

# Antecedents and Consequences of Destination Engagement in Sports Tourism: A Conceptual Framework for Vietnam

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Article History	Abstract
<b>Original Research Article</b>	<p><i>The novelty and economic viability of sports tourism have spurred an increase in related academic research to explore the multifaceted impacts, industry trends, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of sports tourists. Identifying the factors influencing, and to what extent, destination engagement, return visits, and positive word-of-mouth within the context of sports tourism in Vietnam is crucial. Therefore, this study synthesizes the current state of tourism in Vietnam and globally, as well as recent academic research on tourism, to understand the advantages and challenges in the tourism business and research. The results provide a proposed comprehensive research model for future empirical studies. The study also synthesizes and refines measurement items to suit the context of sports tourism research. However, the study has not yet conducted empirical exploration to verify this proposed model. Therefore, future research will evaluate this model and propose deeper theoretical and practical implications.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Destination image, Environmental consciousness, Emotional Experience, Tourist Engagement.</p>
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sports tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing sectors in the tourism industry, generating significant economic benefits for countries. This growth is driven by technology and consumer behavior. Technological advancements have created online payment and booking platforms, as well as virtual travel, enhancing customer experiences and facilitating travel, fostering community interaction. This has created a massive tourism market, with the global sports tourism market showing the strongest growth, valued at approximately \$323 billion in 2020 but projected to increase by about 5.6 times (\$1.8 trillion) by 2023 (Allied Market Research). This growth enhances national prestige (e.g., through hosting the FIFA World Cup, the Olympic Games), develops tourism, strengthens cultural exchange between countries, and also brings economic value to countries hosting sporting events, especially developing countries (Vierhaus, 2019; Ferris et al., 2022). This type of tourism is also increasingly expanding due to the diversity of tourism types (such as active participants, nostalgic tourists and passive spectators) (Rangkuti et al., 2024), as well as the diversity

of sporting activities such as sporting events (Olympics, World Cup), participation in historical sporting sites, and participation in sports competitions (Abdollahi et al., 2024). This will create a collaborative and specialized market, providing opportunities for brand and infrastructure development for destinations. The symbiotic relationship between tourism and sports has formed a new and interesting, and effective business model that has the potential to enhance customer experience, diversify services, and boost local economic growth. However, alongside this, responsible tourism and environmental sustainability are issues that every country organizing sports tourism needs to pay attention to.

Besides economic benefits, sports tourism also faces challenges from the perspective of environmental responsibility and sustainability. These are issues that each country organizing sports tourism must consider to balance environmental protection and economic growth. In particular, sports activities in natural environments can have negative consequences for the ecosystems of destinations. Therefore, the concept of responsible

recreation/tourism and environmental awareness is increasingly prevalent in academic research and is a factor that tourists need to consider when engaging in tourism-related activities. Many recent studies of Wiastuti and Rashid (2024) and Kozáková et al. (2025) and Borkowski et al. (2025) and Eviana and Yusrini (2025) show that tourism and consumption activities within the socio-economic system are becoming more environmentally responsible and sustainable. Scholars have empirically demonstrated that consumers have a positive attitude towards environmentally friendly products, so business and production systems are becoming more prevalent (Kement et al., 2024; Wiastuti & Rashid, 2024; Kozáková et al., 2025; Borkowski et al., 2025). In other words, responsible consumers are reshaping economic activity towards sustainability.

This trend has integrated into Vietnam. The country has been organizing sports events (cycling, marathon) combined with cultural experiences. Vietnam is not only known for its natural beauty and historical relics, but is also investing heavily in improving its infrastructure. The combination of sports integrated with local cultural experiences, adventure, visiting local cultural heritage, and ecotourism experiences has created an exciting and deeply connected experience. With diverse terrain from romantic beaches, fertile plains, majestic mountains, and multi-ethnic culture, Vietnam is emerging as an attractive destination in the global sports tourism market. However, intense competition among destinations is becoming increasingly evident, leading destinations to focus on marketing strategies, technological innovation, and building/maintaining partnerships to attract and retain tourists while fostering positive word-of-mouth experiences. This is especially true in the context of sports tourism, a segment largely unexplored in emerging sports tourism markets like Vietnam. This novelty and diversification have spurred a surge in relevant academic research to explore the multifaceted impacts, industry trends, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of sports tourists. Identifying the factors that influence, and to what extent, destination engagement, repeat visits, and positive word-of-mouth within the context of sports tourism in Vietnam is crucial.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Engagement is considered one of the high-level marketing constructs that plays a crucial role in shaping post-purchase customer behavior, and is a common construct in customer behavior models. Engagement has been explored in various fields such as education - student/teacher engagement, and retail/service/technology - employee/customer/consumer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014 and Lim et al., 2022).

### 2.1 Destination Image

Tourist engagement is considered a multidimensional construct representing the emotions, physical, and behavioral aspects of tourists towards a specific destination (Hollebeek, 2011). Meanwhile, Destination Image is considered an important construct for measuring the attractiveness of a destination. It is defined as the ideas, beliefs, and impressions of tourists about a destination (Martins, 2025). Many studies have demonstrated the importance of Destination Image in promoting tourist satisfaction and repeat visits. Destination Image has also been shown to impact tourist engagement in many previous studies.

H1: Destination image positively influences sports tourist engagement.

### 2.2 Emotional Experience

Recent studies continue to investigate the role of Emotional Experience in shaping tourist engagement in different tourism contexts (Li et al., 2022; Ai et al., 2022; Xue et al., 2022; Qu et al., 2022). Accordingly, sensory experiences also increase digital engagement, such as participating in tourism communities, sharing information and experiences about the destination (Hosany et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2022).

H2: Emotional Experience influences sport Tourist Engagement

Climate change and natural disasters around the world have boosted environmental awareness among tourists. Therefore, this concept has become increasingly important in maintaining and preserving the landscape at destinations. It is a multi-dimensional concept involving tourists' knowledge, perceptions, and cultural values regarding a specific destination, encouraging them to engage with a sustainable context. Perceived environmental quality at a destination increases enjoyment, fosters engagement, and consequently enhances tourist awareness and behavior towards the destination (Pourhossein et al., 2023).

H3: Environmental consciousness positively influences sports tourist engagement.

### 2.3 Recommendation Intention

In the context of tourism, tourist engagement is often investigated as a key mediating variable to predict the level of tourist return visits. Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021) further affirmed the positive relationship between tourist engagement and the ability to post positive comments and the desire to return to a destination. Empirical research by Cheung et al. (2023) demonstrated that there is a strong correlation between tourist engagement and actual behaviors such as eWOM. Many studies have also

examined this mechanism (Kumar & Kaushik, 2020; Hossain et al., 2022; Zhou & Y., 2022). Based on this logic, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H4: Sports tourist engagement positively influences destination recommendation intention.

Based on the above hypotheses, the study proposes the following research model.

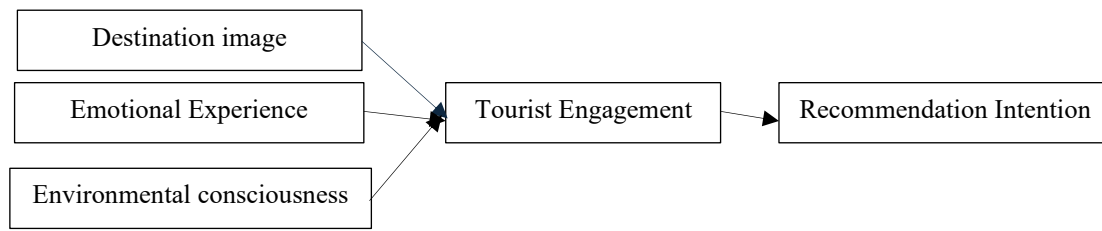


Figure 1 Proposed Model

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

#### Measurement Scale

The Destination Image scale is inherited from previous studies by Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) and Chi and Qu (2008). It measures the attractiveness of a sports tourism destination, including accessibility, infrastructure, event catalog, and community atmosphere. The Environmental Consciousness scale is inherited from the study by Lee

(2011) and Dolnicar et al. 2017). The Emotional Experience scale is inherited from the study by Han & Jeong (2013). The Destination Recommendation Intention scale is inherited from the previous study by Zeithaml et al. (1996); Chen & Tsai (2007) and measures return intention, overall satisfaction, and word-of-mouth recommendations. The Tourist Engagement scale is inherited from the previous studies by Taheri et al. (2014) and So et al. (2014) Huang and Choi (2019). All items are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. MEASUREMENT SCALES

Constructs	Items	Sources
Destination image	This destination is characterized by sports.	(Chi and Qu, 2008; Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007)
	The local people and event staff are friendly and enthusiastic.	
	The sports infrastructure is complete and of high quality.	
	The natural environment inspires visitors.	
	The destination combines sports events and local culture.	
Emotional experience	The experience at the sports event was very impressive.	Han and Jeong, 2013
	The experience at the sports event was very different, especially with the VR/AR pre-experience.	
	I was excited to experience the services outside of the sports event.	
	I actively participate in the cultural-sports combination programs.	
	I have positive feelings about the socially responsible experiences of the event.	
Environmental Consciousness	I support environmentally well-managed sports events.	Lee (2011) and Dolnicar et al. 2017
	I feel responsible for protecting the environment at sports events.	
	I hope event managers will pay attention to environmental factors.	
	I only attend sports events that prioritize social responsibility.	
	I refuse services from events that do not commit to environmental protection.	
Tourist Engagement	I am excited to enjoy sports events here.	Taheri et al. (2014) and So et al. (2014) Huang and Choi (2019)
	I actively interact with the sports travel community through social media.	
	I feel connected to this sports travel destination through digital services.	
	I feel connected to the sports fans of the event.	
	I actively participate in the activities throughout the event series.	

Recommendation Intention	I am willing to recommend this sports event to others.	Zeithaml et al. (1996); Chen & Tsai (2007)
	I am willing to post positive comments about this event.	
	I intend to recommend accommodation services at this destination to sports travelers.	
	I am willing to share positive images of the event.	
	I am willing to share the social responsibility of the event organizers with other travelers.	
	I am willing to speak kindly about the natural environment at this sports event.	
	I am willing to recommend the accompanying services at this sports event to other travelers.	

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Sports tourism has been generating significant economic benefits for countries worldwide. It's also a relatively new and exciting topic for academic researchers, with several journals dedicating their names to the subject. However, different studies in different contexts have produced diverse models, definitions, and results. These studies examine different perspectives, such as different cultures, developed or developing economies, and regions like Asia, Europe, or America. Some studies were conducted in rural or urban areas, and others before or after the COVID-19 pandemic. This diversity in models, results, and implications has resulted in a wide range of research. However, very few studies have proposed a combined research model that integrates both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to explore the factors influencing the engagement of sports tourists. Therefore, this study synthesizes previous research from different contexts to propose a comprehensive research model that fills current gaps. Simultaneously, this study analyzes and adjusts the measurement items to suit the context of sports tourism in Vietnam post-COVID-19. However, to truly explore the model's effectiveness, future research needs to conduct empirical exploration at various sports tourism destinations and sporting events in Vietnam. This model could also be used to explore other sports contexts in the Asian region to expand its applicability and test its widespread adoption.

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