

Sport Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Tourism can contribute to sustainable development and the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) if properly developed and managed. As a segment of tourism, sport tourism also helps achieve sustainable development in a distinct way stemming from its characteristics. This article illustrates how sport tourism can contribute to these goals and what needs to be considered when developing sport tourism to realize its contribution to sustainable development.

The comparative strength of sport tourism lies in (1) engagement in physical activities, (2) opportunities for interactions, and (3) high development potential almost anywhere (small events or light activities like walking in particular). Thanks to these characteristics, sport tourism can play an important role in achieving various SDGs if developed with consideration of SDGs.

SDGs	How sport tourism can contribute to SDGs	What needs to be considered when developing sport tourism and advancing the SDGs
<p>SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere</p> <p>+</p> <p>SDG 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</p>	<p>Jobs and income opportunities: Sport tourism, as other segments of tourism, provides jobs and income opportunities including those for less favoured groups. Depending on the nature of sport tourism products and experiences developed, local people can work as instructors and guides who are likely to be paid more than average for their special skills. New businesses catering to sport tourists can be also expected: e.g., equipment rentals, transport services, etc.</p> <p>Visitor spending: Sport tourists tend to spend more than average tourists (for renting equipment, hiring instructors, participation fees, etc.). Sport events, even small ones, attract participants and spectators, whose spending at the destination directly brings in economic benefits. Sport tourists tend to enjoy the destination’s other attractions, which results in more spending.</p> <p>Competitiveness: Sport tourism can enhance a destination’s attractiveness and competitiveness by expanding the destination’s tourism offer. This helps increase a length of stay and spending of visitors. Sport tourism products and sport events can contribute to dispersal of tourists spatially and temporally when they are organized in a less-visited area of the destination or in off-peak season.</p>	<p>Partnerships and community involvement: Successful development of sport tourism requires close cooperative relationship among stakeholders in sport (including sport commission) and tourism sectors, and private and public sectors. Involvement of the communities is also crucial for sport tourism to benefit the destination as a whole and enhance welfare of the locals, the disadvantaged in particular. Engaging local people is crucial in various ways since it enables them to act for tourism development and improvement of quality of life of their own.</p> <p>Support of the locals: Hiring local people, encouraging local entrepreneurs and utilizing local products help minimize economic leakage and maximize local benefits. Employees for sport tourism are often required to have special skills, especially as instructors and guides. Therefore, training opportunities need to be provided for local people. It is preferable that new or expanded business opportunities brought in by sport tourism are materialized by local SMEs and it is necessary to provide them with business advice and micro finance.</p> <p>Sport events: When a sport event is planned, the type and size needs to be appropriate based on the capacity and characteristics of the destination. Timing and venue of a sport event should be considered with the objectives of the event taken into account. In order to distinguish the event from others, it is important to add something with local flavours: for example, combining sport activities with local culture and gastronomy and offering an opportunity to interact with the locals. Also it can be considered to offer incentives (e.g., coupons) to participants to spend more at local shops, restaurants and other services. Efforts in public relations should be made since sport events are a good opportunity of promotion through media. If the event is held regularly, it is possible to achieve long-term positive impacts.</p>

		<p>Sport events for a cause: Sport events can be held for a cause, where part of participation fees goes to projects or charities to help local communities. This not only helps communities but also enhances visitor satisfaction and visitors' mental attachment to the destination, which stimulates repeat visits and good word of mouth.</p> <p>New sport: A destination can even create a new sport or sport event taking advantage of its unique natural and cultural heritage. It may start small, but it can be a major attraction if it becomes popular to visitors and residents alike.</p> <p>Technology: Sport tourism should take advantage of the latest technology and innovation such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), or virtual reality (VR), which can make sport tourism more exciting and entertaining. Stadia and arenas have begun "smartization" utilizing applications and wearable devices to improve audience's convenience. Sport events and museums can enhance visitor experiences with help of technology. It is also expected that innovation creates new gears for the people with disabilities to enjoy sport activities.</p> <p>Combining sport tourism with other tourism resources: Sport tourists are likely to want to experience other attractions during their stay at a destination. Participants of a sport event, non-competitive ones in particular, tend to take advantage of the event opportunity to discover other tourist attractions at a destination. Therefore it is important to combine sport tourism with other tourism resources and promote them together. This also helps distinguish a destination from others and bring more benefits to a destination as a whole.</p> <p>Safety: Whatever sport tourism is developed, safety is the utmost important. Sport activities must be programmed with minimum risk. Participants need to be informed of the risk and safety measures and act responsibly. Instructors and guides need to have a good knowledge of how to act in emergency through trainings. Visitors, employees and businesses should be appropriately insured.</p>
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<p>SDG 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</p>	<p>Well-being of tourists: Sport tourism enhances physical and mental well-being of participants. It helps maintain or improve health of tourists. Participants of sport tourism can also have positive emotions such as fun and excitement, a sense of togetherness of fellow travellers, and feelings of accomplishment and self-esteem. For youth, sport tourism helps them achieve both educational and personal development goals while they are having fun with friends.</p> <p>Welfare of the locals: Sport tourism provides residents of the destination with sport opportunities and can have impacts on the residents similar to those on tourists, which leads to healthy and active lifestyle. Sport activities can bring about self-fulfillment and enhance self-confidence among local people, through which the locals are empowered.</p>	<p>Participation of residents: It is preferable to promote sport activities not only to visitors but also local residents for health and well-being of their own. If visitors and residents participate in the same sport programmes, it also brings about good opportunities for them to interact, which enhance visitor satisfaction and local pride. In this sense, sport opportunities for the locals and sport tourism can be developed hand in hand.</p>
<p>SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</p>	<p>Jobs and income opportunities: Jobs and income opportunities mentioned above are also relevant here. Women can take jobs from sport tourism. Nowadays, more women take sport holidays and women-only travel groups are on the rise, which may expand opportunities for local women to cater to these groups.</p> <p>Athletes as a role model: Female athletes participating in sport tourism or events can be an inspiring role model for the local women.</p>	<p>Consideration of women: It is important to provide training and micro finance for women, sometimes intentionally, to enhance empowerment of women. It is beneficial to create opportunities for women in the destination to meet female athletes to get inspired.</p>

<p>SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries</p> <p>+</p> <p>SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p>	<p>Accessibility: Accessible sport tourism products (e.g., hand bikes) provide people with disabilities, both residents and visitors alike, with opportunities for sport. Parasport activities can be enjoyed by everybody including tourists and residents with and without disabilities. Development of accessible sport tourism can improve general accessibility in the destination by provision of not only such tourism products but also accessible accommodation and transport. Accessible sport tourism also helps enhance understanding of people with disabilities in society and engage the disabled in social activities.</p>	<p>Enhancement of accessibility: Accessible sport tourism should be considered as an accelerator for social inclusiveness with local needs taken into consideration.</p>
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SDG 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

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SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

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SDG 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

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SDG 15 – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystem and halt biodiversity loss

Enhancing awareness and encouraging environmental measures: Nature-based sport tourism provides opportunities to directly experience and enjoy the nature. As such, it relies on the very presence of natural resources. Global warming has negative impacts on snow sport tourism; loss of biodiversity affects diving; and loss of fauna and flora degrades enjoyment of hiking and trekking. Thanks to this close relationship with natural environment, sport tourism can play an important role to enhance awareness of nature's value and importance of its protection, and to encourage measures for environmental preservation among travellers, the locals and the tourism industry.

Sustainable use of natural resources: Sport tourism must be developed taking into account sustainability of natural resources including biodiversity. And nature-based sport tourism must champion the preservation of natural environment without which it cannot sustain. Preservation of landscape and avoidance of visual pollution should also be considered. Tourism fees can be used for preservation of natural resources.

Environmental measures: Sport tourism operators should make the best efforts in taking environmental measures: for example, to use motors and other equipment with less (preferably no) emissions of CO₂, noise and pollutants, to reuse/recycle sport equipment and to restrict use of hazardous materials (e.g., pesticide). Sport resorts and events should be managed in an environmentally friendly way (efficient water and energy use, waste management, recycling, etc.). Sport tourism operators and sport event organizers (large ones in particular) can consider sustainability in choosing suppliers and products.

Educating tourists and the locals: Tourism is an agent of change. It is crucial to educate tourists and the locals about importance of the destination's environment and its protection through signage, leaflets, workshops and classes at school, etc. It should also be considered to communicate the message to the world together with tourists and the locals. (Refer to the Cancun Declaration (<https://www.cbd.int/cop/cop-13/hls/in-session/cancun-declaration-draft-dec-03-2016-pm-en.pdf>)).

<p>SDG 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all and build inclusive institutions</p> <p>+</p> <p>SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</p>	<p>Promoting mutual understanding: Sport tourism provides encounters between people of diverse cultural backgrounds from all over the world and let them interact with each other through sport activities. It can foster friendship and mutual understanding, laying the foundation of more peaceful societies. It also helps the locals and visitors have friendly relationship through sport and other activities.</p>	<p>Encouraging interactions: It is important to ensure opportunities where the locals and visitors can interact; it can be a sport activity itself, a specially created space such as fan zones or programmes that both residents and visitors can participate.</p>
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