

**SPORT TOURISM: A POTENTIAL FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN
THE CONTEXT OF TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

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Abstract. The paper examines theoretical material on sports tourism, analyzes it, and identifies prospective topics for further study. Materials and procedures. In this section, the authors explore the role of sports and fitness. Fitness has become an essential part of the life of anyone who is serious about staying healthy. The goal of this study is to examine theoretical material on sports tourism, analyze sports tourism, and identify prospective topics for further research. There are many elements influencing the state of sports tourism. The article investigates sports tourist attractions. There is a strong association between foreign and domestic development of sports tourism and resources given for sports infrastructure. Overall, sports tourism trips attract tourists to their favorite sporting event, facility, or destination around the world.

Keywords. Niche tourism, global health, sport, healthy lifestyle, sports tourism.

Introduction. Sport has become an increasingly popular activity in society. It has also become a popular leisure activity for a growing number of people from diverse backgrounds. Along with tourism, it has become one of the most popular leisure activities in the modern world. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (2019), travel and tourism are "one of the world's largest economic sectors," providing one in every ten jobs (319 million) worldwide and accounting for 10.4% (US\$8.8 trillion) of global GDP in 2018. The intersection of two spheres, physical and sporting activities related to tourism, is becoming an important component of specific local development projects, particularly in inland regions and territories where its combination with cultural tourism and the natural environment, for example, can yield very interesting results. According to the Da Nang Declaration on Promoting Tourism and Sport for Sustainable Development (2016), tourism and sports are the most powerful economic drivers in society, with significant potential for socioeconomic benefits (UNTWO, 2016).

Furthermore, sports tourism is the fastest growing industry in global tourism, with various National Tourist Offices (NTOs) marketing sports-focused destinations. Pigeassou (2024) defines sport tourism as a collection of services provided or sold in various ways. According to the author, the most typical indications of these experiences are the type of activities, level of competence, and investment in the activity, as well as the participants' setting and status. However, a thorough discussion and analysis of what sport tourism is, its modalities, and its effects on global locations is required. This paper examines the relationship between sports and tourism as a driver of development for local destinations, focusing on minimizing negative impacts and maximizing positive outcomes, based on expert panel analysis and existing literature. This research uses the Delphi Method to gather insights from international sport tourism experts on the economic and social impact of sport tourism in destinations, as well as public and private cooperation strategies for promoting sport tourism. Finally, the results from a global perspective emphasize the primary prospects and challenges for sport tourism, as well as new trends and perspectives on this essential phenomenon.

Literature review. The definition of sport tourism has been a topic of debate among academics and professionals, despite its little existence. The British Central Council for Physical Recreation produced the first academic publication on sports tourism in 1966 (Anthony, 1966). Williams and Lewinsky conducted research in 1970 on the possibility for generating revenue from mega-sport events. In the 1980s, academics focused on the economic benefits of these sports events. Since the 1990s, the area has expanded and diversified, but its definition remains unclear. As Gibson predicted in 1998, it has grown in a fragmented fashion, both as an academic field of study and a discrete component of the tourism sector.

Previously, sport tourism was primarily associated with attending sporting events. According to Redmond (1990-1991), sport participants and visitors to prominent stadia and halls of fame are also actors in sport tourism, in addition to viewers. According to Hall's (1992) classification, sport tourism can be separated into two types: observing sports and participating in them. There are three types of sports-related destinations: those that host events, those that provide opportunities to practice sports, and those that offer associated attractions.

Methodology of the study. The Delphi method, a research strategy, was created in the late 1940s. The Delphi approach is founded on the concept that collective opinion is more reliable than individual opinion. The Delphi approach is a multi-stage survey that aims to reach consensus on a key subject.

The Delphi approach involves organizing a group conversation process to effectively address complicated problems. Structured communication involves providing feedback on individual contributions, assessing collective judgments, allowing individuals to revise their views, and maintaining anonymity for responses.

The most typical Delphi procedure is the «conventional or classical Delphi» variant, in which a small monitor team in charge of the study creates a questionnaire that is distributed to a wider responder group of specialists with understanding of the field requiring decision making. After the questionnaire is received, the monitor team compiles the findings. Following this phase, and based on the results, the monitor team creates a new questionnaire for the respondent group, restarting the process. The respondent group is usually given at least one opportunity to re-evaluate its original replies after reviewing the group response.

Result and discussion. The empirical findings were based on the data collected. Thus, this section displays the results acquired using the Delphi approach and secondary data. This section discusses both the study's discovered concerns and the proposed links between the empirical findings and the literature.

Promoting the success of sport tourism in destinations Experts believe that successful sport tourism projects require cooperation between tourism and sport agencies (86.7%), proper communication and transportation infrastructures, and appropriate equipment/facilities (73.3%), as well as expertise from social, business, and institutional networks (60%).

The most common obstacles to running a sport tourism project in a region were a lack of coordination between public tourism policies and decision makers (80%), project design, implementation, and execution costs (66.7%), and joint coordination between sport and tourism authorities (60%). Nearly 43% of respondents cited a lack of local involvement and poor public-private collaboration expertise as major impediments. Impact of sports tourism ventures. Most experts believe that sport tourism projects have three main benefits for a region: reducing seasonality (80%), driving local development (wealth and employment creation) (73.3%), and facilitating synergies with other activities (60%). Over 50% of respondents cited sport tourism as a significant source of income for the hospitality and tourist industries. Respondents unanimously identified the major negative impact of sport tourism initiatives in a region as

expensive and underutilized infrastructure (100%). Environmental degradation (93.3%) and governmental institutions' over-indebtedness (73.3%) are the second and third most significant negative impacts of sport tourism projects.

Conclusion. This study aims to advance understanding and discussion of sport tourism prospects and future trends. According to UNWTO (2016), sports tourism management agents must create sustainable and responsible conditions for the development of natural, cultural, human, and built resources to promote tourism and sports for socio-economic benefits. Throughout the information acquired based on a panel of experts located on five continents, it was clear that the international panel members' primary concern is cooperation among various administrations, scholars, decision makers, businesses, and sectors. As a result, the key conclusion is that, in order to flourish and become a development instrument in tourist locations, sport tourism activities must be organized in close collaboration with sport and tourism authorities, decision makers, other local resources, the local population, and so on. On the other side, it was discovered that experts do not place enough emphasis on the involvement of local people in sport tourism projects, which most scholars believe is a mistake that should be corrected. The study revealed that international panel experts believe collaboration between tourism and sports authorities is crucial for the success of a sport tourism destination.

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