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## Sporting Memorabilia, Place Branding and Dark Sports Tourism

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# Sporting Memorabilia, Place Branding and Dark Sports Tourism

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## Abstract

Tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon involving travel for personal or professional purposes, with dark tourism focusing on sites tied to tragic historical events. Dark tourism often intersects with sports, where certain organizations are shaped by dramatic events in their histories. For instance, the Cypriot football club “Nea Salamina” was deeply affected by the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, which forced its relocation from Famagusta to Larnaca. Events like these influence the identities of sports organizations, which often commemorate such tragedies to honor individuals, reflect on their history, or highlight their growth. Recent studies have explored how sports organizations also use these tragic events for place and destination branding. They promote travel and cultural interaction by creating relationships with certain locations. Football clubs, for example, create themed memorabilia, such as jerseys, that incorporate symbols and narratives from historical tragedies. These products introduce tourists to local history by bridging the gap between sports, tourism and dark tourism. This study examines the impact of a commemorative football jersey on a local community and a football club's identity, highlighting its broader implications in the sports and tourism sectors. It also highlights the cultural and economic value of such projects.

**Keywords:** sporting memorabilia, dark tourism, Crete, place branding

## Introduction

During the 1990s an alternative form of tourism gradually made its appearance. That was dark tourism. It is a tourist phenomenon that has spread widely to a specific consumer audience, who wishes to visit areas and locations that have become places, where wars, tragedies, disasters and deaths have taken place, in order to experience the heavy emotional burden that these places carry (Panayidou et al., 2024). Visitors who choose this alternative form of tourism appear to be interested in historical and educational topics, as well as information about the memory of people who have lost their lives, and the possible suffering they have experienced (Berberich, 2021). Given that it is a new field, it is important to study its context, in order to have a clearer picture of the concepts identified with dark tourism and simultaneously to evaluate those that are expected to be useful for future research (Podoshen et al., 2015).

Like every other social aspect, sports are a field that has been marked by many tragedies and disastrous events. These events often directly affect the operation of a sports organization or event, as they are likely to occur when a sporting event is in progress. A classic example is the tragedy of Hillsborough in 1989 when 97 supporters of Liverpool FC lost their lives, during the FA Cup semi final (Liverpoolfc, 2024). Such tragedies can stigmatize the history of many sports organizations, events and clubs. Historical events and tragedies can cause a great impact on the history of a sports organization or the region where it is located. As a result, they become a key part of a team's identity. For example, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 forced several people and sports clubs, such as Nea Salamina, to relocate in other areas of Cyprus, thereby changing the course of their history (Nea Salamina, 2019).

This leads several clubs and sports organizations today, to create sports memorabilia in honour of certain people or situations and to simultaneously enrich their brand.

The sports industry is estimated to be at 350–450 billion dollars, with a large percentage of this value coming from licences for sport brands, as well as from the official sporting merchandise and memorabilia (Tettamanzi et al, 2024). According to Statista, during 2023 globally the value of branded sport products reached 34 billion dollars. This amount of income makes it clear that sports products and memorabilia have an important role in the industry. The sports industry, especially team sports and more specifically football, is a field where fans experience intense emotions, through their interaction with the sport itself, the team they support, or even because of what their team advocates (Shakina et al, 2020).

Through the research of Biscaia et al. (2012) the importance of positive emotions and the effects they have between the relationship between the fans and their teams are emphasised. Such bonds and emotions can be strengthened through sports memorabilia that represents an aspect of the identity of sports teams and clubs. According to the dictionary ‘Law insider’ (2024), sports memorabilia is every item available for sale, that is produced and sold under a license granted by a professional sports league, association, franchise, or team. Therefore, these kinds of products are the ideal objects for the supporters of a football club, when they feel the need to establish an emotional connection with their favorite sports team.

### **Defining the research problem**

It is quite common among football clubs around the world to design and create thematic football jerseys, in order to commemorate and honor the memory of important figures in their history, or dramatic events/moments. In recent years, many sport clubs have been attempting to enrich their profile via the creation of commemorative jerseys, which carry a variety of historical, cultural, social and religious value. This phenomenon, combined with the complex nature of dark tourism (Light, 2017), creates a mix of conditions which, on occasion, favours the tourist industry in certain destinations. The main research problem concerns whether the transfer of elements from the field of dark tourism to sports benefits and enhances a regional brand, which carries the necessary elements to attract visitors who are interested in dark tourism.

### **Purpose of the research**

The primary goal of the study is to investigate the reasons behind the creation of an early form of dark – sport tourism in the village of Damasta, as well as the results and evolving viewpoints that resulted from it. These are examined through two different prisms. The first one takes a look at things from the point of view of the Damasta Football Club’s upper management. The second examines things from the vantage point of the residents of Damasta, some of whom support the team and are members of the village’s Holocaust Victims Association.

### **Research questions**

These are the research questions that aim to be addressed in this paper:

- Are themed – anniversary football jerseys a ‘way of expression’ for some groups, to draw attention to social and historical events that have had significant negative impacts?
- Does the Damasta Football Club’s themed jersey accomplish what it had hoped to do?
- Has this action sparked the curiosity and interest of the surrounding community?
- Did the villagers of Damasta see this action in a positive way? Regarding the village’s history and the victims of the Nazis, did they think it was an honorable initiative?
- Did the jersey’s creation ignite discussions on how to plan such events while considering the tourism industry’s involvement?

## **Limitations**

The main setback is that there are no similar cases, so that a comparative study can be carried out. Indeed, there are plenty of commemorative – themed football jerseys that draw inspiration from sad incidents and historical tragedies, but none of them appear to have been designed with the intention of highlighting or promoting a particular site as a dark tourism destination.

## **Literature review**

### **Four cases of thematic jerseys (Memorabilia) related to dark tourism**

It is clear that there is a potential connection between dark tourism and sports industry. Several football teams worldwide aim to remember, honor and highlight a sorrowful historical event, through the production of sport memorabilia. Moreover, there have been cases where football clubs have launched sport memorabilia – typically football jerseys – to draw attention to and connect themselves with a tragic event, even though there may not have been a direct connection before. Four relevant cases are analyzed below.

#### **APOEL – Asteras Tripolis**

Due to the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Greek revolution, the professional football clubs Asteras Tripolis, from Greece and APOEL Cyprus created a themed jersey. This jersey carries elements of dark tourism, as well as a plethora of historical, cultural and religious details.

On the front of the jersey, the background faintly depicts the painting ‘The legend of Agia Lavra’ by Adam Friedel and on top, it sports the white Cross that was placed on the first flag of the Greek state. On the back of the jersey, right below the neckline, is the number ‘21’ and alongside it the phrase ‘Liberty or Death’ is placed, which is the most characteristic phrase of the 1821 revolution (Asteras Tripolis, 2021).

These football clubs are based in areas that are linked to historical events that justify the creation of the thematic jersey. More specifically Asteras Tripoli’s base is located in the region of Arcadia, whose liberation in 1821 by Theodoros Kolokotronis and the Greek army, was a key event in the Greek revolution’s success. During that period, in Cyprus and more specifically in the city of Nicosia, where APOEL is currently based, the Ottomans captured and executed the archbishop Cyprianos, who was the representative of ‘Filiki Eteria’ in the city. This project has brought these teams closer, thanks to their nations’ shared history.

#### **Anorthosis Famagusta**

Another case of a themed football jersey which promotes a location, through dark tourism’s characteristics is the one belonging to the Cypriot team Anorthosis Famagusta. References to the name of the city, Famagusta, exist from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Cypriot city was a world-famous tourist resort, which housed 40.000 permanent residents, until 1974. The natural environment of the city, as well as the coastline were the main attractions for tourists and visitors (Municipality of Famagusta, 2018).

On July 20, 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus. The residents of Famagusta were forced to abandon the city after it was bombarded for a whole day, turning it into a ‘ghost city’ (Municipality of Famagusta, 2018). The city of Famagusta was also the ‘home’ of the local sports club, Anorthosis. In 2021, the club celebrated the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary, since its establishment and the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Greek revolution against the Ottomans. Hence, the team decided to design an anniversary themed jersey that combines historical aspects and symbolisms from both historical events. This highlights the club itself and its history, as well as the cultural and historical bond of Cyprus and Greece. The team’s official website stated that the organization of Anorthosis Famagusta arranged a competition in order to choose the sketch of the new themed jersey. In that competition every supporter of the club had the right to submit their sketch. Through this competition a sketch was chosen (Anorthosis Famagusta, 2021).

The jersey stood out because of its golden colour, which was chosen in honour of Famagusta’s beach which was known as the ‘Golden Coast’. Lastly, the emblem that was

selected for the anniversary jersey represents the association's foundation emblem (Anorthosis Famagusta, 2021).

### **Palestino FC – Celtic FC**

The next football jersey was created by the Chilean football team Palestino, because of an international tragedy and genocide. The main purpose of its creation was to honor the supporters of the Scottish football club Celtic, who stood by the victims of Palestine.

This case is unique due to the fact that Palestino began the campaign, but Celtic did not have an official involvement, while its supporters did. Club Deportivo Palestino was founded in 1920 by members of the Palestinian community of Santiago, Chile, which is reflected in both the name and the colours of the football team (Palestino, 2024). On the other hand, Celtic is one of the most recognizable and successful teams in Scotland. Since its founding in 1887, the organization has maintained a strong social profile, with the main goal of providing towards Glasgow's underprivileged population (Celtic, 2024).

This humanitarian approach has been ingrained in the club's identity over time, and its supporters, who are highly involved in social and humanitarian issues, have also supported it. Considering the fan base's mindset, Celtic got the attention of FIFA and UEFA during last year, when the Israeli – Palestinian conflict flared. More specifically, the team's organized fans and supporters stood in favour of Palestine. In fact, they were so strong-willed that they protested against Celtic's leadership, when it made an effort to suppress them (Aljazeera, 2023). Palestino decided to honor Celtic supporters by creating a themed jersey called 'Green Brigade' in recognition of their actions and support. This appearance is simultaneously a symbol of unity between the two groups, which are active in different social and sports backgrounds. However, both of their actions serve common purposes and interests. (777score, 2023).

### **Manchester United**

Manchester United is considered to be one of England's most historic teams. It was founded in 1878, by the name of ως «Newton Heath L&YR FC» and since then it has been active for 146 years. Its first appearance in the top league of English football was during 1892/93 season. In 1902 it changed its name to Manchester United and since 1910 its 'home' is the historic 'Old Trafford' stadium (Manutd, 2018).

In all of Manchester United's history there have been many moments of joy and success, however one of the most tragic events took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in 1958. It happened while the club was returning to its base in Manchester, from a draw against Red Star Belgrade. On their way home, the plane that transported the club's members was forced to stop in Munich's airport, Riem, in order to refuel. After that, two failed attempts to take off took place. During the third try, under harsh weather conditions, the plane crashed in a nearby field. Twenty-three people lost their lives because of the accident, eight of which were footballers, seven were sport journalists, four team administrators, two team supporters and two airplane crew members (Το Βήμα, 2023). This accident is considered one of the biggest tragedies in English football history. According to Mellor (2004) this incident affected the team's history and behavior, as well as its supporter's community. Until this day, in order to commemorate and honor the memory of the victims the club and its supporters organize and take part in thematic events.

The 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the 'Munich air disaster' was marked in 2008, when Manchester United organized a series of events to honor victims' memory. One of these events was the creation of a themed jersey that was worn by the team in a single official match. According to BBC Sport Football (2007), Manchester United created a jersey without sponsors so as to honor the victims. This particular jersey was worn in the match against Manchester City, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2008. This jersey was a memorial symbol for those who lost their lives, despite their occupational position, as well as the way this incident changed Manchester United's history.

### **The anniversary-thematic jersey of Damasta**

Damasta is one of the most historic villages of the Municipality of Malevizi. According to archaeological evidence the village was first populated around 3000 BC. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the name of the village, which remains unchanged, was first documented, as well as the number of its inhabitants in a census (Visitmalevizi, 2024). Damasta was one of Crete's villages that was torn down by Nazi German troops, during World War Two. The Nazis captured and executed thirty of the village's men on August 21, 1944. After this event the Nazis evacuated and burn down the village. East of Damasta, beside the site 'Keratidi' where the graves of the thirty executed are placed, a monument was created in their honor. In addition, in 'Keratidi' thirty cypresses have been planted and each one corresponds to one of the executed men (Dmko, 2024).

Since last year, the local authorities have been planning and organizing events that will take place throughout 2024 in order to commemorate those who were executed by the Nazis. This year (2024) marks 80 years since the Holocaust. The first of those events was carried out by the cooperation of Damasta's Holocaust Victims Association which consists only of decedents of the thirty men executed, and Damasta's Football Club, which participates in the first division of the local football league. The two organizations created an anniversary-themed jersey that included historical, cultural and religious elements. This jersey aims to be a sport memorabilia symbol which honors the history of the thirty executed men and the village itself, through its usage by the team and its availability to the public.

Two designs have been created, both of which were available in five colours. The main focus of the first design was practical, as it was used in the team's official games during 2024. The second version was only available for purchase. On the front side, both versions depicted the memorial structure of the village as well as the outline of the village's church, Saint George, as it contributed financially to the development of this project. The number 80 was placed on the back of the anniversary jersey, representing the years that have passed since the village's holocaust and below it the names of the thirty men were written. On the jersey that was used by the team the number 80 was replaced with the number of each footballer accordingly. Last but not least, the colours were chosen based on their practicality and the symbolisms for the project. More specifically:

- Light blue, dark blue and gold were chosen in order to cohere with the team's basic colours and at the same time to distinguish the goalkeepers' shirt, as defined by the rules of IFAB (theifab, 2024).
- The colour black symbolizes the bereavement of Damasta and
- Burgundy symbolized the rebirth of Damasta, moreover, it was used as the colour on the second goalkeeper's kit.

## **Methodology**

Firstly, the research topic and objectives were determined. After that, suitable key words were chosen in order to gather the data required for the literature study. Finally, the central questions for the two interview formats that would be utilized for collecting data for the primary study were determined from the research questions. The interviews were separated based on the sample's category in each case, as shown below.

## **Participants and sample**

There were two categories of individuals in the research sample. Damasta football club's administration made up the first category, while the second one was comprised of the village's residents. Regarding the second category, potential respondents had to have already bought the anniversary jersey in order to be allowed to take the survey. This sample differentiation was crucial since it provided two different viewpoints for examining the data during analysis.

There were ten participants in total. The first group was comprised of four people, three of whom were the club's main administrators that supervised the planning and execution of the anniversary jersey. The fourth person was one of the footballers of Damasta, who used the jersey during the official matches of the team. Six people who were originally from the

village of Damasta made up the second group of research participants. As previously noted, they had already bought the club's anniversary/themed jersey.

### **Method of data collection**

With the participants' consent, data was collected through recorded interviews. Each group's questions were different and focused on several aspects of the project. The first group of interviewees was asked three questions. The subject of the first question had to do with the motives for designing the team's themed jersey. The second question looked at how the project was seen by the fans and the local society. Lastly, the final question inquired whether there were further plans that included the use of the themed jersey.

The second group of interviewees was asked four questions. The first three aimed to study the reaction of the public concerning the Damasta Football club's initiative in creating the themed jersey, as well as the emotional effect it had on them. The final question was similar to the first group's and inquired on potential future uses for the themed jersey. In any case, one of the main goals of the last question directed at each group was to examine whether the tourism industry could involve itself in future uses of the anniversary jersey.

### **Results**

As described in the methodology, there were two types of questions. The first category was directed at Damasta football club's administration and athletes, while the second category was aimed at the team's supporters.

#### **Answers from the team's management and one of its players:**

The administrators and the athlete of Damasta football club were first questioned about the motives surrounding the creation and launch of the anniversary jersey. The interviewees provided a variety of answers, but they all had the same goal in mind: to honor those who were killed by the Nazis and to spread information concerning the village of Damasta's past. Through the responses received, all the objectives are directly related to the club's growth in a variety of commercial sectors as well as the promotion of organized events in honor of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the holocaust of Damasta. A typical response is as follows: *'Our goal was to actively participate in the commemorative events honoring the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the village's holocaust. The timing was ideal for putting this concept into action since we created and produced a symbol that now exists in every village home.'* Furthermore, the response that follows indicates that the club aims to use the anniversary jersey in the official matches: *'Another one of our goals was the use of the jersey in official games for the League and Heraklion Cup, at least for the second half of the 2023/24 season.'* Finally, despite the different role of the last interviewee of the first group, who is a footballer, it was clear from his response that he and his teammates wanted to honor the jersey and everything it stands for via their performance.

The second question inquired as to whether the local football community, as well as the residents of Damasta and the club's supporters, showed interest in the project of the anniversary jersey. Participants were asked to provide relevant examples in order to support any positive answers they gave. Through the responses of the four participants, it is evident that both the football and non-football community, including the residents of Damasta, showed interest. In fact, there were reports of a large number of orders for the jersey from people in the suburbs of Heraklion, the Greek territory and even from abroad. Moreover, the interviewees said that there was an increase in visitors to the club's home games. The Damasta football club's player provided the following characteristic response: *'Following the formal announcement of the anniversary jersey and the fact that it would be Damasta football club's first jersey for a short period of time, the people of the village and local community in general showed interest and filled our stadium in several home games'.*

In the interviews with the Damasta football club's administrators and one of its football players', the third and final question focused on potential future uses for the jersey. The four participants' answers include a small number of possible uses. In the context of the 80 – year

anniversary of the Damasta holocaust, they mostly discussed about the 'journey' of the jersey in the market and its promotion through upcoming events. They also commented on the use of the jersey as a political, social and cultural symbol as well as a conduit for the development and the enrichment of the club's business movements. Finally, a collaboration between the club and state institutions, such as the Hellenic Football Federation, was mentioned with the intention of promoting similar activities in different areas, through other sports clubs.

#### **Answers from the residents of Damasta/team's supporters:**

The first question that the residents of Damasta who participated in the research were asked, had to do with their emotions once they got the anniversary jersey. It was clear from their responses that all of them were moved. This was due to the symbolism of the jersey, as well as the history it narrates. Besides this, there were several different notable answers. For example, one of the participants expressed anger, toward the holocaust. Another participant stated the following: *'I can relate with this jersey and the team of Damasta, because as a long-time supporter, I know very well the team's history and what it stands for.'*

Pride and joy were the two main emotions that were mentioned. More specifically, one participant stated that they are proud, not just because of the jersey and impact it had on the local community and the team itself, but because the main contributor and coordinator of the project was a young man who originated from Damasta. Lastly, there was a particular answer which expresses hope for the development of similar projects that would honor the memory of the fallen and the village's history. They stated: *'I am very happy that the new generation has a way to get to know the history, that we learned and experienced through our parents and grandparents'.*

The second question that the participants answered had to do with the initiative that the Damasta FC took in creating the themed, anniversary jersey. The responses were all positive and the participants recognized that it was an important decision. Overall, the answers had a lot of similarities, as the residents highlighted that the team managed to honor the fallen and the village's recent history. Simultaneously, they emphasized that the jersey is the ideal memorabilia to showcase the history of the village. The following answer represents the above: *'The team's initiative was very important, because the village of Damasta acquired an item that narrates its story and suffering, which can be obtained by anyone, regardless of their age.'* Finally, comments on the originality of the project were made, with the reasoning that this jersey is an alternative, attractive way of publicizing the village itself and its history.

Regarding the third question, which examines if Damasta's residents believe that this project honored the thirty people that Nazis executed during World War II, the answers were all positive. Furthermore, some answers indicated that the jersey does not limit itself to the thirty fallen. It also honors those who survived the holocaust and helped rebuild the village. All the aforementioned can be seen through the following answer: *'The outfit honors not only the people that were killed by the Nazis, but also their families, the history of the village and most importantly the people who survived the holocaust and rebuilt the village, which exist to this day'.*

The fourth and final question asked the participants opinions on how the jersey can be utilized in the future. Emphasis was given to the use of the jersey by local authorities as a symbol against war crimes and most specifically crimes that took place during World War II. Moreover, it was mentioned that it can be used as a memorial for Damasta's holocaust. Also, a proposal was made for the commercial usage of the jersey, by Damasta FC. An exemplary answer was: *'The jersey can be used as an exhibition, by the team'.* Finally, an answer involved the tourism industry. Most specifically, given the interest that has developed around the jersey, its interconnection to alternative forms of tourism was mentioned. These alternative forms of tourism had to do with the characteristics of Damasta's village, which included cultural, historical and religious aspects, as well as its hospitality.

## **Discussion**



The primary goal of this paper is the examination of the motives behind the creation of an early form of dark sport tourism in the village of Damasta. As mentioned in the introduction of the paper, an important aspect of dark tourism is the destination and the emotional burden it 'bears' (Panayidou et al, 2024). When taking into consideration some of the elements of the sports industry, which can also be considered 'components' of dark tourism, a new aspect of dark events is attributed, which is not only linked to the destination (Šuligoj & Kennell, 2022). Including sport events and innovative actions of sport organizations, the transfer of dark tourism elements away from the location where the events took place is introduced. A tremendous example is the themed jersey of Palestino, which managed to connect a tragic event with two additional locations, besides the one that the event took place.

Dark tourism is an alternative form of tourism that can affect the people involved in many ways. It often highlights violent and lesser – known aspects of a historical event that most people feel uneasy and uncomfortable to manage (Pietrowski, 2016). On the other hand, the second main term of this paper, sports memorabilia, is an attraction for plenty of people. In general, these memorabilia can affect consumers' behavior since their main characteristics, such as rarity and what they stand for is particularly attractive (Draeger, 2016). The sport clubs want to have a connection with dark events and through sports memorabilia they aim to give a positive note and introduce the darker pages of history to the public.

This is also what Damasta FC aims to achieve. Through the themed jersey the recent history of Damasta's village, which is the base of the team, became known. This jersey became the conduit, as was mentioned in one of the interviews, which motivated the youngsters of the village to familiarize themselves with their roots and the history of Damasta during World War II. Furthermore, it became a symbol, which was used by the club for their official matches as well as by local authorities in order to showcase and highlight the local history and a plethora of cultural and social issues, mostly concerning war crimes. Finally, this initiative became the reason for other local football teams to do something similar. For example, the team of 'Aetos Anogion' also created a themed jersey to honor its village's fallen people, during the same period, according to the team's official profiles on social media.

### **Overview and presentation of answers to research questions:**

In order to answer the five research questions a series of interviews was conducted, as previously mentioned in the methodology chapter. Concerning the first research question, which inquires as to whether a football jersey is an efficient way of expression and as well as a way of highlighting social and historical events that had great impact, it can be deduced that its answer is positive. This is demonstrated through the literature review and the aforementioned case studies. Moreover, according to the responses of the administrators of the Damasta FC, this particular case study was spurred on by similar motives.

The subject of the second research question was whether Damasta FC accomplished its goals by creating its themed football jersey. Considering the villagers' comments and the responses provided by the team's administration, it appears that the goals were accomplished to the greatest extent. In simpler terms, this conclusion is reached by comparing the administrators' answers with the villagers' answers about the significance of the project and their thoughts on whether it was an appropriate tribute to the village's history and the thirty executed men.

Whether the local community was interested in the initiative was the subject of the third research question. The responses provided by both groups of interviewees showed great interest in the project. Also, there were reports of crowds rushing in and filling Damasta's stadium in their home fixtures, and there was a strong interest in purchasing the themed jersey.

The fourth question inquires on locals' perceptions concerning the entire jersey initiative. Once more, the responses indicated that people were joyful, touched and enthusiastic. They believe that the jersey honors the victims of the Nazis and morally brings attention to Damasta's past, while also educating the public about the village's recent past.

Taking into consideration the definition of dark sport tourism and all that was mentioned previously, in relation to the research questions, Damasta's themed jersey became a subject of

discussion as to whether the tourism industry could be involved. Only one interviewee brought up the potential of creating additional value by combining a sport memorabilia, such as this themed jersey, with the local tourism industry, hence this goal had scope for further development and discussion. Nonetheless, it has served as a platform for thoughts and dialogue on new alternative forms of tourism, that highlight the tourism services already provided and connect them to newer aspects of alternative tourism models, as well as to new possible target audiences.

## Conclusions

This study emphasizes on the connection between elements of the sports sector and dark tourism. This is achieved by creating themed sport memorabilia, such as the themed jersey of Damasta FC, which is the primary subject of this paper. Sports organizations can use this type of project to honor victims, maintain local heritage and potentially boost tourist activities by connecting them to tragic historical events.

The four case studies under consideration illustrate the various reasons why sports organizations may choose to make mournful incidents a part of their brand. Damasta's themed jersey honors the recent history of the village and the thirty people that were executed by German Nazi forces during World War II. It also bridges the generation gap, informing younger residents about the history of the village. From a wider angle, it is a creative way to connect sport to a community's cultural legacy, demonstrating how sports teams may serve as platforms for social, historical and emotional narratives.

The research brought attention to the heightened interest that occurred at the local level, which in fact led to the increase of attendants at the team's home fixtures. Simultaneously, there was increased interest from individuals located in other regions of Greece or overseas for purchasing the themed jersey. Due to the fact that the village's modern past was emphasized, through the themed jersey that intrigued many people, Damasta raised interest as a destination. An action like this one can positively affect the development and promotion of a recognizable place name if it is carried out correctly, as also demonstrated by the four case studies. Overall, Damasta's themed jersey is an example of how sport memorabilia can overcome their traditional roles, acting as a 'tool' for cultural storytelling, community empowerment and innovative tourism development.

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