



Current Issues and their Solutions in the Leisure Sports Tourism Industry

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Received: May 27, 2024. Revised: June 29, 2024. Accepted: June 30, 2024.

Abstract

Purpose: The primary aim of this study is to investigate the current issues in the leisure sports tourism and propose viable solutions based on a comprehensive review of existing literature. The specific objectives are to: (1) Identify the key challenges facing the leisure sports tourism industry. (2) Analyze the impact of these challenges on the industry's growth and sustainability. (3) Review and synthesize existing research to propose evidence-based solutions. **Research design, data and methodology:** The preliminary search yielded an extensive list of articles. These articles underwent a rigorous screening process based on their titles and abstracts. The inclusion criteria were: (1) studies focused specifically on the leisure sports tourism industry, (2) empirical research providing data on the identified issues, and (3) peer-reviewed journal articles. **Results:** The leisure sports tourism industry faces several pressing issues requiring effective solutions to ensure sustainability and growth. This section provides four critical solutions addressing the identified challenges: environmental sustainability, infrastructure and facility management, seasonality and economic impact, and health and safety concerns. **Conclusions:** The findings highlight several actionable solutions to the current issues faced by the leisure sports tourism industry. This industry can achieve a more stable and sustainable growth trajectory by addressing environmental sustainability, infrastructure and facility management, seasonality, and health and safety concerns.

Keywords : Sports and Recreation, Leisure Industry, Sports Tourism, Literature Analysis

JEL Classification Code : L83, Z21, L67

1. Introduction

Leisure sports tourism is one of the world's most popular and dynamically developing segments in the world tourism market. This industry comprises not only the adventurous and operational, like mountain climbing and rapid boating, but the recreations like golfing, tennis, and other sporting, wellness, and recreation like yoga and spas (Gharibzadeh et al., 2023). The desire of fitness enthusiasts to take their workout sessions to different tourist destinations has continued to attract more and more tourists each year, thus being a source of income for locals and countries.

However, this rapid growth has brought about several challenges. One is the environmental aspect, as the growing

number of tourists often leads to negative impacts on the environment, such as the destruction of habitats, pollution, and exploitation of the resources of a particular region. Thirdly, the facilities developed in many beautiful places of interest are generally poor to accommodate a large number of tourists that visit the area, and this is a safety hazard and a decline in the standard of services offered. Seasonality is another economic implication evident in leisure sports tourism since it alters the demand for tourist products and services and, thus, the financial status of the destinations.

Moreover, participants' health and safety are always vulnerable when participating in adventure sports and other sporting activities, which calls for measures and policies (Brussoni et al., 2015). However, it is essential to understand that these challenges can only be addressed to achieve

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sustainable development for the industry. This research will explore these issues further and undertake adequate measures to increase the sustainability of leisure sports tourism for the overall tourism se.

Understanding the current issues within the leisure sports tourism industry is crucial for developing strategies to enhance sustainability and competitiveness (Maki et al., 2023). This study is relevant since it offers insights into the difficulties that, if not addressed, may hinder the viability of this industry, including environmental concerns, infrastructural factors, seasonality, and health and safety concerns. Therefore, the findings of this research would be necessary for policymakers, managers, and other stakeholders to establish the problems facing this industry and how those problems could be solved so that this industry could grow sustainably.

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the current issues in the leisure sports tourism industry and propose viable solutions based on a comprehensive review of existing literature. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the key challenges facing the leisure sports tourism industry.
2. Analyze the impact of these challenges on the industry's growth and sustainability.
3. Review and synthesize existing research to propose evidence-based solutions.

2. Literature Review

The leisure sports tourism industry has experienced significant growth, drawing attention to its economic and social benefits. However, several challenges in the sector make its sustainability and efficiency questionable to some extent. This literature review identifies and discusses four primary issues in the leisure sports tourism industry: environmental sustainability, infrastructure and facility management, seasonality and economic impact, and health and safety concerns.

2.1. Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is a critical issue in the leisure sports tourism industry, as the increasing number of tourists participating in outdoor and adventure activities has led to significant environmental degradation. According to Baloch et al. (2023), tourism development impacts ecological sustainability, and this paper presents a framework for sustainable eco-tourism. Their research shows that the best way to manage the environment is crucial to proper waste disposal, conservation, and use of green energy.

Hognestad et al. (2022) focus on the problem of

environmental responsibility in sports and outdoor recreation, pointing out that sustainability has to be accomplished to preserve the value of tourist destination opportunities. This includes limiting individuals' freedom to certain areas, educating the public on manners when exploring, and engaging citizens in conservation efforts.

Moreover, the prior study (Kim & Kang, 2022) also described the impacts of sports and outdoor recreation on the natural environment and disclosed that tourism management can significantly reduce these adverse effects. Their study showed that alongside preserving natural resources, such practices positively influenced the growth of tourist numbers with a focus on environmental issues, making these destinations more popular and competitive in tourism.

2.2. Infrastructure and Facility Management

Infrastructure and facility management is a significant issue in the leisure sports tourism industry, with inadequate infrastructure posing a barrier to growth and safety. In the Abdullah et al. (2014) study, various challenges to developing and managing public Tourism facilities were identified. They include poor planning and inadequate funding, resulting in poor and unimpressive facilities that will deter tourists. According to the authors, it is evident that solid structures and safety measures are some of the most important factors that should be provided to attract tourists and protect them, including such aspects as the quality of structures, which have been stated to have a highly positive impact on the satisfaction of the tourists.

Herbold et al. (2020) also support the significance of the involvement of host communities in infrastructure development, as they should be involved in the planning and maintenance of infrastructures since it is favorable to tourists and the development of sustainable tourism. This is because participation guarantees that infrastructure development is going in the right direction regarding local demand and capacity, increasing population involvement.

According to Pechlaner & Smeral (2015), adequate, efficient, and quality infrastructure facilities are needed to accommodate leisure sports tourists. They argue that applying contemporary amenities and tools and crucial facilities such as safety measures and accessibility enhances tourists' satisfaction and the destination's competitiveness. Therefore, leisure sports tourism destinations must have their structures developed comprehensively for increased growth to ensure sustainability in the market in the future (Fotiadis et al., 2020).

2.3. Seasonality and Economic Impact

Seasonality is a significant challenge in leisure sports

tourism, affecting economic stability and employment. The prior study (Kim & Kang, 2022) described the characteristics of seasonality and its impact on tourism by explaining how seasonal variation influences economic activity. They argue that this can be achieved by diversifying the tourism products or services tourists visit.

The prior study (Kang & Kim, 2023) seemed to establish and discuss the factors that militate against sustainable sports tourism development in non-metropolitan regions with specific reference to seasonal tourism impacts. They also said that it is suitable for economic activity to have year-round activities, so there will always be a demand for the work of the local people. This concurs with the study conducted by Xiong and Tang (2023), who explored the effect of transport infrastructure and environmental spending on the revival of global tourism in health disasters. They argued that if infrastructure development is done and activities are diversified, off-season tourism can be managed.

2.4. Health and Safety Concerns

Health and safety concerns are paramount in leisure sports tourism due to the inherent risks associated with adventure sports and physical activities. According to Burr et al. (2013), it is high time to address the issue of it is high time to address the issue of risk to benefit ratio in adventure sports and the lack of empirical evidence on the benefits of health promotion as a counterpoint to the dangers of risk-taking. From the paper, they conclude that it is necessary to ensure adequate measures are put in place to protect tourists.

The prior study (Kang & Kim, 2023) proposed intervention strategies to mitigate risks in adventure tourism using the Haddon matrix perspective. They contend that it is possible to effectively control or reduce the risks associated with high-risk activities by checking the equipment and using qualified guides, among other risk control measures. In the same way, The prior study (Kim & Kang, 2022) presents personal risk in outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism and stress the necessity of enhancing safety management to minimize risks.

Zakaria et al. (2016) examine risk management in sports and recreational activities, emphasizing that steps should be taken to address and reduce risk. According to their findings, places with high safety measures implemented are bound to be visited by tourists, and the safety standards are bound to be high. Moreover, Huang et al. (2023) explain the form of night tourism accidents in China and the factors that lead to such incidents, thus providing measures to prevent such mishaps.

2.5. Research Gap

Despite the extensive research on the leisure sports

tourism industry, there is a notable gap in studies addressing practical solutions to these issues. Existing literature often highlights the problems but fails to provide comprehensive strategies to mitigate these challenges. This study, therefore, aims to present the problem area with research-based solutions derived from previous research studies, thus adding to the body of knowledge. The leisure sports tourism industry faces significant challenges related to environmental sustainability, infrastructure and facility management, seasonality and economic impact, and health and safety concerns. However, a general scarcity of actual problem-solving research in these areas is receiving growing attention.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection and Screening Procedures

To provide a robust justification for the findings presented in Chapter 4, this study employed a systematic literature review approach guided by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology. This approach ensured a thorough and unbiased selection of peer-reviewed journal articles relevant to the issues in the leisure sports tourism industry (Moher et al., 2010).

Identification: The initial step involved identifying relevant studies through comprehensive searches of academic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Keywords and phrases such as "leisure sports tourism," "environmental sustainability," "infrastructure management," "seasonality in tourism," and "health and safety in tourism" were used to locate pertinent articles. This search aimed to cover a wide range of studies published in the last ten years to ensure the inclusion of the most recent and relevant research (Woo & Kang, 2020).

Screening: The preliminary search yielded an extensive list of articles. These articles underwent a rigorous screening process based on their titles and abstracts. The inclusion criteria were: (1) studies focused specifically on the leisure sports tourism industry, (2) empirical research providing data on the identified issues, and (3) peer-reviewed journal articles. Articles that did not meet these criteria, such as those focused on general tourism without specific relevance to leisure sports or those published in non-peer-reviewed sources, were excluded.

Eligibility: Following the initial screening, the full texts of the remaining articles were assessed for eligibility. This stage involved a detailed examination to ensure that the studies directly addressed the four main issues identified in the literature review: environmental sustainability, infrastructure and facility management, seasonality, and

economic impact, and health and safety concerns. Only studies that provided substantial empirical evidence and discussed potential solutions to these issues were included in the final review (Guzak & Kang, 2018).

Inclusion: The articles were reviewed and finally included in the study based on the above criteria. The findings presented in chapter four of this research were based on these articles. Specifically, the papers were reviewed closely to gather the required data and information for each selected study. At the same time, the literature backed up the solutions mentioned in the findings section.

Justification: The systematic approach adopted in this methodology provides a solid foundation for the findings in Chapter 4. Hence, the guidelines of PRISMA assist the study in comprehensive, relevancy, and quality screening of the literature. Such elimination and reduction make this paper's argument more credible and give more truth to the actuality of leisure sports tourism as a subject of research and practice. This approach not only improves the reliability of the study's findings but also addresses the existing gap in the literature regarding leisure sports tourism by offering a synthesis of the current knowledge in the area and highlighting the challenges that may be encountered in the field and possible solutions.



Figure 1: The Final Data Selection Process

4. Findings

The leisure sports tourism industry faces several pressing issues requiring effective solutions to ensure sustainability and growth. This section provides four critical solutions addressing the identified challenges: environmental sustainability, infrastructure and facility management, seasonality and economic impact, and health and safety concerns. Each solution is supported by evidence from prior studies and presented with specific strategies for implementation.

4.1. Solutions for Environmental Sustainability: Adoption of Comprehensive Waste Management Practices

Environmental sustainability is a critical issue in leisure

sports tourism due to the significant environmental impact of tourism activities. A comprehensive approach to waste management can mitigate these impacts. Abubakar et al. (2022) emphatically state that appropriate measures must be implemented to address the issue of solid waste and the environment. Some of the measures that should be taken include developing and publicizing the recycling program, reducing the use of reusable plastics, and cultivating the environmentally conscious behaviors of tourists.

Moreover, integrating energy efficiency and water conservation measures can further enhance environmental sustainability. Energy conservation and water management are two areas the prior study (Kim & Kang, 2022) has noted as crucial in mitigating the effects of structures related to tourism on the environment. There are many potential solutions, such as the use of renewable energy sources, employing water-saving devices, and raising awareness of tourists about water conservation.

4.2. Solutions for Infrastructure and Facility Management: Investment in Modern and Sustainable Infrastructure

Infrastructure and facility management are pivotal in supporting the growing demand for leisure sports tourism. Sakai (2006) rightly notes that tourists will not come and stay without public sector investment in tourism infrastructure. Trail maintenance, safety gear that are relatively new in the sport's scene, and facility infrastructure need to be improved.

Also, support from the community or people in the area where these facilities would be developed is crucial. Similarly, the prior study (Park & Kang, 2022) explained that infrastructure construction should involve the community to ensure they appreciate the importance of such development and the value added to the community. This consists in engaging the local people in the development processes so that they have a positive attitude towards development.

Lahura and Sabrera (2022) illustrate the positive impact of infrastructure investment on tourism demand. Their study on Kuelap in Peru shows that improved infrastructure would increase tourist traffic, boosting the economy. This is because sustainable infrastructure is a very effective leverage that can be employed to encourage more tourists to visit the destination and ensure its sustainability.

4.3. Solutions for Addressing Seasonality and Economic Impact: Diversification of Tourism Activities

Seasonality poses significant economic challenges for the leisure sports tourism industry, leading to fluctuations in

tourist numbers and financial instability. Diversifying tourism activities to offer year-round attractions can mitigate these challenges. The prior study (Park & Kang, 2022) emphasized the importance of understanding and addressing the causes and implications of seasonality in tourism.

One effective strategy is to develop activities that are not dependent on specific seasons. For example, skiing resorts should diversify their product into summer products, which can include trekking, cycling, and several cultural activities, among others. In the paper by the prior study (Hong & Kang, 2022), the authors describe the importance of managing seasonality in sustainable tourism development and demonstrate which activities can help maintain the tourists' interest in the destination during different seasons.

Also, encouraging off-season tourism will spread the number of tourists over the year. This can be done by promoting the attractions and exciting experiences during the off-season, as the prior study (Hong & Kang, 2022) recommended. There are also reasons to stimulate tourist flow during the time that is not considered very attractive for traveling to prevent overloading of the infrastructural facilities in the high season.

4.4. Solutions for Health and Safety Concerns: Implementation of Rigorous Safety Protocols

Measures concerning health and safety are crucial, especially in leisure sports tourism, primarily due to the possibilities of dangers in tourism activities and workouts. It is, therefore, important that adequate measures be put in place to decrease the occurrence of these incidents and enhance confidence among tourists. The prior study (Kim & Kang, 2022) mentioned that reducing and eliminating medical mistakes is another safety management concern that can be relevant in tourism.

Measures that are crucial in implementing safety include: ensuring that standard safety procedures are put in place and also ensuring that all the tools are inspected and checked for mechanical problems (Hu et al., 2024). Another concern is the preparedness of the guides and the various staff working in the area in case of emergencies and the necessary precautions that should be taken. In this regard, Badiora et al. (2022) have highlighted the importance of safety and security assessment regarding threats and risks in the tourist receiving areas.

Another factor in safety management is communication. According to the research done by Zara et al. (2023), the communication determinants are crucial in the level of commitment to safety because communication of the safety measures that can improve safety performance is well enhanced. It is essential to educate tourists on the necessary precautions to observe and ensure they know them for their

safety (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012).

Creating a safe working environment for employees is also crucial. As the prior study (Park & Kang, 2022) states, some of the ways that can be adopted to strengthen the working environment safety include safety awareness training, clear and well-articulated safety policies, and a safety culture. In this regard, the International Labor Organization (2024) presents a clear framework that can be adopted for the management of occupational safety and health in the tourism industry to protect workers and visitors.

The leisure sports tourism industry faces several significant challenges that require targeted solutions to ensure sustainability and growth. By expanding the integrated waste management initiatives, enhancing tourism infrastructure through the construction of new modern and eco-friendly facilities, creating more diverse tourist attractions, and ensuring compliance with safety standards, the industry can overcome these challenges. These strategies, given by the literature and supported by the previous studies, indicate concrete recommendations that might enhance the industry's stability and attractiveness. Further research should focus on emerging new ideas and analyzing how such solutions have long-term impacts to improve the outlook and the permanency of leisure sports tourism.

Table 1: Supporting Resources of the Findings

| Solution Statement | Previous Selected Studies |
|--|--|
| <p>The findings provides four critical solutions addressing the identified challenges: environmental sustainability, infrastructure and facility management, seasonality and economic impact, and health and safety concerns. Each solution is supported by evidence from prior studies and presented with specific strategies for implementation.</p> | <p>Baloch et al. (2023), Hognestad et al. (2022), Abdullah et al. (2014), Fotiadis et al. (2020), Xiong and Tang (2023), Kang and Kim (2023), Zakaria et al. (2016), Huang et al. (2023), Abubakar et al. (2022), Lahura and Sabrera (2022), Park and Kang (2022), Hong and Kang (2022), Kim and Kang (2022), Hu et al. (2024), Badiora et al. (2022), Zara et al. (2023), Rittichainuwat and Chakraborty (2012)</p> |

5. Discussions

The findings of this study highlight several actionable solutions to the current issues faced by the leisure sports tourism industry. This industry can achieve a more stable and sustainable growth trajectory by addressing

environmental sustainability, infrastructure and facility management, seasonality, and health and safety concerns.

Adopting eco-friendly practices is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the leisure sports tourism industry. Tourist destinations should, therefore, ensure appropriate waste disposal means, energy from natural resources, and conservation of natural resources. These measures are effective in preventing the detrimental effects that tourism may occasion on the natural resource base.

Future practitioners should consider the following strategies: Integrating Environmental Education: Informing the tourists about the necessary measures to conserve the environment can go a long way in ensuring that the tourists adhere to those measures. Other possible measures that can increase tourist consciousness and minimize negative impact include advertising, popularizing ecological tourism, and using information and educational activities. Certifications and Standards: Some tools can be used to demonstrate a destination's sustainability commitment, such as Green Key or Blue Flag status. These certifications help tourists planning to visit a particular eco-friendly destination and set an environmental management standard for the industry.

Investing in modern infrastructure and maintaining high standards of facility management is critical to the success of the leisure sports tourism industry. Maintenance of trails, provision of safety measures and facilities, and provision of appropriate facilities not only enhance the tourists' experience but also ensure the safety of the tourists. To achieve this, practitioners should focus on: Regular Maintenance and Upgrades: Infrastructure maintenance is crucial as its deterioration results in poor facility and infrastructure quality. Some practices that can be carried out include checkups, repairs, and the adoption of technology in the structure.

Inclusive Design: It is possible to increase the number of people who can enjoy leisure sports tourism attractions if features that enable people with disabilities to access them are provided and integrated. Include universal and inclusive design principles from the early planning and development stages of the tourist activities to ensure they are accessible to all tourists.

Seasonality poses a significant challenge to the economic stability of leisure sports tourism destinations. To mitigate the effects of seasonal fluctuations, diversifying activities and creating year-round attractions are essential strategies. Practitioners should consider the following approaches: Year-Round Activities: Of course, it is quite possible to maintain the stream of tourists throughout the year if many activities interest them. For instance, ski resorts can expand their portfolio and provide other activities and events that could attract tourists when skiing isn't feasible. Marketing and Promotion: Marketing promotions can be used to reach out to potential visitors to visit during a

specific period or attend certain occasions when the place is not so congested. One can make people aware that some activities can only be done in a particular season and make the tourists travel in another.

The solutions outlined in this study provide a roadmap for addressing the critical challenges in the leisure sports tourism industry. For practitioners, the following recommendations can guide future practices:

Embrace Innovation: Continuous innovation is vital for staying competitive in the rapidly evolving tourism industry. Industry players must be well informed about the new technologies and trends prevalent in the market so that they can enhance their services and also the manner in which they operate.

Sustainable Development Goals Aligning with global sustainable development goals can enhance the credibility and attractiveness of leisure sports tourism destinations. This means that sustainability is a crucial and principal factor that should be considered in formulating the central business strategies and management processes so as not to harm the quality of the environment and the well-being of the people.

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