



Analysis of the Potential and Challenges of Nature-Based Sport Tourism in West Java

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Abstract

West Java is endowed with diverse natural landscapes—mountains, rivers, and forests—that offer strong potential for the development of sport tourism. As interest in nature-based and adventure tourism grows, especially among younger generations, the region has an opportunity to foster innovative and sustainable tourism models. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to explore perceptions and challenges related to sport tourism in West Java. The research involved university students with a demonstrated interest in tourism and sports, selected for their responsiveness to emerging travel trends. Data were collected through questionnaires focusing on two key dimensions: natural potential and development challenges. Findings show that students generally view West Java as highly suitable for sport tourism, citing its natural richness and varied landscapes. However, several obstacles were identified, including inadequate infrastructure, limited safety regulations, and weak digital promotion. These challenges suggest the need for a more integrated strategy that aligns environmental potential with institutional and promotional support. Strengthening both ecological and managerial aspects will be essential in positioning sport tourism as a prominent driver of regional development and identity in West Java.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has extraordinary natural wealth, ranging from mountains, rivers, forests, to long coastlines. This potential is not only attractive to general tourists but also opens up great opportunities for the development of sport tourism (Arisman et al., 2024). Sport tourism is a form of tourism that combines sports activities with travel experiences, thereby creating dual value in terms of health, economy, and regional promotion (Sukwika & Nurlestari, 2024). In various countries, sport tourism has become one of the main strategies in destination development. For example, New Zealand leverages its natural beauty for activities like skydiving and bungee jumping, while Switzerland develops mountain biking and hiking trails integrated with tourism facilities. Unfortunately, in Indonesia, particularly in West Java, this significant potential has not been fully maximized (Dzikrayah et al., 2025). Yet, this region possesses an ideal natural landscape to be developed as a premier sport tourism destination. The diversity of landscapes, such as the pine forests in Lembang, the rivers in Sukabumi, and the mountainous areas in Garut, offer strategic opportunities that have not been systematically explored.

West Java, as one of the provinces with the highest number of domestic tourist visits in Indonesia, boasts a wealth of diverse natural attractions (Bahtiar et al., 2023). Geographically, the province features mountains, lakes, forests, and rivers that hold great potential as venues for adventure tourism activities. Some existing examples include paragliding in Sumedang, whitewater rafting on the Citarik River in Sukabumi, and trail running in the Cikole Lembang area (Cahyadi et al., 2021). However, these activities have not yet received optimal management and promotion. Many activities are sporadic, dependent on specific communities, and lack strong support from local governments in terms of infrastructure, regulations, and promotion (Rahma et al., 2025). As a result, this sports tourism has not been able to reach a wide and sustainable audience of tourists. When compared to other provinces like Bali or Yogyakarta, which have strong branding, West Java is still lagging behind in terms of sports tourism. This situation highlights the gap between the significant potential it possesses and the limited systematic support for its implementation on the ground.

The main problem faced in developing nature-based sport tourism in West Java lies in the lack of an integrated strategy between promoti-

on, infrastructure, regulation, and community participation. Many destinations are naturally attractive, but are not accompanied by supporting facilities such as road access, transportation facilities, signposts, and security facilities (Bachtiar et al., 2017). On the other hand, outdoor sports activities carry high risks, necessitating clear safety standard operating procedures (SOPs) (Arisman et al., 2024). Several incidents at sports tourism sites highlight weaknesses in safety measures and operator preparedness. Additionally, the absence of a regulatory framework supporting sport tourism leaves this activity without a strong legal foundation (Wahyuni, 2024). The involvement of stakeholders such as the Tourism Department, sports communities, and local residents is also still insufficient (Ramadhan et al., 2025). This disparity prevents sport tourism in West Java from developing competitively compared to other regions, despite its strong natural potential.

Several previous studies have discussed sport tourism in various regions of Indonesia, but few have specifically examined the integration between sport tourism and nature tourism in West Java. Research by Priyanto et al. (2022) shows that sport tourism in Indonesia still faces serious obstacles in terms of digital promotion and destination branding. Meanwhile, a study by Suherman et al. (2024) emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the public and private sectors in organizing sport tourism events to have a significant impact on the local economy. On the other hand, research by Syafrianto et al. (2023) shows that environmental and sustainability factors pose unique challenges in the implementation of nature-based sport tourism. However, these studies remain general or limited to specific types of sports. In the context of West Java, there has been no comprehensive study examining the potential and challenges of nature-based sport tourism from the perspectives of promotion, infrastructure, stakeholder involvement, and environmental sustainability simultaneously (Saptari et al., 2021).

However, the development of sport tourism cannot be separated from fundamental challenges that must be resolved first, particularly those related to regulations and destination management. Many natural tourist destinations in West Java do not yet have clear regulations regarding the limits of permitted sports activities (Cahyadi et al., 2021). For example, downhill cycling trails in forest areas that should be subject to conservation regulations, or off-road activities that cause damage to soil and vegetation. Without strong policies and consistent oversight,

sport tourism risks damaging the very natural environment that is its main attraction. Additionally, sports tourism activities often lead to conflicts of interest between tourism operators, indigenous communities, and conservation agencies (Wibowo & Istanabi, 2024). Therefore, it is crucial to create synergy between nature conservation and the development of sports tourism so that both can coexist without compromising each other (Arini et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to contribute significantly to enriching academic discourse and policy practices in the field of tourism. The synergy between West Java's natural strengths, progressive public policy support, and active community participation is an important foundation for making sport tourism a pillar of inclusive and competitive regional development (Arisman et al., 2024). Thus, sport tourism not only offers healthy recreational activities but also drives sustainable local economic growth and strengthens the region's identity as a premier destination based on nature and sports (Rangkuti et al., 2023). Based on these conditions, this study formulates the main problem related to perceptions of the potential and challenges in developing nature-based sport tourism in West Java. The purpose of this study is to identify the potential and obstacles faced in developing sport tourism, as well as to formulate relevant and applicable development strategies. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the perceptions of the younger

generation, which are rarely addressed in similar studies, as well as its approach that integrates environmental, promotional, and infrastructure aspects to provide a more comprehensive picture of the opportunities and challenges of sport tourism in the West Java region.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to reveal and analyze in depth the potential and challenges of developing nature-based sport tourism in West Java Province. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon contextually from the perspective of those directly involved (Sugiyono, 2022). The research subjects are students residing or pursuing education in the West Java region, particularly those with an interest in tourism activities and recreational sports. The selection of students as respondents is based on the consideration that the younger generation is one of the groups actively involved in experience-based tourism trends and active lifestyles, including sport tourism. Additionally, students are considered to represent a society that is adaptive to innovation and has a critical perspective on issues related to regional tourism development. Sampling was conducted using a purposive approach, selecting respondents who are relevant based on their interest and involvement in rela-

Table 1. Questionnaire Instrument

Aspect	Statement
The Potential of Sports Tourism	I see that natural tourist destinations in West Java have great potential to be developed as sport tourism locations.
	The diversity of natural landscapes in West Java (such as mountains, rivers, and forests) supports various types of tourism sports.
	In my opinion, activities such as paragliding, rafting, or trail running can attract local and foreign tourists.
	I assess that the local community around natural tourist destinations is fairly open to the presence of sport tourism activities.
	I believe that sport tourism can become a new source of income for local residents around natural tourist destinations.
Challenges in Developing Sports Tourism	I feel that the promotion and branding of sports tourism in West Java is still not widely known by the public.
	In my opinion, supporting facilities (road access, public toilets, parking areas) at natural tourist sites are still inadequate to support sport tourism activities.
	I have not seen strong synergy between the government, private sector, and sports communities in developing sport tourism.
	I assess that safety and security standards in sport tourism activities in West Java are still unclear.
	I am concerned that sport tourism activities could damage the environment if not managed properly.

ted activities. By using this group as the subject, the study aims to uncover students' perceptions, potential support, and critical perspectives on the development of nature-based sport tourism in West Java.

The questionnaire instrument was designed in the form of a five-point Likert scale, with a rating range from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" to systematically measure respondents' perceptions (Sugiyono, 2022). Each section of the questionnaire contained a number of statements designed to measure respondents' perceptions of two main aspects, namely the potential and challenges of developing sport tourism. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to efficiently and quickly reach respondents from various regions. The complete list of statements used in the questionnaire instrument can be seen in **Table 1**.

The data obtained from the questionnaire results were then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which consists of three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). The data reduction stage was carried out by filtering important information relevant to the research focus from the questionnaire responses. Next, the filtered data was presented in the form of thematic tables and descriptive narratives to facilitate researchers in identifying emerging patterns or trends. The verification process was carried out by comparing the analyzed data with the theoretical context and previous findings, so that the conclusions drawn could be academically accountable. This approach is considered effective for understanding the complexity of sport tourism development in West Java, as well as providing a comprehensive overview of the potential that needs to be maximized and the challenges that must be overcome.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of nature-based sports tourism is one of the strategic alternatives for advancing the tourism sector in West Java. With its rich geographical potential, including mountains, rivers, and tropical forests, this region has significant opportunities to offer tourism experiences that combine recreational and sports elements. However, despite its great potential, the development of sport tourism has not yet been fully structured or maximized (Dari et al., 2022). This requires a deeper understanding of how the community, especially the younger generation

such as students, perceives the existing potential and challenges. As a group that is active and adaptive to active and experience-based lifestyle trends, students are an important indicator for assessing the extent to which the appeal of sport tourism can be accepted and developed in the future (Hadi & Yulianto, 2021). Therefore, the data obtained through the questionnaire in this study is expected to provide an initial overview of the perceptions, expectations, and challenges felt by the younger generation regarding the development of nature-based sports tourism in the West Java region.

The questionnaire developed in this study aims to explore two main dimensions, namely the potential and challenges of developing sport tourism in natural tourist areas. Using a five-point Likert scale approach, respondents—in this case, students—were asked to rate a number of statements that had been compiled based on conceptual indicators (Nurdiansyah et al., 2024). The responses provided not only reflect the level of agreement with a statement but also signal how the direction of sport tourism development should be designed and implemented. The results of this questionnaire will be presented and discussed thematically, starting from how students assess the geographical and social potential for sport tourism development, to their views on structural barriers such as promotion, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. Thus, the presentation of these results does not merely present numbers or statistics but is also interpreted as material for reflection and reference in the formulation of more targeted and sustainable strategies for the development of sports tourism (Nasution & Syahputra, 2024).

The Potential of Sports Tourism

Table 2. Results of the questionnaire on potential sports tourism

Aspect	Statement	Score					Average
		1	2	3	4	5	
The Potential of Sports Tourism	S1	1	1	4	27	27	4.30
	S2	1	1	3	24	31	4.47
	S3	1	1	3	18	37	4.52
	S4	2	6	7	22	23	3.90
	S5	2	1	4	25	28	4.30

The following table presents the results of the questionnaire data compilation from respondents regarding their perceptions of the potential for nature-based sport tourism in West Java. This data was collected from five statements covering aspects of destination attractiveness, landscape

diversity, potential to attract tourists, openness of the local community, and its impact on the community's economy. Each statement item was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). The average score was calculated to determine respondents' overall assessment of each statement.

In general, the questionnaire results show that respondents have a positive view of the potential for developing nature-based sport tourism in West Java. The third statement (S3) regarding the attractiveness of sport tourism activities such as paragliding and rafting received the highest average score of 4.52. This confirms that students as respondents consider these activities to be very promising in attracting local and international tourists. Similarly, the second statement (S2) regarding the diversity of natural landscapes supporting sport tourism also received a high score of 4.47.

However, there are differences in perception regarding the openness of the community to sport tourism activities (S4), which has the lowest average score of 3.90. Although still in the "Agree" category, this score indicates that local community support can still be improved through more intensive social approaches, such as education and involvement in tourism programs. Meanwhile, statements regarding the potential of sport tourism as a new source of income (S5) and the overall value of natural tourism potential (S1) both received a score of 4.30, indicating that respondents have confidence in the economic benefits that can be achieved.

These findings illustrate that in terms of natural carrying capacity and tourist interest, West Java has strong potential for developing sports tourism. However, local community participation remains an aspect that needs to be strengthened in order to realize this potential in a sustainable manner. Support from the local government in the form of education, training, and community empowerment around sports tourism destinations is key to optimizing this potential (Arisman et al., 2024).

Challenges in Developing Sports Tourism

Table 3 shows respondents' perceptions of various challenges faced in developing nature-based sport tourism. The five statements in this aspect measure students' views on barriers to promotion, infrastructure, coordination between stakeholders, safety standards, and environmental impact. As in the previous aspect, the instrument uses a five-point Likert scale to obtain an overview of the respondents' level of agreement on each issue raised.

Table 3. Results of the questionnaire on Challenges in Sports Tourism Development

Aspect	Statement	Score					Average
		1	2	3	4	5	
Challenges in Developing Sports Tourism	S1	1	4	8	19	28	4.35
	S2	1	3	11	18	27	4.17
	S3	2	1	10	25	22	3.93
	S4	1	5	11	19	24	4.12
	S5	2	3	8	16	31	4.18

In terms of challenges, respondents tended to agree that there were a number of obstacles to the development of sports tourism in West Java. The first statement (S1) regarding the lack of promotion and branding of destinations received the highest average score of 4.35. This finding reinforces the argument that the existence of destinations is not yet widely known, both at the national and international levels. The lack of promotion results in the potential of sport tourism not being optimally exploited, so a more integrated marketing strategy is needed.

Furthermore, coordination issues between parties (S2) and the lack of safety standards (S3) were also concerns, with average scores of 4.17 and 3.93, respectively. This indicates that institutional support, synergy among stakeholders (government, private sector, community), and safety regulation aspects remain weak points that need to be addressed systematically (Nirwana et al., 2020). Without a strong coordination and supervision system, sport tourism activities can be high-risk and impact the tourist experience. The environmental impact issue captured in the fifth statement (S5) also received a fairly high score of 4.18, indicating respondents' awareness of the importance of sustainable management. Nature-based sports activities, if not managed properly, have the potential to damage local ecosystems. Therefore, sport tourism planning must incorporate a conservation-based and environmental mitigation approach (Arisman et al., 2024).

These findings are in line with the opinion of Umam & Wicaksono (2021), who emphasize that sport tourism has great potential for development in areas with scenic landscapes and natural diversity, such as West Java. With natural features such as mountains, rivers, and forests, this region is geographically ideal for becoming a hub for adventure-based sports activities like trail running, whitewater rafting, and paragliding (Maslivah & Sugiarto, 2022). The finding that sport tourism activities are considered attractive by respondents demonstrates that students—who are a potential consumer group—view sport tourism not only as

recreation but also as a challenging and memorable travel experience. This provides a basis for tourism destination managers and local governments to leverage this trend in their tourism development strategies.

However, as also noted by Arisman et al. (2024), the success of sport tourism does not only depend on natural attractions, but also on infrastructure readiness and synergy among tourism actors. The main challenges identified in this study—low promotion, poor cross-sector coordination, and lack of safety standards—highlight the need for integrated policies to build a sustainable sport tourism ecosystem (Rahmanita & Myrza, 2024). A collaborative approach involving local governments, tourism businesses, sports communities, and universities is needed to develop a comprehensive and targeted development strategy.

Finally, the awareness of the importance of environmental protection that emerged in the questionnaire results shows the respondents' sensitivity to the long-term impacts of sport tourism activities. As emphasized by Kusumawati & Fasa (2011), sustainability is a key principle in nature tourism—including sport tourism—which not only pursues economic benefits but also preserves natural resources. Therefore, every sport tourism activity should be accompanied by an environmental impact analysis, education for tourists and local communities, and strict regulations to prevent environmental degradation (Banowati et al., 2024). In this context, this study provides a theoretical foundation that the potential of sport tourism can be realized optimally if the main challenges are addressed systematically and participatively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that nature-based sports tourism in West Java has enormous potential but has not been optimally managed. The diversity of natural landscapes, such as mountains, rivers, and forests, serves as the primary asset for developing various sports tourism activities. However, there are still fundamental challenges that need to be addressed, such as the absence of clear regulations, limited supporting infrastructure, insufficient digital promotion, and low synergy between the government, communities, and local residents. These findings highlight the need for an integrated and sustainable development strategy for sport tourism, emphasizing collaborative principles, environmental sustainability, and the use

of information technology in promotion. With the right approach, sport tourism in West Java has the potential to become a flagship sector capable of driving regional economic growth while strengthening the identity of nature- and sports-based tourism destinations.

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