. Event staff, event atmosphere, hospitality, and good feelings about live attendance must be taken into consideration while designing a satisfactory experience to be integrated into the city's tourism offerings. Findings showed event facilities and quality services as key factors in order to attract more domestic and international tourists, increase the involvement in cybersport events activities, and foster willingness for future visits. Thus, Guayaquil might be presented as a promising venue for cybersport events, which will serve to potentiate special interests tourism in the destination and delineate future steps for other developing countries with similar infrastructure and technological characteristics in the region.

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