



Print ISSN: 2233-4165 / Online ISSN 2233-5382  
 JIDB website: <http://www.jidb.or.kr>  
 doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.13106/jidb.2024.vol15.no2.31>

# The Impact of Recreational Sports Enthusiasts' Willingness to Engage in the Leisure Consumption

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Received: January 26, 2024. Revised: February 28, 2024. Accepted: February 28, 2024.

## Abstract

**Purpose:** The present research guides to a middle ground where recreational sports and enjoyment justify the basic concept of leisure consumption, exploring an exciting field of study, where participation is the motivational source of recreational sports fans for transferring into the motivation of leisure activities and leisure consumption. **Research design, data and methodology:** This research took a close look at the current literature to investigate impacts of recreational sports enthusiasts' willingness to engage in the leisure consumption. The screening and excluding procedure took a place to select a qualified prior resources and the present author finally obtained a total of 19 highly relevant papers. **Results:** The evaluation of the presented research shows that the enthusiasts' participation in avocational sports has four significant implications on their lifestyle and leisure consumption. These impacts are categorized as follows: Economic influence, Psychological influence, Social influence, and Environmental influence. **Conclusions:** In sum, this study has shown the various ways and magnitude in which willingness to participate in leisure affects its consumption by the recreational sports enthusiast. These impacts have brought critical implications for the viability of the sport leisure business in the industry, particularly in urging it to be the right strategic direction to cater to this market segment.

**Keywords :** Sports and Recreation, Leisure Consumption, Sports Industry, Literature Analysis

**JEL Classification Code :** L83, Z21, L67

## 1. Introduction

Exploring an exciting field of study, where participation is the motivational source of recreational sports fans for transferring into the motivation of leisure activities and leisure consumption, this paper guides to a middle ground where recreational sports and enjoyment justify the basic concept of leisure consumption. Examples of activities that can make up recreational sports include team sports like soccer and basketball or other individual pursuits such as hiking, cycling, or yoga (Zhang et al., 2023). Taking part in these activities can bring with it not only suitable physical but also psychological and social advantages, which add to building an individual's character. According to Halbrook et al. (2019), an individual interest, perceived benefits accrued

from the activity, availability of time, and accessibility of facilities, among others, would be some of the factors contributing to determining the readiness of a person to engage in such activities. A proper understanding of these factors will serve as a critical guide concerning how people take their time to spend their leisure time. On the contrary, Starosta and Izydorczyk (2020), on the one hand, it is an issue related to how free time is formed, providing for its use and enabling the acquisition of valuable skills and maybe even providing conditions for turning a passion into a way of doing worthwhile business. This could include buying sports items, sports services in free time, and products for which sports activities are part of the product, for example, equipment. The Willingness to participate in recreational sports has an intricate and complex relationship

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with leisure consumption (Jiang et al., 2021).

For as long as willingness to participate in recreational sports represents the level of investment a person puts into these activities, it only follows that it may beget increased levels of leisurely consumption (Martin Ginis et al., 2021), or low willingness to participate could show a penchant instead for other forms of leisurely consumption. The relationship will, therefore, be further explored through the study to understand how this willingness influences leisure consumption. The study will determine precisely what motivates and characterizes recreational sports fans' willingness to do it and relate it to how these characteristics also affect their consumption pattern. A clear understanding of this issue would provide a better appreciation of leisure behaviors and implications on industries associated with recreational and leisure activities. This understanding can support strategies that encourage people to participate more in their recreational sports or increase the utility of the offerings across the leisure industry.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Recreational Sports: An Overview**

Recreational sports provide a platter of a wide range of activities, engaged by people who love playing in a group and those who prefer to go alone. Engage in team sports, such as football and basketball, to personal fitness through swimming, cycling, or running via these activities; one can also get involved in leisure and social interaction. Beyond the physical aspect, recreational sports contribute to mental health as well, while at the same time, they help form a community of people with common interests. Research, as expected, reveals that these activities create the positive side of life and become a basic lifestyle (Ramalho & Petrica, 2023). Hence, any recreational sport thrills your body and feeds your heart, whether running the track or playing a game with your friends.

### **2.2. Motivations for Participation in Recreational Sports**

Research on recreational sports participation has delved into the intricate motivations driving individuals to engage in these activities. These motivations extend beyond physical exertion, revealing a rich tapestry of human desires and needs. As a cornerstone motivation, many people turn to recreational sports to enhance their physical well-being (Lucini & Pagani, 2021). Whether shedding extra pounds, building endurance, or maintaining overall health, the allure of a healthier lifestyle propels them onto the field, court, or track. The thrill of competition beckons (Qiu et al., 2022).

Some recreational sports provide an arena to test their mettle, set personal records, and conquer new heights. Pursuing excellence fuels their passion, pushing them to surpass their limits. The camaraderie fostered within recreational sports teams is akin to a second family. Participants seek social bonds, shared victories, and the joy of celebrating together. Whether it is high-fiving after a goal or cheering during a marathon, these connections enrich their lives. The court becomes a sanctuary, the trail a refuge. Escaping daily stressors, individuals find solace in the rhythm of their chosen sport (Yu et al., 2018). The rhythmic pounding of sneakers on pavement or the splash of water during a swim provides respite from life's demands. Being part of a team imparts a sense of purpose. Whether it is a weekend soccer league or a casual cycling group, the collective pursuit of a common goal fosters belonging and identity (Stebbins, 2018).

Existing research corroborates these motivations. For instance, a study conducted in Taiwan explored factors influencing interest in recreational sports participation. It revealed that the location of urban or rural residences significantly impacted interest, with rural dwellers showing less enthusiasm than their urban counterparts. Other factors, such as gender, education, participation frequency, health motivation, and appearance motivation, also played a role (Chen et al., 2017). Similarly, parents enrolling their children in sports consider a mix of extrinsic or parent-focused reasons, child growth and development, social benefits, and health or well-being (Pracht et al., 2020). Recreational sports are not just about physical activity; they weave together aspirations, connections, and personal growth, making them an integral part of our lives.

### **2.3. The Impact of Recreational Sports on Leisure Engagement**

Participation in recreational sports has diverse effects on individuals' leisure engagement (Hulteen et al., 2017). While the motivations driving people to engage in sports are well-documented, the subsequent impact on their leisure experiences remains an intriguing study area. Research indicates that recreational sports can significantly enhance leisure engagement by nurturing feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. When individuals participate in sports, they often experience a sense of accomplishment, which spills over into other leisure activities (Li et al., 2021). The autonomy gained through sports, making decisions, setting goals, and managing one's time translates to a broader willingness to explore leisure pursuits. Moreover, the social aspect of recreational sports fosters connections with others, reinforcing a sense of relatedness (Hopper & Iwasaki, 2017). Whether it is team sports, group fitness classes, or outdoor adventures, shared experiences create

bonds beyond the playing field. However, existing studies focus on specific sports or activities, leaving gaps in our understanding of the overall impact. Considering diverse contexts and individual differences, a more holistic approach is needed to unravel the intricate relationship between recreational sports and leisure engagement.

### 2.4. The Research Gap

Leisure activities, which we do for fun, have been shown to improve physical and mental health (Elsden et al., 2022). However, the research generally regards “leisure” as a single category, ignoring the differences between leisure activities and their impacts. To fill this gap, Recent research has examined how recreational sports, a large subgroup of leisure activities, affect our inclination to try others. One middle-aged adult study assessed leisure activity involvement and health functioning. The researchers considered general health, energy, bodily pain, social functioning, physical functioning, mental health, and role restrictions owing to emotional and physical difficulties (Taylor et al., 2016). They observed that leisure activities affected health differently. Frequent physical activity improved health, vigor, and physical functioning.

Cultural participation many times a year is beneficial. It improves social and physical health. Cultural activities, including art exhibitions, music concerts, and theater, build relationships and boost energy (Bernard & Rickett, 2016). This changes when we consider arts and literature activities. Interestingly, these artistic undertakings negatively impact health. The specific causes are unknown, although artistic expression and intellectual exploration may not directly benefit health. Volunteering or community engagement is more complicated. Health impacts vary by context. Volunteering can improve or harm well-being, depending on involvement. Promoting community engagement requires personalized approaches. Leisure interest and engagement were highlighted in another study. While interest alone affected well-being, engagement was far more critical. In particular, social activities and sports were strongly linked to well-being. This emphasizes the significance of participating in leisure activities to maximize their advantages (Schulz et al., 2017).

### 2.5. Need for The Study

Recreational sports enthusiasts remain an understudied demographic within leisure research. While prior studies demonstrate clear links between physical activity and well-being, few examine how sports participation shapes individuals' broader leisure engagement (Lera-López et al., 2020). This critical gap motivates the present study. By exploring recreational athletes' willingness to partake in

diverse leisure pursuits, from museums to book clubs, we aim to elucidate the mechanisms connecting sports to consumption patterns. Our granular approach classifies recreational activities based on features like adrenaline levels, camaraderie, and frequency. This nuanced perspective allows tailored interventions that leverage sports to boost leisure participation. Ultimately, unraveling how team hikers or weekend golfers spend their discretionary time will enrich leisure theories and policies. With multidimensional data and robust analytical models, this study focuses on recreational sports enthusiasts within the leisure landscape.

**Table 1: The Gap of the Literature**

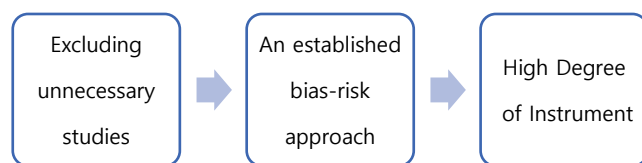
The Research Gap	Prior Resources
By exploring recreational athletes' willingness to partake in diverse leisure pursuits, from museums to book clubs, we aim to elucidate the mechanisms connecting sports to consumption patterns.	Ramalho and Petrica (2023), Lucini and Pagani (2021) and Qiu et al. (2022) and Yu et al. (2018) and Stebbins (2018), Chen et al. (2017) and Pracht et al. (2020) and Hulteen et al. (2017) and Li et al. (2021) and Hopper and Iwasaki (2017), Elsden et al. (2022), Bernard and Rickett (2016) and Schulz et al. (2017) and Lera-López et al. (2020)

## 3. Research Design

It took two phases to choose studies. First, two reviewers independently assessed retrieved article titles and abstracts to exclude unnecessary studies. The full texts of possibly relevant articles were evaluated in the second phase to decide inclusion. Reviewers settled issues through conversation. One reviewer extracted data using a standard form and verified it by another. Author names, publication year, location, participant profiles, leisure activity information, measurements utilized, assessed leisure consumption impacts, and significant results were collected from the paper. An established bias-risk approach assessed the listed research's methodological quality. This systematic approach allows the review to rigorously, comprehensively, and impartially synthesize current research on how recreational sports fans' leisure activity participation affects their spending and consumption (Lahart et al., 2019; Kang & Hwang, 2017). The mentioned studies will help justify the findings in the next chapter.

Raz-Yurovich (2021) published “Leisure: Definitions,

Trends, and Policy Implications” first. This study examines how leisure definitions have changed. Its broad review of leisure may assist in explaining recreational sports fans' motivations and behaviors. Chen et al. (2017) published “Factors Influencing Interest in Recreational Sports Participation and its Rural-urban Disparity” as the second study. The behavioral and socioeconomic aspects impacting recreational sports participation in Taiwan are examined in this study. It may reveal what motivates recreational sports fans to play. The third study (Aksoy & Arslan, 2019; Kang, 2021; Nantharath et al., 2016) examines how recreation affects student leisure obstacles. It may reveal how recreational activities affect leisure consumption in a specific population. These studies examine how recreational sports affect leisure consumption. They may illuminate your findings and reinforce this study’s claims. However, these papers should be assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria to establish their relevance to this research. Constantly assess each study's methodology and relevance to your research question (Phommahaxay et al., 2019).



**Figure 1:** The Study Selection Process

## 4. Findings

The evaluation of the presented research shows that the enthusiasts' participation in avocational sports has four significant implications on their lifestyle and leisure consumption. These impacts are categorized as follows: Economic influence, Psychological influence, Social influence, and Environmental influence.

### 4.1. Economic Impact

Due to the willingness of recreational sports enthusiasts to consume leisure, this potential impact on the economy is enormous and highly tangible (Harangi-Rákos et al., 2022). Hence, if they are prepared to spend their extra energy on leisure, their expenditures often represent significant economic value. Starting from equipment and clothing to travel, accommodation, entrance fees, and many more, a follower of any sport, for instance, cycling. This person could invest in highly regarded equipment, like a fine racing bicycle, appropriate safety gear, including helmets and pads,

and clothing designed for various climatic conditions (Büth et al., 2023). One might elect to enter into bike races that charge an entrance fee while also requiring travel arrangements and a place to stay overnight if the race takes more than one day. Furthermore, extra direct costs may be realized for travel to unique cycling spots, like mountain biking in a national park or participating in a few days' cycling tours. Each of these constitutes an amount of money that goes directly into the respective economy and stimulates economic activity. Such expenses guide the development of industries related to recreational sports and leisure. Businesses that manufacture or sell sporting equipment increase sales.

The travel and tourism sectors are among the winners, considering how many sports enthusiasts travel. These would have to include airlines and hotels, local catering facilities, and restaurants as they wait for the arrival of sports students on trips (Bradbury et al., 2023). The spending behavior of recreational sports enthusiasts could trigger multipliers in the economy. For example, money they spend on buying goods and services converts into income for relevant industries concerning products or services. Then, these people spend this money and keep using it, thus impacting the economy more than once. Likewise, discretionary spending by recreational sports enthusiasts may lead to economic effects by opening job opportunities and economic development (Lee et al., 2022). As revealed by recreational sports enthusiasts, economic activity is impacted where the willingness to involve oneself in leisure activities is exceptionally high. It spurs other economic activity and growth areas, sometimes generating local economies and new jobs. Such knowledge of economic impacts is essential for policymakers, businesses, and researchers in the consumption of recreation, sports, or leisure. It reinforces the promotional values of participation in recreational sports and may be considered a possible economic advantage in meeting the demand conditions of sports consumers' needs and wants.

### 4.2. Psychological Impact

Indeed, a psychological influence defines an enthusiast's willingness to undertake a leisure activity. The recreational benefits thus are related positively to improved mental health, greater self-esteem, and increased life satisfaction. Those psychological benefits might be reflected within enthusiasts' styles of leisure consumption through various mediators. For example, to the extent that one looks at a run as stress-relieving, the more readily he would invest in associated products and services of running (Eather et al., 2023). Recreational sports should help one feel optimistic based on the emotions one derives from participating in the game (Munroe-Chandler & Guerrero, 2017). This kind of

attachment should be able to condition how much they are prepared to give, taking into consideration time and money for such activities. Furthermore, the satisfaction from the favorite sport or the feeling of belonging to a group elicited similar emotional bonding in active participation when accompanied by competitive arousal (Eime et al., 2013).

There are probably other benefits that can be derived from recreational sports; for example, based on an individual's cognitive abilities, there could be better concentration in functioning, which helps in making the right decisions as well as problem-solving abilities developed by the self (Opstoel et al., 2019). These cognitive benefits further enhance the enjoyment of leisure activities and urge enthusiasts to deepen their investment in leisure consumption. There are also further psychological benefits from recreational sports that can be gained on the communal level. Recreational sports participants were also associated with increased community cohesion, social capital, and collective efficacy among member communities (Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2017). These community-based benefits may increase the popularity of leisure activities and stimulate their consumption. The psychological effect of the recreational sports enthusiasts' willingness to participate in leisure consumption is multifold and relevant. It impacts individual well-being, shapes leisure consumption behavior, and influences community development. To this end, local authorities, practicing managers, and scholars focusing on realizing the potential benefits that recreational sports can bring to leisure consumption should consider the influence of this dimension.

#### 4.3. Social Impact

Indeed, the willingness above to characterize modern recreational sports enthusiasts has a long-standing social background and dimensions (Kruize et al., 2019). By their nature, sports are essentially social. Joining the practice of a team sport, for example, soccer or basketball; developing strength and good agility in the running within an ordinary runners' club; or becoming involved in group fitness activity all present many genuine social opportunities. Concerning such interpersonal communication, it can enhance the enjoyment of leisure activities (Laursen & Veenstra, 2021). Sharing common interests with others has the potential to provide social interaction that would allow such people a chance to enjoy camaraderie and even an aspect of mutual appreciation with their fellows. Social networking sites can also make social acquaintances, friendships, and social networks, again giving added pleasure and thrill to life. In this sense, higher pleasure propels enthusiasts to spend more time, effort, and resources on their activity for leisure and increases recreational sports consumption (Iso-Ahola &

Baumeister, 2023). The perceived community or sense of belonging that might arise from participating in recreational sports can further compel the consumers toward those activities and the money spent on such a pursuit (Huipeng, 2023). When one is part of a community of like-minded people, participation may give an identity that is fulfilling and belonging. Participation in such a community also symbolizes social support for a person during high stress or struggle. The social implication of indulging remains personal to the larger society (Thorpe, 2016). The second benefit associated with recreational sports is that they affect community integration and collective identity. It also creates social capital, which may be explained as networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society that enable its functions.

#### 4.4. Environmental Impact

The environmental impact of the willingness of recreational sports people to engage in leisure activities is one major issue (Gao & Lee, 2019). This is particularly important because hikers and bird-watchers seeking free outdoor recreational activities might be more pro-environmental, which can significantly influence their leisure consumption. For example, an eco-sensitive hiker will ensure that all his hiking equipment is eco-friendly, that the trails are not too anthropologically impacted, and apply "leave no trace" methods so it can at least leave one (Cole, 2018). Some people, like bird lovers, may be thrilled with such eco-friendly binoculars because they are made of recycled items, give conservation money to bird habitats, and help save the bird species themselves (Jørgensen, 2019).

Their green awareness can also be observed while purchasing the products and services. While consuming these products or services, they may get for businesses that act sustainably; for example, they may use recycled materials, reduce waste in every possible way, and curtail carbon emissions. They will have no qualms about paying an extra cost for it since an increased value will assist in giving a fillip to the market for products related to sustainability and, in turn, prompt others to bring in changes so they turn sustainable. Moreover, in addition to the mentioned groups, fostering sustainability in the natural spaces of recreation involvement is possible. This is because they are involved in events organized for cleanups or conservation of such areas and shaping policies that enhance the preservation of such areas. In this way, more than just nature would be preserved; recreation can also occur in such spaces (Streimikiene et al., 2020). Moreover, the recreation of recreational sports fans is a direct positive environmental outcome since when these fans go green in their choice of goods or consumption practice, they are, to one extent or another, helping keep the earth green (Mahadewi et al.,

2021). His initiatives can alert society of the threats and stimulate similarly thinking people to search for solutions that collectively offer safety to the living environment.

**Table 1:** The Gap of the Literature

The Research Gap	Prior Resources
1. Economic Impact	Due to the willingness of recreational sports enthusiasts to consume leisure, this potential impact on the economy is enormous and highly tangible.
2. Psychological Impact	There are probably other benefits that can be derived from recreational sports; for example, based on an individual's cognitive abilities, there could be better concentration in functioning,
3. Social Impact	Sharing common interests with others has the potential to provide social interaction that would allow such people a chance to enjoy camaraderie and even an aspect of mutual appreciation with their fellows.
4. Environmental Impact	Their green awareness can also be observed while purchasing the products and services. While consuming these products or services, they may get for businesses that act sustainably.

## 5. Discussions

This study examined the impacts of recreational sports enthusiasts' willingness to engage in recreational activities on their leisure consumption. They identified four significant impacts: economic, psychological, social, and environmental. Policy scenarios within the future trends in the sports leisure industry are set up based on these impacts, which help create awareness for policymakers to give insights into the recreational sports enthusiast's motives, preferences, and behaviors. Based on this, we propose the following directives for the sports leisure industry to serve this growing and heterogeneous market: the first one will be for the industry to understand that most leisure sports also

contribute economically, and therefore, strategies to make them part with their disposable income should be put in place. This could mean products and services provided in such ways as they can fit different skill levels, interest levels, and budgets, among others. This way, the industry may serve individuals who are not keen less seriously through equipment rental, coaching, or light training while simultaneously serving the needs of hard-core enthusiasts through specialized or upper-end goods and services. The industry will also benefit from the multiplier economic effects of the leisure expenditure channeled to other economic sectors, including travel, hospitality, and retail. It could be a combination of sports activities with traveling somewhere, accommodating facilities provided by the industry, or collaboration with third parties regarding the recommendation of sports-related events or places of their arrangement.

Secondly, the sports leisure industry should consider the psychological benefits that the sport delivers through participation in recreation and enhance what pleases the amusement and arousal among the enthusiasts. This may involve furnishing positive and memorable experiences for enthusiasts, which could help to form emotional relationships with the activities they are engaged in. For example, the industry may use storytelling, gamification, or personalization strategies to make things exciting and emotionally appealing for the enthusiasts. Incentives could include feedback, rewards, or recognition systems for enthusiasts' successes and advancement, pushing them forward for continuance or furthering their enthusiastic participation. The recreation sports leisure industry could also tap the cognitive benefits of recreation sports by providing this class of enthusiasts with opportunities for learning or development, which trigger and challenge their minds.

The sports leisure industry must further understand that recreational sports are ascribed to social dimensions and then design channels through which relationships by its enthusiasts are developed and promoted. Some channels include various social interactions, communications, and collaborations between parties with an interest or common objective. For example, the industry could make it easier to relate through online platforms, social media, and mobile applications designed to bring enthusiasts together. The other strategy that would apply to the given industry to relate with its customers is creating events, clubs, and communities of enthusiasts related to the industry product or service. Furthermore, community-based recreational sports may enrich the enthusiasts with a sense of social responsibility, citizenship, or volunteerism and ask them to support each other at their request.

The players in the sports leisure sector should pay attention to the fact that recreational sports may have some

negative influence on the environment and create sustainable sources among the ranks of enthusiasts. This could be through the provision or marketing of products and services that neutralize or reduce the negative impacts of recreational sports on the environment, including pollution, waste, or resource depletion. It may also be possible that such a sector incorporates or encourages the adoption of environmentally friendly inputs, processes, or technology in manufacturing or distributing its products and informs these technologies to sports enthusiasts. More sensitization can also be made to enthusiasts regarding the impacts of their activities on the environment and even equipped with guidelines or tools on how to cut down their environmental impact. More support can also be channeled towards conserving and protecting natural spaces where fans derive their fun and indulge in advocacy and activism activities towards keeping the environment intact. This study has also shown the various ways and magnitude in which willingness to participate in leisure affects its consumption by the recreational sports enthusiast. These impacts have brought critical implications for the viability of the sport leisure business in the industry, particularly in urging it to be the right strategic direction to cater to this market segment. Only through understanding and catering to the enthusiasts' requisites and desires for recreation—economic, psychological, social, and environmental—can the industry fuel them with satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy to empower sustainable growth and, ergo, success.

## 6. Conclusions

Leisure enthusiasts active in all sorts of sports make up this group. Their leisure practice and spending provoke changes in the economy, society, and environment. The present study took up this topic and analyzed its impact using a thorough literature review of available research. The analysis made us examine identity, alienation, and economic, mental, and environmental impacts. From the cultural factor, the policymakers, corporations, and researchers working in the recreational sphere are affected. As leisure time spenders, consumers' recreational sports activity may cause an economic impact.

Moreover, they buy goods like equipment, accommodation, traveling, and amenities, which facilitates the economy. The spending they do is applicable for economic growth and the provision of more jobs. Consequently, supporting leisure sports players and disseminating product lines that target fans' needs could agitate economic growth. Recreational sport undoubtedly impinges on the psychological well-being of people passionate about leisure activities in many ways. Recreational sports lift people mentally, aid in self-confidence, and add happiness to one's lifestyle. These

mental effects mean that leisure activities impact people in a way that makes them feel like they were a part of these leisure pursuits, leading to people spending more and more time on their favorite activities. Sports activities for recreation play a significant role in community fostering, building social capital, efficiency, and branding.

Realizing the value behind producing feelings of happiness through recreational activities and relaxing during leisure time can benefit individual and community lives. Recreational sports fandom, marked as fun competition, plays a significant social role in society. Leisure activities affiliated with these enthusiasts socialize and make them happy as well. Connections through social get-togethers that result in friendship and a vast network of inclusive social support. Sustaining this business is necessary to maintain personal relationships and community feeling. With the help of social contacts and forming social relationships through recreation, sports, and leisure activities, enthusiasts find more fulfillment in their activities, and society gets stronger. The environmental costs of rival fans' recreational leisure excursions are equally important. Often, hikers and other outdoor lovers have their perception of how their specific recreations alter the natural surroundings. They support labels claiming green nature, crafting, conservation, and preservation. Through these, they keep the environment safe the way they love it and the beauty surrounding them. Those efforts raise public awareness of environmental issues, foster sustainable practices, and help conserve nature. Thus, the growth of leisure sports fans' environmental consciousness and green practices enriches society and safeguards nature.

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