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Can Padel Serve Tourism

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Abstract.

Sports tourism is a growing sector in Europe, with more tourists looking for unique and engaging sporting experiences. Padel has grown in popularity throughout Europe in recent years, making it an appealing option for sports tourists and enthusiasts. This thesis investigates the factors that make a padel club appealing to tourists visiting European countries as well as non-padel players.

In this study, 202 TripAdvisor reviews from padel players were extracted and analyzed using a software called Leximancer. These reviews came from thirty padel clubs in five different European countries: Portugal, France, Spain, England, and Italy. Leximancer processes these reviews by transforming data into semantic patterns.

The study identifies several key themes that contribute to the attractiveness of a padel club for tourists through a literature review and qualitative research, including "padel," "friendly," "club," "playing," "team," "recommend," "lessons," and "helpful." The findings suggest that investing in high-quality facilities and coaches, creating a welcoming and supportive environment, cultivating a sense of community among visitors, and positive recommendations from previous visitors can all improve a padel club's overall attractiveness to sports tourists.

This study contributes significantly to the theory of sports tourism by elucidating the variables that affect the attractiveness of padel clubs to tourists in Europe. The findings can assist padel club's managers and tourism organizations in developing strategies to improve the overall sports tourism experience and bring more tourists to European padel clubs.

Keywords: Sports tourism, Padel, Padel Clubs, Attractiveness, Europe

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Resumo

O turismo desportivo é um setor em crescimento na Europa, com cada vez mais turistas à procura de experiências desportivas envolventes. A popularidade do padel cresceu em toda a Europa nos últimos anos, tornando-se uma opção interessante para entusiastas do desporto. Esta tese investiga os fatores que tornam um clube de padel apelativo para turistas que visitam países europeus, bem como para não praticantes de padel.

Neste estudo, 202 avaliações do TripAdvisor de jogadores de padel foram analisadas usando um software chamado Leximancer. Estas avaliações vieram de trinta clubes de padel em cinco países europeus diferentes: Portugal, França, Espanha, Inglaterra e Itália. O Leximancer processa essas opiniões transformando dados em padrões.

O estudo identifica vários temas-chave que contribuem para a atratividade de um clube de padel para turistas através de uma revisão de literatura e pesquisa qualitativa, incluindo “padel”, “amigável”, “clube”, “jogar”, “equipa”, “recomendar”, “lições” e “utilidade”. Estes temas sugerem que investir em instalações e treinadores de alta qualidade, criar um ambiente acolhedor, cultivar um sentido de comunidade entre os visitantes e recomendações positivas de visitantes anteriores podem melhorar a atratividade geral de um clube de padel para os turistas desportivos.

Este estudo contribui para a teoria do turismo desportivo ao elucidar as variáveis que afetam a atratividade dos clubes de padel para os turistas na Europa. Os temas podem ajudar os gerentes de clubes e organizações de turismo a desenvolver estratégias para melhorar a experiência do turismo desportivo e trazer mais turistas para os clubes de padel europeus.

Palavras-chave: Turismo Desportivo, Padel, Clubes de Padel, Atratividade, Europa

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“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” - Helen Keller

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1 - Introduction

The influence of travel and tourism on economic and social development is indisputable as it opens countries to business, trade and capital investment opportunities leading to new jobs and entrepreneurialism. During recent years travel and tourism has been growing at a faster rate than both the general economy and other significant sectors (Grobelna & Skrzyszewska, 2019).

Although there has been a significant change in demand and visitor expectations, the tourism industry is still evolving. A segment of sports tourism has been on the rise for years now, and it is expected to continue to grow (Yu, 2010). Sports tourism accounts for 10% of global tourism and has an annual economic output of almost \$800 billion. Europe is considered the leading continent to attract sports tourism to countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland (Mhanna, 2018). Numerous research has been conducted since 1990 to better comprehend the nature of the connection between sport and tourism. The study by Williams and Zelinsky (1970) stands out among earlier studies that demonstrate this connection but also investigate the economic implications of sporting events (Weed, 2009). We currently witness a Globalization in sports where we witness the involvement and interaction of individuals, organizations, and governments across. Practical outcomes like advancements in technology and communication, have a major role in competitiveness in international markets, and cross-cultural management have influenced the growth of sports. Many experts use the ancient Olympic Games as an example of how spectators and competitors would travel for sporting events (The World Financial Review, 2022). Direct spending by sports tourists at host facilities, hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues stimulates the local economy (Grobelna & Skrzyszewska, 2019). Jobs are created, and tax revenue is earned. Notable sporting events may also improve the country image and create opportunities in the areas in which the events are held. In turn, these areas attract future visitors and the money they will spend—a desirable residual for many cities (The World Financial Review, 2022). Lately padel has been a topic of conversation between investors and world-renowned brands. For example, major fashion brands including Zara, Brunello Cucinelli, Slazenger, Adidas, and Head launch padels' sports ware. In addition, investment fund managers have realized that padel courts can have high returns, as is the case with the company EEPadel Capital, which will make an initial investment of 15 million dollars to make padel grow in the United States (Padel the next pickleball, 2022). The profit margins for padel business owners are also more appealing than building a tennis court, which is twice as expensive (García-Giménez et al., 2022). Glass walls and cushioned turf are necessary for a padel court, and their combined construction costs are close to 50,000 dollars. Club owners receive a revenue stream from a combination of court time and membership fees.

Padel has many benefits, including the fact that it doesn't require highly technical skills to begin playing, that most neighborhoods have a court nearby, and that it can be played indoors or outdoors, and the sport equipment is affordable (Courel Ibáñez et al., 2017). The padel is particularly appealing to adults and women due to its unique nature, namely it helps people to preserve functional autonomy and independence in their everyday lives as they age, and it is essential to promote healthy habits (Carrasco et al., 2011). Padel has different types of tournaments for different types of athletes (Barajas & Sánchez, 2011), although the effects of large athletic events on the cities where they took place have been extensively studied, we should not overlook the significance of smaller sporting events, which still suggest wealth creation in the area where they are held, mostly owing to the influx of spectators and players (Hurtado & Rueda, 2007; Wilson, 2006). The fact that this sport has gained a lot of popularity all over the world, in a short space of time, it made the scientific research on padel to increase (Courel-Ibáñez & Sánchez Alcaraz-Martínez, 2018). However, there is little information about the real reason people adhere to this modality and what are their motivations to continue playing while traveling for tourism. In this way, when understanding what really motivates people of different ages to play padel, the marketing and promotion actions of this sport can be more targeted.

So, this dissertation's primary goal is to address the following research question:

***RQ1** - What makes a padel club attractive for tourists that visit European countries?*

Leading to the main objectives to understand what drives people to play padel and what makes a padel club attractive for tourists that visit European countries, I will collect reviews from people of different countries and different ages from a website. The project aims to contribute to the literature by further understanding the importance of online reviews and players voluntary testimonials in order to identify the topics linked to padel experiences in European countries.

This dissertation is divided into six chapters in order to cover all of the main points and findings necessary to answer the research question. The introduction explains the research's direction and context. Following that is the Literary review, which provides more in-depth information about what has previously been published and studied in prestigious journals. The methodology describes in detail how the research question will be addressed, and it concludes with the results and discussion, which will enumerate the key results of this dissertation and contribute to the body of knowledge about tourists in European padel clubs. The final chapter will extract the major findings of this project while also pointing out the main limitations and future research possibilities.

2 - Literature Review

2.1- The connection between sports and tourism

The connections between sport and tourism have greatly increased and grown more distinct (Gibson, 1998). Both, sports, and tourism, are currently among the sectors of the global economy with the fastest growth rates (Sport Business, 2022). In the that followed World War II, a mass engagement in sports and tourism was attained, and in many cases, sports and tourism are engaged in at the same time, both sports and tourism sectors have new connections because of this (Gibson, 1998; Chhabra, 2007).

One of the most notable aspects of tourism is seasonality, yet strangely it is a phenomenon that show a lack of studies. The great majority of travel destinations are distinguished by regular yearly oscillations in tourism phenomena (Lasak, 2001), particularly, seasonality typically shows a major surge in visitors throughout the summer. The tourism industry perceives such oscillations in visits and income as a concern, and it invests time, money, and effort into changing these patterns by creating and putting into practice multiple strategies (Higham & Hinch, 2002; Brymer, 2013).

The World Tourism Organization predicted in its report “Tourism 2020 Vision” that 282.3 million foreign tourists will visit the Americas by the year 2020. This is relevant for sports as sports tourism is one of the key trends that has been expanding over the past last decades of the XX century among the growth of foreign visitor arrivals (World Tourism Organization, 2001a). Tourists have the possibility of attending sporting events and at the same time taking part in other tourist attractions, thus combining sports and tourism has grown in popularity. Governments and local communities also profit from sport tourism in terms of raising money for the community and public awareness, in addition to sports tourists who take advantage of it (Brymer, 2013). For instance, in the United Kingdom, 88 million pounds were spent into the London economy during the one weekend in 2007 London Grand De Portion of the Tour de France (Mathur, 2012).

Additionally, according to 2003 research by Gibson, football games have boosted local economies, boosted neighborhood pride, and raised tourists' awareness of local communities. The strength that sport has on people is immense and companies have realized this, so many of them show interest in sponsoring professional teams to give visibility to their brands (Leng, 2017).

A new classification was created to emphasize the many types of incentives that influence tourists' decision to travel and to differentiate sports tourism from tourism sports. Sports tourism is for people who travel primarily for competitive experiences of some kind, whereas sport tourism is for people who travel for unrelated or incidental reasons related to sport (Getz & Page, 2014).

2.1.2- Sports attractiveness

A new classification was created to emphasize the many types of incentives that influence tourists' decision to travel and to differentiate sports tourism from tourism sports. Sports tourism is for people who travel primarily for competitive experiences of some kind, whereas sport tourism is for people who travel for unrelated or incidental reasons related to sport (Getz & Page, 2014).

Sports are physical activities or games that are competitive in nature and involve the use of physical strength, skill, or endurance. There are hundreds of sports, ranging from those with just one competitor to those with hundreds of players playing at once, either in teams or individually. Some examples of sports include basketball, soccer, football, baseball, tennis, and golf. Individuals enjoy participating in sports to stay physically active and improve their health, while others enjoy watching sports as a form of entertainment (Brymer, 2013). In addition to the physical benefits, participating in sports can also improve mental well-being, build teamwork and leadership skills, and promote social connections (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005).

The thrill and drama of witnessing a live game or contest is one of the main elements that attract people to sports. Sports provide a wide range of emotional experiences that may be highly engaging, whether it's the rush of a last-second buzzer-beater in basketball, the anxiety of a penalty shootout in soccer, or the drama of a close match point in a padel game (Choi et al., 2022).

The sense of accomplishment that comes with participation in sports is a significant aspect that adds to their appeal. Sports may make people feel good about themselves and their talents, whether it's the sensation of triumph after winning a game or the sense of satisfaction that comes from accomplishing a personal best (Krzesiwo et al., 2018).

Finally, the sense of community and belonging that sports may foster can also make them appealing. Sports can bring people together and foster a feeling of community, whether it's the camaraderie among players on a sports team or the shared enthusiasm of fans for a particular sport or team (Choi et al., 2022).

2.1.3-Sports Motivation

Motivation is the driving force that inspires you to act and helps you achieve your goals. It can come from within you (intrinsic motivation) or from external factors (extrinsic motivation). Intrinsic motivation is driven by personal interests and a desire for personal satisfaction. It comes from within

you and is fueled by your own interests and passions. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, comes from external factors such as rewards, praise, or the desire to avoid punishment (Darnell SC, 2011).

Effective motivation involves finding a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation. When you are intrinsically motivated, you are more likely to engage in activities for the inherent enjoyment and satisfaction that they provide (Lichy & McLeay, 2017). When you are extrinsically motivated, you may be more likely to do something because of the rewards or incentives that are available. There are many ways to increase motivation to start practice sports, including setting clear goals, developing a positive attitude, finding sources of inspiration, and seeking support from others (Bjernereld & Lindmark, 2006).

Overall, the wide variety of motivations and emotional experiences that sports offer, the sense of accomplishment that comes from playing them, and the sense of community and belonging that they may foster are what make them so alluring (Lichy & McLeay, 2017).

2.2- The relevance of padel sports

Padel, after being created in Acapulco, Mexico in 1962, has been gaining a lot of popularity around the world. This modality is always played between two pairs with rackets and a ball like tennis, but with different pressure. Currently, this sport is played in numerous regions, with a larger community in countries such as Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Portugal, Qatar, USA, France, Uruguay, Holland, Germany, Japan, among many others (García-Giménez et al., 2022).

The field also has interesting details, as it is 20 meters long and 10 meters wide, surrounded by four walls. The quality of the court can significantly impact the player's experience and enjoyment of the game, as well as their safety and performance. Good padel courts are also essential for attracting and retaining players. poorly maintained courts with uneven surfaces or inadequate lighting can discourage players from participating and lead to injuries (Ryman Augustsson & Lundin, 2023).

When compared to tennis and squash racquets, paddle players' unique racquets exhibit striking variances in size and construction. The surface of a paddle tennis racquet is perforated for lighter weight and easier airflow. It is solid and mostly composed of lightweight composite materials (Valls, 2018). The racquet's 45 centimeters long face is 26x29 centimeters in size. With the less-pressure bright-yellow tennis ball being used as the ball, this short paddle is simpler to manage than a longer strung racquet, allowing beginners of all ages and ability levels to enjoy a fast-paced game with lots of rallies (Carrasco, 2011).

Padel Sports market size was valued at USD 163.95 million in 2021 and is expected to expand at a CAGR of 17.06% during the forecast period, reaching USD 421.84 million by 2027. Padel Sports Market Size is projected to reach Multimillion USD by 2028, in comparison to 2022 (By The Express Wire, 2022). Padel has gained many participants, both at a professional and amateur level, as it is a sport that does not require a high physical or technical form. At a professional level, this game provides real spectacles of skill and with a lot of competition in the mix. There is also an international championship that brings together all the best padel players from around the world, for example, World Padel Tour (Di Carlo, 2021).

Padel associations were quickly established in many nations across the globe because of the apparent growth. FIP, an international padel federation that represents numerous national associations globally, was established in early 1991 as a result (Javier, 2016).

The first padel court in Portugal was constructed in *Lisboa Racket Center* by a Spanish company, which is how padel began to be played in Portugal in the 1990s. Despite its initial lack of widespread appeal, padel is now played by more than 100,000 amateur and professional players nationwide, according to a count by the Portuguese Padel Federation in September 2021 (Tiesports, 2022).

Padel footballers from Portugal have recently achieved success abroad, for example in the Netherlands, the women's national team won the European Championship in 2015. Both teams finished as runners-up in the European Championship in 2017, which was hosted at *Clube de Ténis do Estoril* and was largely dominated by Spain. Ana Catarina Nogueira and Filipa Mendonça finished second in the double's competition in Europe. Portugal's performance at the 2018 World Cup in Paraguay was its best, where the men's national team finished in fifth place, and the women's national team earned a fantastic third place (Tiesports, 2022).

2.2.1 – The relevance of the International Padel Federation for tourism

Padel is being spread throughout the world, and countries and players were feeling the necessity to create an association that organizes and uniformize padel. So, on July 12th of 1991, the International Padel Federation (FIP) was founded in Madrid by the legal representatives of the Argentine Padel Association, the Spanish Padel Association, and the Uruguayan Padel Association, by means of public deeds signed before the Notary Mr. Javier Gaspar Alfaro, with the protocol number 2486 (PadeFIP.com, 2022).

The FIP organization is made up of the president, the board of directors, and a passionate and committed group of specialists. Our associated members are given close advice from a global and local

viewpoint, taking into consideration each regional and national situation, thanks to the presence of FIP team members on most of the world's continents (PadeFIP.com, 2022).

According to the official website of the international padel federation, the FIP represents 64 national federations from different countries and more than 500,000 federated padel players. These dimensions could be achieved thanks to the help of its sponsors, among which BullPadel, Joma and Cupra stand out.

The growth of padel tourism and the economy are both significantly influenced by the International Padel Federation. The FIP aids in boosting padel's recognition and luring more funding to the sport by marketing it internationally. This can then result in greater chances for the padel tourism industry to flourish and thrive. The FIP also conducts international padel competitions like the Padel World Championships and the World Padel Tour (WPT), which can draw a lot of visitors to the host towns and nations and benefit the local tourism industry's economy (Rodriguez-Fernandez, 2011).

The FIP oversees establishing and upholding the rules and regulations for the game of padel, it also seeks to advance the sport by offering instruction and training to competitors, coaches, and officials. This contributes to raising the sport's standard, which can attract more tourists and create additional business prospects. The FIP also emphasizes promoting involvement in the sport at all levels, from amateur to professional. This promotes the sport and brings in additional fans, athletes, tourists, and business prospects (Valls, 2018).

By planning events like conferences, seminars, and exhibitions, the FIP can not only promote the sport but also create networking possibilities amongst various players, coaches, and authorities involved in the padel industry. The construction of padel courts, training facilities, and lodging are just a few examples of the infrastructure development for padel tourism that the FIP may assist with (Di Carlo, 2021).

The International Padel Federation, in general, is essential to the growth and promotion of padel tourism. The FIP can contribute to increased tourism to host towns and nations as well as increased financial potential for the local tourism industry by promoting the sport, planning events, setting standards, and encouraging participation (Escudero-Tena, 2022).

2.2.2 – Relevance for the economy of the World Padel Tour

The World Padel Tour (WPT), a professional padel circuit that was created by the Association of Professional Padel Players (AJPP) and several sponsors, was unveiled in December 2011. The WPT

adds a fresh perspective to the professional scene in the fields of sport, business, and media (Jiménez-Naranjo et al., 2016).

World Padel Tour is the number one professional padel circuit worldwide. It gathers the best players from all around the world and has its central headquarters in Spain, where 12 of the 16 tournaments in the calendar are developed. This young sport has lived to see a great professional outburst in the last 10 years (worldpadeltour.com, 2022). Additionally, this may encourage more people to take up the activity, which may encourage more financial investment in it (Rodríguez-Fernandez, 2011).

Through a variety of channels, including ticket sales, sponsorships, and television rights, the Padel World Tour makes money. These funds can be utilized for prize money for the competitors as well as for the sport's expansion and advancement (Priego Quesada, 2013).

Hosting WPD competitions can have a positive economic impact on the host nations and localities. Local businesses like hotels, restaurants, and transportation providers may benefit from the flood of tourists who come to the area to attend the games. It can also provide employment in the hotel and tourism sectors (Javier, 2016).

Every tourney unites an average of 20,000 fans in stadiums with a capacity of over 5000 spectators. These numbers set Padel as the third sport only behind football and basketball, overcoming other old-established sports such as handball or indoor football. What has helped and contributed to the growth of this tournament are its sponsors, in which Estrella Damm, Cupra, BitPanda, Head among others stand out (World Padel Tour.com, 2022).

The fact that this tournament can be viewed on the official World Padel Tour channel on the Internet for free has contributed to the growth of interest in this competition. The latest proof of this is the agreement between Eleven Sports and the WPT to broadcast all tournaments on the professional Padel circuit, both in the men's and women's categories, which will take place until the end of the 2022 competition (Eleven Sports Portugal, 2022).

Overall, the WPT may boost the economy overall by fostering chances for growth and development, as well as by promoting and growing the sport.

3 – Methodology

Numerous research has examined the connection between sports tourism and the factors that influence someone to travel for sports, according to the literature review. It remains to delve into what drives people to play padel and what makes a padel club attractive for tourists that visit European countries.

3.1 – Information Source and Data Collection

This study will concentrate on online reviews from a website called TripAdvisor because they provide the most spontaneous, heartfelt, and immediate responses from the widest range of participants who have shared the same experience but have never met (Malhotra, 2017).

The 202 reviews were collected in total from thirty different padel courts in ten different cities across Europe. In Portugal we collect data from fields in Lisbon and Algarve, in Spain from Barcelona, Madrid and Marbella, in France from Lille, Toulouse and Paris, in Italy from Rome and Milan, finally in England we collect data from fields in London.

Fields from these locations were selected for the study because they were in the larger areas of each chosen country and also because they had a large number of assessments from which a large sample could be drawn. These padel courts are in different parts of Europe, therefore, they can provide a more diverse sample of people's evaluations of the fields and their characteristics, making them more relevant for sport tourism, and not for padel courts in a specific place.

Table 1: Number of Padel clubs per country

Country	Padel Clubs	Number of Reviews
Portugal	4	28
Spain	10	68
France	7	46
Italy	4	26
England	5	34

3.2 – Leximancer Data Analysis

The program utilized to analyze web reviews is called Leximancer, known as an unsupervised semantic mapping of natural language, Leximancer is a computer-assisted quantitative data analysis tool that offers automated analysis based on statistical features of text, extracting semantic and relational information (Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

Leximancer is unsupervised as opposed to Nvivo, ATLAS.ti, and CAPTAC, which demand manual processing of the data and coding (supervised) and make use of word frequency or coding words. This is regarded as one of Leximancer's major benefits because it makes use of its algorithm, is objective, and unearths texts' hidden structures and meanings by extracting key concepts and ideas (Lin et al., 2019).

To use Leximancer, users typically start by uploading a set of text documents or importing text data from a database or other source. Leximancer then processes the text, extracting key terms and phrases and organizing them into a visual map or "concept map" (Penn-Edwards, 2014). The concept map shows the relationships between different concepts and allows users to explore and analyze the data in a more intuitive way. To assist users in visualizing and communicating their findings, Leximancer also offers a variety of visualization choices, such as bar charts, line graphs, and scatter plots (Finneran, 2018).

The occurrences and co-occurrences of ideas and categories will be displayed once Leximancer analyses the data and generates the panel of insights and concept maps, making it easy to understand what draws padel practitioners and what are the essential ingredients for success (Finneran, 2018).

Overall, Leximancer is a powerful and user-friendly tool for text analysis and visualization and can be a valuable asset for the future analysis and work with large volumes of text data (Goh & Wilk, 2022).

4. RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present a comprehensive understanding of the research results on the subject of padel tourism. The results are systematically presented, following the research questions and objectives outlined in the preceding chapter. The findings are supported by data collected from reviews. This section of the thesis is essential for comprehending the study's outcomes and provides insights into the current state of padel as a sport, the aspects that practitioners consider most important, and the factors contributing to its growth and development.

4.1 Concept Map-Padel clubs in Europe

The results of the Leximancer content analysis were shown in the next table (see table 2) and concept map (see Figure 1) that highlights the topics and ideas that appeared most frequently in the amassed padel club's evaluations. Leximancer indicates eight themes: *club*, *padel*, *lessons*, *playing*, *helpful*, *recommend*, *team* and *friendly*.

Table 2: Theme, Hits, Connectivity, Concepts (Leximancer outputs)

Theme	Hits	Connectivity	Concepts
friendly	165	1357.00	friendly, place, staff, bar, area, nice, atmosphere, clean, rooms, beautiful, professional
padel	188	1233.00	padel, courts, tennis, best, excellent, maintained, fields
club	147	811.00	club, sport, fun, facilities, enjoy, level, parking, restaurant, time
playing	81	437.00	playing, game, friends, drink, week
team	45	198.00	team, family, welcome, environment
recommend	46	185.00	recommend, pleasant, quality
lessons	28	93.00	lessons, try
helpful	14	88.00	helpful

In this table 2 highlights were given to hits and connectivity. In general, hits may refer to the number of times a concept or idea has been encountered or referenced, which can indicate its relevance or popularity. Connectivity, on the other hand, refers to the relationships or connections between concepts. It reflects how well concepts are related to each other and how well they form a coherent network of ideas (Eide, 2015).

The two words that have the most hits are padel and friendly. The word friendly is at the forefront of the experience at this padel club, boasting 165 hits and a connectivity score of 1357,00. Then, the concept of "padel" has the highest number of hits (188), while having the second highest connectivity score (1233). This suggests that "padel" is a highly relevant and popular concept in the context of the

concept map. This high number of hits for "padel" may indicate that it is a well-known and frequently discussed topic, and that people have a strong interest in this sport. The relatively high connectivity score suggests that "padel" is well connected to other concepts within the map and that there are strong relationships between "padel" and other concepts.

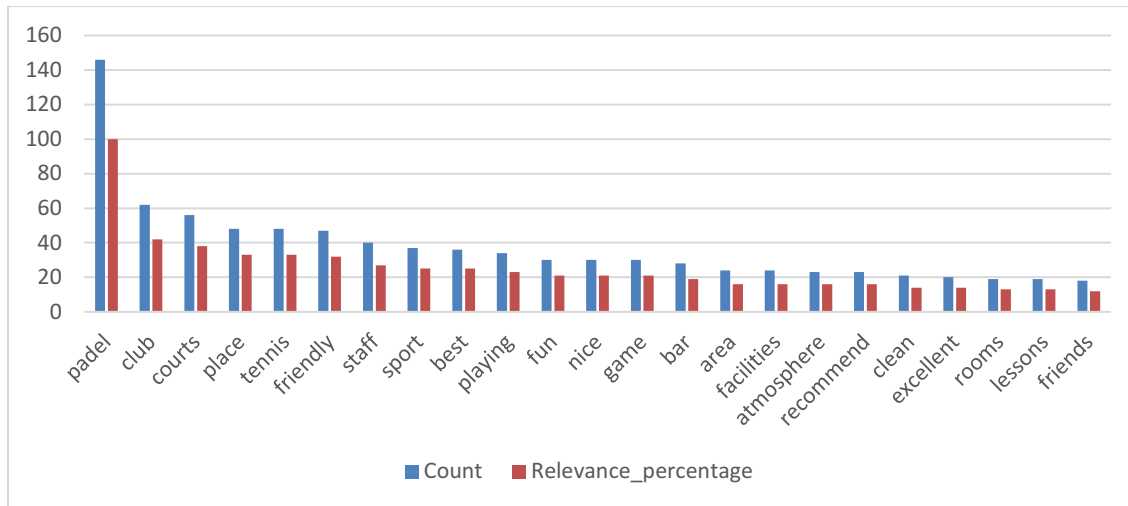


Figure 1: Count of concepts and Relevance (own elaboration)

Since there are many concepts, figure 2 shows those with a relevance greater than 10 and the count and relevance of different concepts related to padel practice and tourism. The most common concept is "padel," which appears 100 times, followed by "club" and "courts" with 42 and 38 occurrences respectively.

Other important concepts include "place" and "tennis" with 33 hits each, as well as "friendly" and "staff" with 32 and 27 hits respectively. The terms "sport" and "best" appear 25 times, suggesting the importance of high-quality athletic experiences in the world of padel.

Several concepts are related to the experience of playing padel, such as "playing," "game," and "fun," all of which have 20 or more hits. Additionally, the terms "nice," "bar," and "atmosphere" suggest the importance of a pleasant social environment for padel players.

Lastly, the concepts of "facilities," "clean," and "lessons" indicate the importance of well-maintained infrastructure and high-quality instruction in the world of padel. Overall, this figure highlights the diverse and multi-faceted nature of the sport, emphasizing the importance of a wide range of factors in creating a successful and enjoyable padel experience.

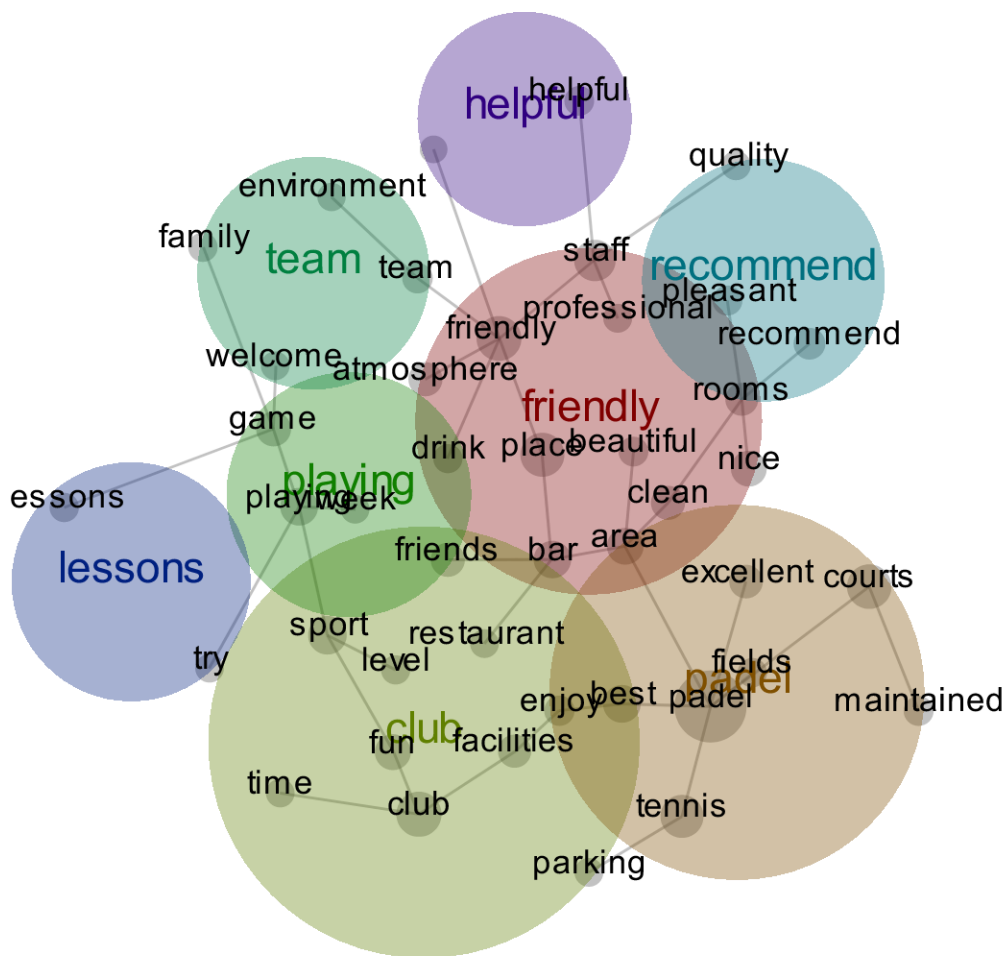


Figure 2: Concept Map-Padel clubs Attractiveness based on TripAdvisor reviews (Leximancer outputs)

In the concept map in Figure 1 it is possible to see that some notions within the themes help to connect them. These ideas include, for instance, the padel fields or the club facilities (relating to its service or physical layout).

To further explore this model, when looking at the concept map, *padel* and *club* are closely connected as courts quality and facilities are dependent on the layout and size of the padel clubs. Another example would be *friendly*, the theme that shares the most boundaries with other themes. The sharing of boundaries delineates a close relationship with *padel*, *club*, *playing*, and *recommend* as these are all closely tied to a sociable reputation and experience and act almost as a lynchpin to connect a lot of the themes and concepts.

5. DISCUSSION

The use of Leximancer to generate a conceptual map based on reviews from TripAdvisor is a suitable methodology to answer the research question. This type of reviews can provide a large amount of rich, detailed data from tourists or players who have experienced playing padel in European countries. This data can be analyzed using Leximancer to identify patterns and relationships between the concepts that are mentioned in the reviews (Goh & Wilk, 2022). Which can provide valuable insights into what drives people to play padel and what makes a padel club attractive to tourists.

Leximancer's conceptual map can assist in identifying the key concepts and themes most relevant to the research question. Leximancer software was employed to obtain a conceptual map containing the most revealed words, splitting it into main themes and concepts from the online reviews in an effort to try and answer the research question what are the key concepts and narratives (Molinari, 2017) shared online by padel players and padel tourists on clubs in Europe.

This chapter intends to answer the question what drives people to play padel and what makes a padel club attractive for tourists who visit European countries. To do that we decide that the eight themes can be grouped into two main groupings, each of which explains a different aspect of the experience and attraction of padel clubs. Firstly, it can identify themes related to sports enthusiasts including themes such as “padel”, “playing” and “lessons”. On the other hand, the Infrastructure and Hospitality group including the “club”, “friendly”, “recommend”, “team” and “helpful” themes as demonstrated in Table 3.

Separating themes into two groups, Sports Enthusiast and Infrastructure and Hospitality, are relevant to approaching the research question of what makes a padel club attractive for tourists visiting European countries because they provide insights into different aspects that can influence a padel club's attractiveness. We take into consideration both the sporting and non-sporting aspects that may influence their decision to come and enjoy their time at the club by considering both groups.

As shown in table 3, the Sports Enthusiast group concentrates on the sport of padel itself, including elements such as court quality, lesson availability, and the social experience of playing with friends. This group offers insights into the factors that are closely related to the sport and the experience of participating in it.

The Infrastructure and Hospitality group, on the other hand, focuses on the padel club's amenities and ambiance, such as the quality of facilities, staff friendliness, and general atmosphere. As shown in

table 3, this group offers insights into factors that are not directly related to the sport but can still influence a tourist's overall experience and impression of the padel club.

The analysis will be divided into two sections: first, a collection of words from web reviews that will illustrate and explain the findings in Figure 3, and second, an assessment of each topic comparing it to the literature gathered to support or refute the conclusion.

Table 3: Groups and Themes

Group	Theme	Concepts
Sports Enthusiast	padel	padel, courts, tennis, best, excellent, maintained, fields
	lessons	lessons, try
	playing	playing, game, friends, drink, week
Infrastructure and Hospitality	club	club, sport, fun, facilities, enjoy, level, parking, restaurant, time
	friendly	friendly, place, staff, bar, area, nice, atmosphere, clean, rooms, beautiful, professional
	recommend	recommend, pleasant, quality
	team	team, family, welcome, environment
	helpful	helpful

5.1 – Padel for tourists that are sports enthusiast

Padel (188 hits); Concepts: padel, courts, tennis, best, excellent, maintained, fields.

*“Saw (and had a go at) **padel tennis** in Andalucia, where it was very popular. On a visit to the latter we booked a one hour introductory lesson for the family. The scoring is just like tennis. I don't like playing tennis, but on a smaller court such as this, with a lower net, it is much easier. The back 'wall' of **court** is glass, where you can hit rebounds, just as you would in squash.” (# club in Spain)*

*“Very nice Racket Club, in my opinion the **best** in Lisbon. Severa Tennis, Squash and Padel courts. Padel **courts** are new and airy. It has a restaurant with a very nice terrace.” (# club in Portugal)*

*“Very nice tennis and padel center. Good service and nice atmosphere. I took padel lessons almost every day and the coach was superb. I learned a lot. The courts and **fields** were **maintained** well and perfect for my skills (slow, artificial grass turf).” (# club in France)*

*“Good atmosphere and **excellent** tracks. It's nice to practice paddle tennis here. Easy parking. Without a doubt, the best in Castellón.” (# club in Spain)*

Playing (81 hits); Concepts: playing, game, friends, drink, week.

*“Love **playing** this sport and cannot wait to return next year to play again.” (# club in Italy)*

*“It's my 2nd visit, and it's always a pleasure: a top-notch sports complex, a very friendly welcome, clean and spacious changing rooms, and perfect grounds to share good moments **playing** and socializing. The **game** afterwards is also very pleasant with dishes of beer and quality charcuterie.” (# club in Spain)*

*“New tracks, delicious food and spectacular atmosphere!! Perfect for **playing** paddle tennis and having fun with **friends**.” (# club in England)*

*“Great place with good owners to play padel! 2 out of 3 courses are newly placed now. Currently, (mixed tournaments are organized a few times a **week**. It can also help coordinate participation in other matches! Soft **drinks**, water, ice and some padel equipment are available for purchase. Good changing rooms and shower/WC are also available! Come here and enjoy.” (# club in France)*

Lessons (28 hits); Concepts: lessons, try.

*“After walking past the Padel club on our way into town several times I decided to give it a go. I play tennis at home 3 times a week and thought this looked so fun. I had a several **lessons** with Osul who was a fantastic instructor. He broke down my tennis background and helped me morph it into a Padel one. I would recommend this to anyone and the prices were very reasonable. What an addictive sport. Give it a **try** “ (# club in Spain)*

As previously referred, the most relevant theme in this group is “padel”, which is expected since it is the subject being evaluated. In order to identify what makes a padel club attractive to new players and tourists visiting European countries, it's important to consider the importance of high-quality courts. One idea that appears repeatedly in these topics is the value of good courts, which is explained by the fact that modern tourists are also looking for courts of a high caliber to prevent injury. This serves to support Ryman Augustsson & Lundin's theory in 2023 that high quality courts can significantly impact the player's experience and enjoyment of the game, as well as their safety and performance.

Players or tourists visiting European countries may be drawn to padel clubs that provide a social and relaxed environment in which they can enjoy the sport while socializing with friends and fellow players. According to the review analysis, many players value the opportunity to catch up and debrief on the game with others while enjoying food and drinks after the physical exertion of playing. This suggests that padel clubs with on-site restaurants or bars may be especially appealing to tourists and locals in European countries. One thing that can also be seen is that the concept “playing” is present jointly with the concepts “friends”, “game “and "drink", this comes to corroborate the idea of Kurtzman & Zauhar (2005) that that participating in sports can also improve teamwork and promote social connections.

Offering quality lessons with experienced coaches can be an important factor in attracting new players or tourists to European padel clubs. The "lessons" theme emerged as important for participants in developing their skills and building confidence in their abilities, according to the review analysis. The International Padel Federation (FIP), as mentioned in the literature review, aims to support practitioners of all levels, and investing in quality coaching can help improve the overall experience for padel tourists. Lessons can also help tourists develop a deeper appreciation for the sport and become more engaged in their overall experience at the club by providing guidance and encouragement (Carlsson, 2021). Padel clubs can work to create an appealing and engaging environment that encourages tourists to return and continue playing the sport by investing in excellent lessons and experienced coaches. Furthermore, providing a variety of lesson options, such as private or group sessions, can appeal to tourists of various skill levels and preferences. So, padel clubs can increase their attractiveness to new players and tourists visiting European countries and establish a reputation as a premier destination for padel enthusiasts by prioritizing quality lessons and coaching.

Overall, the results suggest that padel lessons and playing can provide a fun and enjoyable way to improve physical fitness and social well-being. As the popularity of the sport continues to grow, it is important to promote the benefits of padel and encourage more people to try lessons and engage in regular play (García-Giménez et al., 2022). This may involve investing in high-quality courts and facilities, as well as promoting the social aspect of the game and the enjoyment that comes with playing with friends, family or during trips. By understanding these factors and prioritizing them appropriately, padel clubs can work to attract and retain players and tourists visiting European countries who are interested in the sport.

5.2 – The relevance of infrastructure and hospitality

Friendly (165 hits); Concepts: friendly, place, staff, bar, area, nice, atmosphere, clean, rooms, beautiful, professional.

*“Excellent **padel structure**. 5 big courses, super quality. Covered and air-conditioned, therefore always good playing conditions. Extremely **friendly staff**. Advice for tourists who are not 4 years old: download the app and you can create or join open games.” (# club in Spain)*

*“It's my 2nd visit, and it's always a pleasure: a top-notch sports complex, a very **friendly** welcome, **clean** and spacious changing **rooms**, and perfect grounds to share good moments playing and socializing. The game afterwards is also very pleasant with dishes of beer and quality charcuterie.” (# club in England)*

*“A good place to do this activity. Effort to be made in the changing **rooms** and in the environment (**bar** etc.). Otherwise, nice **atmosphere**. To discover.” (# club in Portugal)*

*“Without a doubt the best padel center in the **area**, **friendly staff**, spotlessly clean and welcoming location both for those who play and for those who are there for a simple coffee or aperitif. **Professional** and well-maintained fields, congratulations I will return to play as many times as I can” (# club in Italy)*

Club (147 hits); Concepts: club, sport, fun, facilities, enjoy, level, parking, restaurant, time.

*“This sports complex has **excellent facilities** for practicing tennis and padel. The staff is very friendly and Great space (especially for those with children) and **food**” (# club in France)*

*“A truly high **level sports** center both for the services it offers **restaurant bar parking** but also for the many sports like Padel, the gym, Boxing, football all with excellent LED lit fields and with qualified instructors.” (# club in England)*

*“Had an amazing experience going to Padel Pro. The staff is so friendly and its really a good place to go for working out & having a **fun time** with friends or family.” (# club in Spain)*

*“This racquet **club** was a great discovery: quality padel and badminton courts, in Lille, at the top! After **sports**, we **enjoyed** the **restaurant** and the bar, a very cozy family atmosphere! There's even a dart board, the icing on the cake!” (# club in France)*

Team (45 hits); Concepts: team, family, welcome, environment.

*“So funny! Being a **family** never tried **padel** this was an excellent first experience!” (# club in Portugal)*

*“Good place to practice padel, in a good **environment**. Highly qualified **team** ideal for advice on sports equipment.” (# club in Italy)*

*“**Team** at the top. We had a great **family** time. Thanks to the whole team for this **welcome!** The kids loved it!” (# club in England)*

Recommend (46 hits); Concepts: recommend, pleasant, quality.

*“A good hour and a half of padel on beautiful new courts... and I don't know how many hours in the **pleasant** company of Kayla! Highly **recommended!**” (# club in France)*

*“A beautiful discovery in the Arcachon basin, in La Teste! A great family moment on a state-of-the-art padel court! Friendly staff, **quality** locker rooms and the must. A delight! I **recommend** this resort 100%! A big thank you to you!” (# club in Spain)*

Helpful (14 hits); Concepts: Helpful.

*“Brand new and very well kept club. Each space is studied in detail. The staff are always excellent and **helpful**. Organization of many sporting events. A place that makes you feel really good!” (# club in Spain)*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the most relevant theme is "padel," but this padel experience for tourists and non padel players must be supplemented with more Infrastructure and Hospitality themes, such as club facilities, staff, environment, and more. The concept map analysis indicates (Penn-Edwards, 2014) that tourists value a friendly environment, well-maintained club facilities, and helpful staff. With this information, padel clubs can work to attract and retain tourists visiting European countries who are interested in the sport.

Creating a welcoming and friendly atmosphere is crucial for padel clubs looking to captivate possible players or tourists visiting European countries. As seen in the analysis of reviews, the "friendly" theme emerged as a key factor for creating a positive experience. Tourists valued the overall ambiance of the club, as well as the friendliness of the staff in creating a welcoming environment. In addition to the friendly atmosphere, tourists also valued the cleanliness of the facilities, including the bar area and rooms. Ensuring that the club is well-maintained and hygienic can contribute to a positive experience for tourists and enhance the overall attractiveness of the club.

The "club" theme was also important for tourists and players that stop by padel clubs in European countries, with visitors valuing the sport's fun and facilities. They enjoyed the high quality of the facilities and the variety of amenities such as parking and restaurants. The time spent at the club was also valued by tourists. As shown in the literature review, padel tournaments can generate a high income of money and the quality and availability of facilities can make or break the tournament experience for both players and spectators (Jiménez-Naranjo et al., 2016). With this type of investment, padel clubs can increase their competitiveness in the European tourism market.

The themes of "team" and "recommend" can be related in the context of padel tourism through the idea of building a sense of community and promoting positive experiences (Choi et al., 2022). When tourists visit a padel club or participate in a tournament, they want to feel welcomed and supported. The concept of "team" refers to creating a welcoming environment that makes tourists feel like they are part of a larger community. When tourists have a positive experience with a padel club or tournament, they are more likely to "recommend" it to others. This could involve word-of-mouth recommendations to friends and family or posting positive reviews online. Positive recommendations can help increase the visibility and popularity of a club or tournament, which can in turn attract more tourists (Hurtado & Rueda, 2007; Wilson, 2006).

Tourists visiting European countries and possible padel players may be drawn to clubs with helpful and attentive staff. According to the review analysis, the "helpful" theme emerged as an important factor in creating a positive experience for tourists. Staff members who are willing to go above and beyond to make visitors happy can help to make a memorable and enjoyable visit to the padel club and also increasing tourism helping economy grow (Gibson, 2005).

Overall, the data from the conceptual map suggests (Penn-Edwards, 2014) that infrastructure and hospitality are important factors in retaining padel tourists and players. Padel clubs can work to create an attractive and memorable experience for tourists visiting European countries who are interested in the sport, by prioritizing friendly staff, a welcoming club atmosphere, a sense of teamwork, positive recommendations, and helpful staff. Padel facilities can create a positive and welcoming environment that encourages tourists' players to return and recommend the facility to others.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Main Conclusion

To sum up, padel can be a fantastic method to stay active and is a racquet sport that is popular throughout the world. A small ball and padel racquets are used in this sport, which is played by four people (Ryman Augustsson & Lundin, 2023). The game is frantic and demands quick reactions, accurate footwork, and strategic thinking (García-Giménez et al., 2022). Players of various skill levels can enjoy playing padel, which is also a terrific way to stay active and socialize with others.

There are several variables that may impact the number of tourists and new players who visit a padel club. The standard of the facilities is one of the most important considerations. Visitors want to play on well-kept court with top-notch equipment. The club's changing rooms, showers, and restrooms should be clean and comfortable. Parking should be simple and convenient, and the club should have a restaurant or bar serving good food and beverages. The overall club's atmosphere is also important, as tourists want to feel welcomed and assisted by the staff and other players.

Padel clubs that want to attract tourists visiting European countries need to pay attention to various factors, including the quality of the facilities, the level of hospitality, and the availability of excellent coaching and lessons. As highlighted in the previous sections of this thesis, tourists often seek out for good experiences. Padel clubs should create a welcoming and supportive environment for tourists and new players, which can lead to enjoyable and memorable experiences. Offering high-quality lessons and coaching is particularly important, as it can help players develop their skills and gain confidence in the game. By prioritizing these factors, padel clubs can not only attract more tourists but also promote the growth of the sport in European countries.

To attract players to a padel club in Europe, it is critical to foster a sense of community and promote positive experiences. Tourists and new players are more likely to enjoy their experience and recommend the club to others when they feel like they are part of a larger community. Providing opportunities for players to participate in tournaments, events, and social activities can help to stimulate a sense of community and make visitors feel more connected to the club and other players.

In conclusion, the appeal of padel clubs for tourists visiting European countries is multi-faceted (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005). In addition to the physical and mental aspects of the sport, the quality of the facilities, the availability of excellent coaching and lessons, and the creation of a welcoming and supportive community are important factors. The ability of padel clubs to provide enjoyable and

memorable experiences for tourists while also promoting the growth of the sport is crucial. Understanding these factors and their impact on the attractiveness of padel clubs to tourists can help clubs improve their offerings and ultimately contribute to the growth of sports tourism in Europe.

6.2 Contribution to theory

The theoretical contribution in this study is derived from the Leximancer analysis results, and the research offers an extensive overview of the factors that make a padel club appealing to tourists visiting European countries or non padel players. This study sheds light on the important themes of lessons, facilities, community, recommendation and others by synthesizing findings from various online reviews from non padel payers and padel tourists.

Second, by investigating the unique characteristics of padel tourism, this study contributes to the theory of sports tourism. While previous research has focused on more traditional sports such as basketball or football, this study emphasizes padel growing popularity as a tourist activity and its potential for economic development in European countries.

Third, this study adds to the body of knowledge on experiential tourism by investigating how padel clubs and tournaments can provide tourists with lasting and important experiences. The concept of "lessons," as well as the importance of good coaching and guidance, are especially relevant to the concept of experiential tourism, as they imply that tourists are looking for more than just a physical activity, but also an opportunity to learn and acquire new abilities.

6.3 Contribution to practice

Based on TripAdvisor reviews, the study identified several factors that contribute to the practical attractiveness of padel clubs for tourists and possible padel players. For starters, cultivating a sense of community and promoting positive experiences can result in increased recommendations and word-of-mouth advertising, both of which are important aspects of sports tourism. As a result, padel club managers can invest in creating welcoming environments, providing excellent coaching and lessons, and hosting events that promote team building and community spirit.

The quality and availability of facilities are critical in attracting visitors and non-players. Investing in well-maintained courts, equipment, and amenities such as restaurants, parking, and lodging can significantly improve the visitor's experience.

Padel tournaments can bring in a lot of money for the clubs and the local economy. Hosting international tournaments can increase the visibility and reputation of the padel club and the destination as a sports tourism destination for padel players and non-players.

6.4 Limitations

There are primarily three limitations that can be found in this study:

- Data derived from online reviews may have less legitimacy and a sampling bias, as individuals who post online reviews may belong to a less diverse sample, influencing results.
- Another limitation that can be recognized is the fact that the data used for the analysis was taken from internet reviews. The information may have less reliability and a sampling bias since people who submit online reviews may represent a less diverse sample and can skew the results.
- And finally, the quantitative analysis may increase the validity of these findings by making up for any shortcomings in the qualitative study. It would be good to conduct quantitative analyses.

6.5 Future Research

While this research sheds light on the factors that make a padel club appealing to tourists visiting European countries, there are still many areas that could be further investigated. Future research could investigate the role of social media and online reviews in influencing tourists' perceptions of padel clubs. With the growing popularity of social media platforms, it will be interesting to see how these channels are used to advertise padel clubs and tournaments, as well as how online reviews influence tourists' decision-making processes.

Furthermore, more investigation on the development of sustainable and environmentally practices within padel clubs and tournaments is required. With growing concerns about the environmental impact of tourism, padel clubs have a chance to lead the way in adopting more sustainability initiatives and reducing their ecological footprint.

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