

Tab 1

Historical Roots of Detroit:
Revitalizing Detroit: The Transformative Power of Sports Tourism

Detroit, a city with its storied history of industrial strength followed by economic decline, is a dynamic I've been able to study and explore in depth through my lectures in Honors 1000. Gives me the opportunity for an interesting view for analyzing the impact of sports tourism on public perception. My research question, "Can sports tourism change public perception, or do long-standing stereotypes still hold sway over Detroit?" talks about the interplay between progress and persistent challenges. Growing up, attending Detroit's sporting events instilled a deep sense of pride for the city's teams, cheering on the Lions Honolulu Blue and watching the Red Wings win meant something to me, yet this pride often clashed with the broader narrative framing Detroit as "ghetto and filled with crime", but Detroit's rare distinction as home to four major sports teams is a claim few cities can make. It highlights its unique potential to leverage sports as a transformative tool.

High-profile events such as the 2012 World Series, WWE SummerSlam at Ford Field, and the record-breaking NFL Draft attracted thousands of visitors and national attention on Detroit in the last couple of years. However, these moments of vibrancy and celebration coexist with deeper structural issues, including economic decline, urban decay, and long-standing racial and economic segregation, which I have come to understand more deeply through my lectures. These systemic challenges, often overlooked in the excitement of major sporting events, continue to shape Detroit's reputation and its ability to fully revitalize.

While I recognize the enduring impact of these structural barriers, I conclude that through events like the 2012 World Series, sports events and tourism can indeed bring positive change to

Rami Fakih

urban centers by driving economic development, enhancing community image, and fostering cultural integration. Although sports alone cannot resolve Detroit's established issues, they serve as a spark for creating opportunities to reshape perceptions and support efforts toward revitalization.

My cousin Ali used to wake up every game at 3 am in Dubai to watch the Tigers as they played in the World Series in 2012. If you don't believe me I can get you his information and you can ask him yourself! He used to say from just watching the TV he could tell that Detroit just looked like a city whose image was growing. In 2012 the Tigers played in the world series, and although they did not win. The 2012 world series brought a broader and greater view to helping Detroit's Image. Before 2012 you never really heard of Detroit in the spotlight, with sports teams that were not historically in the prime time games, and the auto industry not just in Detroit anymore. From our class discussions and lectures I've learned a lot about a city's structures, like patterns of segregation and economic disparity. These Structural issues, such as economic inequality and the decline of infrastructure, are often the focal point of the challenges a city like Detroit faces and part of the reasons on why Detroit's decline was so rough. Sporting events, while offering a temporary boost to the city's image and economy, interact with these larger forces, making their long term impact more complex. I've seen firsthand how different cities use these opportunities to reshape their image. I think that the 2012 world series was something that helped start to reshape this "bad" image, and Detroit can do it by continuing to invest in sports tourism and help reshape a broader and greater impact on the city through these sporting events.

In the article, "Sport as a transformative agent in changing images of tourism destinations." *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, " (Waller, S, trendilola & Daniell R) they discuss how the 2012 World Series was not merely a sporting event but a transformative moment for Detroit,

drawing thousands of visitors and millions of viewers. This influx of attention brought visibility to the city's new stadiums, flourishing entertainment venues, and burgeoning hospitality sector, which contributed to Detroit being seen as a viable tourist destination. For example, Comerica Park and its surrounding areas were highlighted in media coverage, showing an image of vibrancy that counteracted stereotypes of decay.

The media spotlight on Detroit during the World Series brought attention to the city's efforts to position downtown as a hub of activity and innovation. Highlighting the area's revival efforts, reports emphasized the modern infrastructure, entertainment venues, and newly opened casinos, underscoring Detroit's potential as a tourist destination. This media narrative played a pivotal role in shifting perceptions of Detroit from a struggling post-industrial city to one actively investing in its future. As the authors explain, sports events offer cities a unique opportunity to market themselves to a national and international audience, potentially reshaping public perceptions and attracting investment.

By embracing the momentum generated by the World Series, Detroit positioned itself as a city on the rise. This renewed interest in downtown areas caused further investments and increased tourism, showing the transformative potential of sports tourism. In later years Detroit now started to bring more sporting events to the city like WWE's SummerSlam which I was fortunate to go to. In the article "Detroit delivers most watched SummerSlam in WWE history, company says" (Adam Graham) he mentions what WWE's chief content officer said at a post-event press conference at Ford Field. "The city did not disappoint. They showed up en masse, they showed up to have a great time, and I think we delivered for them." To continue to bring these large sporting events to the city makes the whole wide world have eyes on a city that's hosting it, and man does Detroit always show up. I am confident in saying that the 2012

Rami Fakh

world series was the start of it all and effectively brought a broader and greater view to helping Detroit's image.

The next step in demonstrating how sports tourism can help change the public perception of a city like Detroit is by growing economic development. In the past couple of months I've been able to see how Detroit went from one of the most populated cities in the entire country in the 90s, to economic destruction and why, but recently Detroit is attempting a comeback and in Patrick Rishe's article, "2024 NFL Draft Economic Impact Study," he highlights the transformative economic power of major sporting events in Detroit and shows data on how the 2024 NFL Draft generated an impressive \$213.6 million in economic impact, with \$161.3 million coming directly from visitors. The event attracted 775,000 attendees, with over 30% traveling more than 100 miles to Detroit. To think Detroit was able to bring in this much people and produce the amount of money it did with the economic problems I've been able to hear about through lectures is insane. The influx of visitors from the draft filled hotels to capacity, boosted local tax revenues, and created a surge of activity in restaurants, shops, and other businesses. This spending not only energized downtown but also created ripple effects that benefited neighborhoods throughout the city.

To understand this impact at the local level, I interviewed a manager of a Detroit Pizzeria, which is a family-owned restaurant in Detroit. Reflecting on the Draft's effects, the manager shared, "Business doubled, even tripled during the Draft, I've never seen us so busy. We are fortunate now to open our second location out of the city ." His experience reflects how sporting tourism can significantly boost small, locally owned establishments providing them with the opportunity to expand their customer base. The data in the article shows that the Draft brought

Rami Fakih

over \$12 million in spending to minority-owned businesses, showcasing its ability to promote economic growth and provide resources to traditionally underrepresented communities.

Through my studies, I've gained a deeper understanding of Detroit's historical economic challenges, from systemic inequality to deindustrialization. Events like the NFL Draft cannot completely solve these issues, I understand that, but they play a vital role in supporting economic revitalization by attracting investments, generating jobs, and creating optimism. By showcasing the city's ability to host large scale, successful events, sports tourism helps Detroit reposition itself in the national spotlight as a city of opportunity and growth laying the groundwork for positive change.

Another way I was able to research at how sports can help the evolution of a cities economy was through the article and study by (Giovanni Raso and Domenico Cherubini) in "The sport tourism and regional economic development: A systematic review" they discuss in the review the positive impact of small-scale and large-scale sports events in creating long-term economic benefits through infrastructure development. In my lectures I was able to see that lots of the infrastructure in Detroit was built around the days when the automotive industry was booming and in some ways it hurts us in what we can do now in Detroit. The article talks about by bringing in large sporting events they often necessitate the upgrade or construction of stadiums, transportation networks, public amenities and this can enhance the city's appeal beyond the immediate period of the event and maybe potentially help that problem we discussed within class of how and why would we build more in a city where its hard to build now. In the article "Entertainment-led Regeneration:the Case of Detroit" (John Mccarthy Entertainment-2002)he says "'Mayor Archer deftly wooed the business community and the local media into a political marriage around downtown renaissance that celebrated the development of

Rami Fakih

gambling, casinos, sports stadiums and other attractions" (McCarthy 2002, p. 110). Former Mayor of Detroit Dennis Archer used to highlight his political strategy in fostering partnerships with these places so he could bring more money to the city as a whole. This improved infrastructure not only serves residents but also positions the city as a city that has and is growing their economy.

Hosting sports events is not just a short-term economic booster, it lays the groundwork for sustained growth by attracting tourists, enhancing business activity, and driving infrastructure development. My research shows me that sports tourism can play a transformative role in the economic trajectory of a city. This makes a strong case for cities to prioritize hosting sports events as part of their broader economic development strategy.

Growing up playing sports, it never mattered what color, race, or where you came from if you were a part of a team, I considered that person a brother. The final step in my research in how sports can help bring positive change to a community that being hypothetically Detroit extends far beyond the scoreboard wavering a comorbidity of social cohesion. In my class discussions I have been able to see problems that a city like Detroit has faced historically with segregation but also how diverse groups of people a large city like Detroit has. Although sports can't save a city's social structural problems it can help in being a stepping stone for positive change in the right direction.

In a city like Detroit that is home to so many different groups of people, one thing I know for certain is how sporting events serve as a unifying force to bring people of all backgrounds together, if you don't believe me I invite you to go to Detroit on a Sunday when the Lions are playing and look at who's there. In the article "We must use sports as a transformative agent"

Rami Fakhri

(Kofi Annan) she talks about not only a community but broad larger views like a country's impact socially because of sports she talks about the successes of the Iraqi national team winning the world cup in 2007 sparked jubilation in every community, "The side which included Sunnis, Shias and Kurds showed their fellow citizens – and the world as a whole – what could be achieved by working together." As an Arab American Shia Muslim in the world. I've been able to see the problems and segregation in Muslim countries because of the "Shia" or "Sunni" belief, and know how hard it is for people to put it aside. The fact that sports could make Shias and Sunnis come together which some won't even when just visiting a mosque shows that it doesn't matter what you believe in you can cheer for a team and come together during it. In the article *Beyond the Game: Sports Industry's Economic and Social Impact* (author unknown) It delves into the intersections of sports with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and their tangible impacts on community engagement and development. The article draws on a range of data sources including case studies from various cities that have leveraged sports for social benefits. It provides evidence of how sports have been used as a tool to bridge divides in communities, fostering a sense of identity and belonging among diverse populations. The credibility of the article is shown by its detailed analysis and the use of real evidence to support its claims. One talking about how leagues like the NFL's with its "Rooney Rule", which promotes diversity in coaching and front-office positions, and the WNBA's advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights exemplify the industry's commitment to inclusivity. This shows that leagues and teams are trying, which is huge because the impact that some of these leagues have on states, countries, and communities is large and diverse. My last piece of evidence for this being with something I have been able to be apart of to some capacity and shows that these sports franchises in Detroit can translate to actual real action and help divided communities is through an initiative

Rami Fakih

with the Detroit Lions called the Strength in Numbers Detroit Lions Mentorship program, in the article “Lions to extend analytics mentorship program with local colleges and North Carolina HBCU” (author unknown, Sep. 05, 2023) they talk about how “The sports analytics industry is a booming industry, but less than 10% of the industry consists of minorities and women. The key is access because access creates opportunity” As someone who was able to apply, and interview for this position I was fortunate to see that they only allowed candidates from schools in Metro-Detroit those consisting of Wayne State, Detroit Mercy and local UofM Dearborn. When I asked the interviewer why, he told me that they want to show what sports teams can do for divided communities by bringing together the next generations together and showing this social cohesion that is missing in a city like Detroit. With players that people look up to, and coaches that individuals aspire to be, it shows that the Lions and sports has the ability to promote this social cohesion.

In conclusion, Detroit's journey from industrial powerhouse to a city grappling with economic challenges and structural inequities is something that is not common but it is something that is important and I am grateful to have been able to learn about through my honors class. Sports tourism has emerged as a powerful power in reshaping public perception, fostering economic revitalization, and promoting social cohesion. Events like the 2012 World Series brought national attention to Detroit but have also showcased its potential as a vibrant and dynamic urban center. While sports alone cannot solve Detroit's systemic issues, they provide a unique platform to drive progress, attract investment, and unite diverse communities. Through strategic investments in sports tourism, Detroit has the opportunity to redefine its identity, and I can not wait to see what happens next to the city I call home.

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