ЮБИЛЕЙНА МЕЖДУНАРОДНА НАУЧНО-ПРАКТИЧЕСКА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯ

ТУРИЗМЪТ В ЕПОХА НА ПРЕХОДИ: ЗНАНИЯ, ПОЛИТИКИ И УСТОЙЧИВИ БИЗНЕС МОДЕЛИ

Сборник с доклади

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RE-THINKING SPORT TOURISM THROUGH STRONGER PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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South-West University „Neofit Rislki“

Abstract: While contemporary research widely acknowledges that local community engagement is a cornerstone of sustainable tourism, the foundational prerequisites for such engagement are rarely explored. This paper seeks to address this gap by re-thinking sport tourism by emphasizing the role of institutionalized physical education and local engagement toward sports including tourism. The central goal of this study is to demonstrate that a community's capacity to actively host, support, and promote sport tourism is structurally rooted in its internal common physical literacy and sports culture. By reviewing the long-term physical benefits of robust programs and regular exercise, this paper argues that cultivating public health and physical literacy from a young age is not to be separated from destination management. It is the primary mechanism for building the human infrastructure required for tourism in deed. Ultimately, this study questions about investing in strong physical education and giving emphasis on local actors with a sustainable, dual-benefit strategy: It is the opened possibility to enhance community well-being, on the one hand, and fostering a more capable, sports-oriented population equipped to drive local sport tourism initiatives.

Keywords: physical education, local community engagement, physical literacy, sport tourism.

Introduction

Many researchers in today's world have come to realize that developing sustainable tourism will rely heavily on engaging at the global level. However, very little research focuses on understanding what the fundamental requirements for local community participation in developing sustainable or nature-based tourism activities actually are. Moving toward this understanding, this article attempts to address exactly this gap and to approach to sport tourism development from the perspective of institutionalized physical education and local community engagement.

The main purpose of this research is to show that the capacity of a community to host, support and facilitate sport tourism activities is based on its internal sports culture and the community's level of physical literacy. In conducting a systematic review of the benefits of physical education programming, as measured physically, mentally and socially, and on developing physical activity, the author argues that investing in public health and establishing a foundation of physical literacy early on are not separate from destination management but are

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in fact the most recognised factors. Their contribution to developing the human resources is required and needed for tourism development in times of transitions as well. For this reason, searching and demonstrating a strong physical education system can create a long-term opportunity for sustainable development for both the community and an active sports-minded population.

Involving the local community in the development of tourism can be crucial for its success, as the community can play an active role in attracting and accommodating tourists, as well as promoting the area as a destination (Butowski, 2016; Brsčić, Lovrečić, & Sugar, 2021; Garg & Krishnan, 2023). Effective programs to promote tourism in general, and sport tourism in particular, have been shown to improve the physical, mental, and social quality of life of the community and benefit the local economy (Chang, Choong, & Ng, 2020). The success of sport tourism at commercial and traditional levels contributes to economic, social, environmental, and cultural benefits for residents (Chang et al., 2022). Studies examining how place image and tourism knowledge contribute to residents' support for sport tourism development have found that place image and tourism knowledge have a positive influence on residents' support for sport tourism development (Chang, Choong, & Ng, 2020).

To effectively involve the local community in sport tourism, however, it is essential to build their internal capacity and cultivate a local sports culture. In this study, we argue that the foundation of a community's readiness to sustain sport tourism lies in its historical and ongoing relationship with physical activity and institutionalized sport. By nurturing physical literacy from a young age, we strengthen the community (Chang et al., 2022) while making them capable of promoting sport tourism and improving their economic situation.

Therefore, this paper reviews the physical education through the lens of a literacy benefit, the cultivation of youth fitness into the set strategies for life, the creation of sports-oriented local communities in their contribution to long-term sport tourism.

1. Health and Physical Fitness as Community Assets

Regular exercise brings many health benefits. It is beyond doubt, that a sustained physical activity helps reducing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and many other chronic conditions. Regular physical activity can also provide many short-term benefits, such as improving sleep quality and reducing depression (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). There is clear evidence that exercise can improve a person's physical and mental health. A recommendation from the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and the American Heart Association (AHA) states that all healthy adults between the ages of 18 and 65 should engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate or vigorous aerobic (endurance) exercise five days a week or at least 20 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical exercise at least three days per week

(Haskell et al., 2007). However, only 30% of college students met the recommendations of ACSM and AHA, indicating the need for health campaigns to promote regular physical activity on college campuses and within local communities.

2. Culture Through Physical Education

Physical education is a school subject and is defined as the formal teaching of knowledge and values through physical activity and experiences (Davis, Roscoe & Bull, 2005). Pickup et al. (2007) describe Physical Education as "the most appropriate place for high quality, motivating and individually relevant provision is therefore within a fully inclusive statutory curriculum." Constantinidies et al. (2013) assert that physical education is a very important component of child development.

Physical activity through participation in Physical Education improves overall well-being and is one of the best preventive measures against significant health problems associated with many chronic diseases (e.g., obesity, hypertension, and high cholesterol). No other school subject has the potential to address these health needs. If communities are to build a sustainable sports environment capable of attracting sport tourism, Physical Education must be strong in schools, taught by qualified teachers, and focused on healthy behaviors. To implement this approach, schools should provide an expansive version of physical education and relate it to self-concepts and social goals (Baena-Extremera et al., 2012). Nevertheless, Physical Education has long been a cause for concern (Brown, 2011). People are often unaware of the importance of Physical Education, and although it has a relatively low profile in schools compared to other subjects (Trudeau & Shephard, 2010), it is clear that Physical Education has a relatively low profile in both the national curriculum and core subject strategies (Pickup, 2012). This fact is also valid for tourism in all its forms as education, activity and practice. Opinions about past experiences with Physical Education in school often distort the relationship between good physical education and personal health.

At the heart of this relationship is the teacher. Teachers who are trained as physical education teachers demonstrate higher levels of effective teacher behavior (Constantinides et al., 2013) and create high-quality programs. For example, trained physical education teachers can achieve greater improvement in physical fitness in children than teachers who are not appropriately trained. It promotes psychomotor learning in a fun or movement-oriented environment to promote health and physical fitness. Physical education is a valuable resource with huge potential to fight against passive lifestyles, as it promotes the development of movement skills and participation in lifelong physical activity (Disnoore & Bailey, 2009). The need for increased sports involvement has never been greater.

Experimental studies from the 1950s to the 1990s show that physical education programs are justified for their physical benefits (Jensen, 1998). Many researchers have noted that schools play a central role in providing children with the education and skill development necessary to promote lifelong physical activity.

3. The Role of Physical Education and Local Community Engagement in Developing Sport Tourism

To successfully bridge the gap between initial destination planning and long-term socio-economic viability, there is an urgent need for re-conceptualizing how sport tourism is integrated into the fabric of local communities. Recent bibliographic evidence strongly indicates that sport tourism should no longer be viewed merely as an isolated commercial sector, but rather as an extension of a community's broader life strategies, institutional physical education, and grassroots engagement. The transition from passive entertainment to active sport tourism requires a population that values physical culture. According to Ivanov and Marandykina (2024), the foundation of youth's "life strategies" and student development is based on physical education and sports. When physical education frameworks facilitate a lifelong commitment to being physically active, they help develop a demographic that views sports and tourism as interrelated pillars of their total development rather than different types of leisure activities.

The integration of sports and health tourism into physical education is systemic and begins in formative schooling. Golubeva (2023) claims that integrating both sports and health tourism directly into the physical education school system helps to expose students to active lifestyles at an early age and provides them with the specific physical literacy needed to support future regional sports initiatives.

From a different perspective, the student engagement at the school level has immediate dual benefits because, as demonstrated by Tolstopyatko, Orlov, and Parii (2023), participation in sports and health tourism is a direct vehicle by which seniors can improve their physical fitness, overall health, and academic/personal success. By institutionalizing sports tourism and including it within their educational curriculum, municipalities create a healthy, capable, motivated local population, as one that will serve as the primary human infrastructure for future tourism development.

4. Re-conceptualizing for Long-Term Sport Tourism Sustainability

Local communities with a robust internal sporting culture can effectively transition from a traditional, consumptive-based tourist model to an active sports tourism model. According to Ravikumar et al. (2025), transitional models to sports tourism from entertainment tourism provide various socioeconomic benefits, such as resilient-local economies, increased community pride and diverse

sources of revenue to local economies. However, implementing a sports tourism transition may not succeed just from top-down infrastructure investments, but require extensive deep-localized management of community assets. Wiltshier (2017) points to meaningful community engagement as the primary catalyst for sustainable rural tourism enterprise; therefore, local stakeholders must own the tourism product and benefit economically from their involvement in the tourism product. If local residents are excluded from tourism, significant blind spots occur that may threaten the long-term viability of significant projects. Brown (2011) indicates that while examining mega events such as the Olympics, research and planning communities tend to overlook blind spots regarding the impact that tourist sports have on the host residents, and how that impact is reciprocated. Thus, if effective long-term sustainable local tourism may ever be realized, there must be significant levels of in-depth local engagement with local residents, or otherwise, large-scale participant sports tourism could easily become an itinerant/extractive industry rather than a sustainable non-trade asset to the local economy.

Ultimately, successful destinations around the globe prove that community integration is a non-negotiable prerequisite for the longevity of sports-based regional development. When adapting the localized tourism models evaluated by Ward-Perkins and Seabolt (2022) in Costa Rica, it becomes clear that linking community engagement directly to active sport-tourism and adventure initiatives is what preserves regional authenticity and secures vital resident backing.

Rather than treating sports as an elite or isolated spectacle, embedding active recreation into the community footprint ensures that the local population acts as both hosts and daily participants. Similarly, the structural insights from Choegyal (2019) in Nepal underscore that community-led management is paramount to balancing protective spatial zoning with the seasonal influx of sport tourists, such as trekkers, mountaineers, and outdoor sports enthusiasts. When applied directly to the intersection of public fitness and regional development, these global lessons highlight the necessity of my theoretical proposition, namely the Paradigm Shift on physical education, local engagement and sport tourism, as presented on the following figure:



Fig. 1. The Paradigm Shift on physical education, local engagement and sport tourism

Source: author's model

Following the presented interrelations between the core paradigm elements, one can state, that local authorities must stop treating physical education, public health campaigns, and sport tourism as separate policy silos. Based on contemporary literature, sport tourism development must be re-conceptualized as a cyclical, self-sustaining system. By explicitly investing in the physical education and sports literacy of its youth, a community simultaneously builds the healthy, socially responsible, and enthusiastic host population required to organically manage, champion, and sustain a thriving sport tourism destination. This is a safe way to create a support network made up of people who want to be active participants to welcome tourists, manage events, and sustain their tourism projects. In addition, the current body of knowledge indicates that this form of economic and social development should be conceptualized as part of a larger lifecycle process as opposed to isolated policies. By embedding sports and health tourism into the educational curriculum, local communities help young people develop the fundamental skills necessary for life while improving their level of physical fitness and personal success. Developing a strong foundation of internal sports literacy within youth in locations that transition from a traditional tourism model (entertainment-based) to one that is focused on being an active sports-based tourism model will ensure that the residents are no longer passive observers. The residents will become engaged participants by having the health, motivation, and ability to sustain their local tourism businesses.

Conclusion

Developing a successful and sustainable sport tourism destination requires far more than modern infrastructure and commercial marketing; it demands a local community that is physically, socially, and mentally prepared to engage with a

sports culture. As reviewed throughout this study, regular physical activity and institutionalized physical education build the core assets of a community, namely physical literacy, public health, social responsibility, and cognitive adaptability. When local authorities invest in strong physical education and community fitness programs, they are not diverting resources from other development sectors.

Traditional approaches to building tourism very often don't include all the pieces needed for sports tourism to truly benefit communities, particularly when it comes to considering whether or not the residents of the community are ready to support sports tourism before investing in the swift build-out of required infrastructure. These case studies demonstrate that even the most aggressive sport tourism projects are at risk of being more of an extractive process than a benefit to a community unless there is a strong foundation of community engagement prior to embarking on the sport tourism project. Thus, any successful change requires the removal of administrative walls between public schools, public health agencies and destination managers. It is critical that destination managers know that the quality of physical education being provided to children in the community is directly related to the viability of any sport tourism project developed for that area in the future. As such, there is urgency to rethink the ways we approach the development of sport tourism. Sport tourism cannot be considered in isolation, but rather needs to be viewed as part of a larger ecosystem where physical culture at the grassroots level and physical economic development in the region mutually support one another. Investing in the physical education of our youth is in fact investing in the socioeconomic future of the destination. When communities support the development of active, healthy and connected youth, they are developing a strong foundation for successful community-based tourism. This holistic approach to sport tourism development will create a win-win scenario by maximizing the economy of the global sports market while protecting the pride and well-being of the local residents that comprise the core of the destination.

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ПРЕОСМИСЛЯНЕ НА СПОРТНИЯ ТУРИЗЪМ ЧРЕЗ ПО-СИЛНО ФИЗИЧЕСКО ВЪЗПИТАНИЕ И АНГАЖИРАНЕ НА МЕСТНАТА ОБЩНОСТ

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Абстракт: Въпреки че съвременните изследвания широко признават, че местната общност е крайъгълен камък за развитието на устойчивия туризъм, то основните предпоставки за това ангажиране рядко биват изследвани. Тази статия се стреми да запълни тази празнина, преосмисляйки развитието на спортния туризъм, като наблегне на ролята на институционализираното физическо възпитание и местната ангажираност към спорта, включително и в лицето на спортния туризъм. Централната цел на това проучване е да покаже, че капацитетът на една общност активно да бъде домакин, да подкрепя и популяризира спортни туристически събития е вкоренено във вътрешната ѝ обща спортна култура и физическа грамотност. Чрез преглед на дългосрочните ползи от програмите за физическо възпитание и редовните упражнения, тази статия извежда твърдението, че култивирането на общественото здраве и физическата грамотност от ранна възраст не следва да се разглежда отделно от управлението на дестинациите. Това е основният механизъм за изграждане на човешката инфраструктура, необходима за туризма. В крайна сметка, това проучване поставя под въпрос инвестирането в по-добро физическо възпитание и поставянето на акцент върху местните власти с устойчива стратегия, като това има двойна полза: Това е откритата възможност за подобряване на благосъстоянието на общността, от една страна, и насърчаване на по-способно, спортно ориентирано население, подготвено да управлява местни инициативи за спортен туризъм.

Ключови думи: физическо възпитание, ангажиране на местната общност, физическа грамотност, спортен туризъм.

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