15 (1) (2026) 147 - 152
Journal of Physical Education, Sport, Health and Recreations
https://journal.unnes.ac.id/journals/peshr

Optimization of Sport Tourism by the PALI Regency Government to improve the Community Economy

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Article History

Received January 2026
Accepted January 2026
Published Vol.15 No.(1) 2026

Keywords:
Local Government Role; Community Economy; Sports Tourism; PALI Regency

Abstract

This study analyzes the Government programs of Penukal Abab Lematang Ilir (PALI) Regency in encouraging the development of sport tourism as a response to stimulate local economy. This research aims to investigate to examine the contribution of the PALI Regency Government in promoting sport tourism, to identify the strengths and weaknesses accompanying its development process, and to propose strategic options for future sustainable development. A qualitative research approach was employed, which consisted of local government agents, event planners and community leaders. The data was collected through interviews, observation and document review and analyzed with thematic analysis approach to find the common patterns and understanding. The findings indicate that the sport tourism in PALI is relatively new and has not been deeply rooted in the regional tourism management system. Various sport and cultural events like Candi Bumi Ayu Festival have encouraged the participation of the local population and development of micro businesses. The supporting infrastructure for popular tourist sites particularly in and around Candi Bumi Ayu, is insufficient to meet the standards of visitor comfort and ease of access. In sum, the results imply that sport tourism can have considerable strategic promise in the support of local economic diversification. To continue its sustainable advancement beyond the initial enthusiasm, systemic planning, trained manpower development, infrastructure up-gradation and continued collaboration habit are necessary. These works will ensure that sporting tourism really is capable of delivering significant and sustainable economic value to our regions.

How to Cite

Handayani, W., & Fhatanah, P. (2026). Optimization of Sport Tourism by the PALI Regency Government to improve the Community Economy. Journal of Physical Education, Sport, Health and Recreation, 15 (1), 147-152.

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p-ISSN 2460-724X
e-ISSN 2252-6773

INTRODUCTION

Sport tourism is one way in which individuals and communities can participate in sport as a form of recreation while experiencing attractions associated with tourism. Sport tourism experience-based events expose children and adolescents to fun and engaging physical activities that also may promote lifelong active and healthy living (Santos et al., 2025). It is becoming increasingly evident that the world prioritises leisure and pays greater attention towards tourism as a way to improve our wellbeing, highlighting the importance of tourism industry. In the educational sphere, physical education is a core subject that develops motor skills and social values or sport spirit and at the same time contributes to cognitive development of students. Research examining the relationship between physical activity and cognitive function has shown that among school age children and adolescents, cognition, attention, and executive function improve. These results emphasize the need to maintain physical education in schools, since the benefits of "learning through movement" reach beyond the physical, social and affective aspects, and provide students with exposure to a variety of sport activities that generate future economic and / or social value from the sport tourism industry.(Kamijo et al., 2019)(Handayani et.al, 2024).

In modern sports, there is a greater acceptance of sport not only as a mechanism for improving physical conditioning and athletic ability. Rather, sport has become even more of an engine of regional economic prosperity as a result of the phenomenon known as sport tourism (Thama et al., 2019). Sport tourism, a form of tourism that the sport is the main reason to visit a destination, has attained great attention both academic and policy wise in the last decade (Handayani et.al. 2025). The establishment of sport tourism is believed to deliver various effects including social, cultural, and economic effects where it could lead to more tourist visits or a higher level of local economy circulating. Tourism = development Many areas rely on tourism as a key driver of growth that can transform the local economy, harnessing material and cultural resources. In such a scenario, sport tourism has enormous power to create local-level economic activities as well as to contribute towards destination promotion and community mobilization. Hence, incorporating sport attractions into the planning of tourism has also been recognised as a sound strategy to enhance regional competitiveness and facilitate sustainable economic development (Di et al., 2020).

Sport tourism has a significant capacity to energize local economies because of its interface with several supporting industries, for example, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), transport products and services, accommodation sector as well as locally created creative economy. Thus, sport and tourism are considered as two interacting industries contributing to economic development in particular for a developing country like Indonesia. Over the years, sport tourism has evolved and placated as both an emerging force within the sports industry landscape and as a setting for community empowerment. More importantly sport tourism is not limited to staging of sport events, but also includes travel for participation, competition or spectating by individuals or groups. These activities create mixed economic opportunities for local communities, such as the realization of income and employment through the reinforcement of cultural identity and regional diversity (Qomara et al., 2024). By and large, all of this shows that sport tourism is not only a form of recreation but also acts as an agent for local socio-economic change.

There is a philosophical aspect in the traditional games: they are conceived not only as a distraction, but also as educational tools that convey cultural values, social conduct and cognitive and motor skills. These cultural customs and games also have a high potential to develop into tourism sport products attracting tourists as well as ensuring the conservation of local cultures and strengthening of local economy. This potential can be studied by the Government of PALI Regency to develop sport tourism based on local wisdom that lead to increasing tourist's participation, strengthening regional identity and boosting economic activity at community level(Arfanda et al., 2024)(Khotimah, N., & Nurhasanah, 2020).

Areas that can successfully organize sport tourism in a managed and sustainable way also have greater opportunity to build their economies without dependence on the natural resources exploitation. As a result, sport tourism offers itself as an alternative channel for fostering inclusive and sustainable regional economic development. In this regard, the participation of local authorities in ensuring efficient development of sport tourism is important. The function and responsibility of government are policy making, the provision of infrastructure, capacity building, and ensuring partnership among stakeholders including private sector and community. There is evidence from different countries that structural problems still hinder the growth of

sport tourism. These are limited financial resources, untrained human capital, destination promotion deficiencies and a lack of policy frameworks that connect sport and tourism on a strategic level. These constraints highlight the need for good governance, and long-term planning, if sport tourism is to play a role as an effective vehicle of sustainable regional development.

Local economic development can be enhanced when local governments are able to take advantage of those sectors that have high endogenous potential. From this point of view, the development of sport tourism in PALI Regency may a be a feasible choice to raising community welfare and local economy (Sadi, 2018). PALI has much potential to be realized for culture-dependent and locally based sport tourism. Initial activities like sports and cultural activities, centres for eye camps etc have been undertaken by the regional government. These actions have already produced positive impacts to the municipal economy with emphasis on micro and small businesses that work in periods of events. Despite these positive signs, sport tourism development in PALI is still patchy and has not yet been well-documented for purposes of long-term planning. Besides, the arts and creative economy sector continues to contribute a complementary role to tourism performance by enhancing efficiency, maintaining cultural heritage, and generating employment. This contribution could improve labour productivity, made tourist visits arise and the greater economic value resulted from creative and cultural products (Mardiyantoro, 2023)

In the context of regional development, it is important to explore in depth how the PALI Regency Government can optimize its role in developing sport tourism as a means to stimulate the local economy. Hence, this research aims to investigate three main objectives: (i) to examine the contribution of the PALI Regency Government in promoting sport tourism, (ii) to identify the strengths and weaknesses accompanying its development process, and (iii) to propose strategic options for future sustainable development. The methodology of this research is qualitative using local government officials, community representative and event organizer as the main informants. The data was gathered via interviews, observations and document examination, before being analysed through the method known as thematic analysis for patterns of meaning and insights. The findings show that sport tourism development in PALI is still limited and has not been fully imbedded into the regional tourism management system. Participation to community and micro-enterprise activities, such as the Candi Bumi Ayu Festival have increased with a growing level of infrastructure in favourite tourist locations but particularly at popular sites near Candi Bumi Ayu is still inadequate for visitor comfort and mobility. In general, the results of the present study indicate that to develop sport tourism may be an important mean of assistance in economic diversification at local level. Planning systematically, building capacity, improving infrastructure and maintaining stakeholders' co-operation is a prerequisite for any sustainable development. The findings are hoped to provide both theoretical and practical implications for regional sport tourism development policy and can also be referred to other areas that possess a comparably socio-cultural and economic background.

METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach to complement local economic development efforts as well as to establish sport tourism in the PALI Regency. By using a case study design, it was possible to get into details of the policy dynamics and processes of implementation and the resulting economic consequences in one region. The informants were the respondents who used purposive sampling based on their understanding, experience, and involvement in sport tourism development in PALI Regency. The informants' criteria were: (1) local government officials with responsibilities for tourism and sports affairs; (2) entrepreneurs and Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises that are related to tourism sector; (3) communities of sport or the organizers of sporting events; and (4) local residents who directly get the impact of their activities as a result of support from sports. Additionally, snowball sampling technique was used to identify other potential informants who were referred by the already interviewed ones.

Information was collected in each destination through indeph interviews, participatory observation and a systematic review of local policy documents and tourism reports. Analysis The analysis followed the steps in the interactive model developed by Miles, et.al (2020) which includes three central stages: (1) condensation of data in which selected and categorized raw data are reduced into manageable units; (2) display of the data such as narrative text, tables and schematic diagrams to facilitate understanding;and (3) conclusion drawing and verification that entails cross checking and iterative reflection to ensure that the interpretations remain close to the

original research findings. The credibility of the data were strengthened through triangulation of sources and methods, to help establish validity, reliability and consistency. This methodological approach allowed the research to map out strategic patterns, strengths and weaknesses for sport tourism optimization development that linked with local economic characteristics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results that although the PALI District Government had already initiated the programs to develop sport tourism as a catalyst of local economic development, it is still in an embryonic stage. Various sports have been developed through cultural events and sports conferences, such as the Candi Bumi Ayu Festival and interschool competition. Although these activities remain isolated, sectional and unfrequented, they have opened new opportunities for popular intervention apropos of micro-companies and small companies and offer the perspective of sport tourism as a mechanism to impulse economies regional. Community participation, especially of its young people, was evident in a number of efforts – including as participants and volunteers; not least because youth increasingly are the new economic players. Their participation seems to indicate a good social acceptability of sport tourism and an encouraging potential for the empowerment of local human resources. Interviews with micro/small business owners reinforced short-term economic benefits, reflecting revenue increases between 30–50% during event years. This suggests that sports tourism can have the immediate economic impacts through increased trading or service based activities.

Infrastructure-wise, the research found that sports facilities or tourism-enabling equipment in PALI District are also far away from meeting the expectations of and basic necessities for potential sport tourists. Field study in the heritage site Candi Bumi Ayu has found that despite its cultural endowment and prospective to give birth to a sport-tourism destination, public facilities such as changing rooms, toilet, parking area and permanent soccer-play venue were still very limited. In addition, access issues for people with disabilities, environmental sustainability and the tenets of inclusive tourism are not yet considered in proposed developments. Structural problems also affect the development of sport tourism in this region. Major limitations are under investment, lack of trained human resources in tourism and sports management, poor destination branding and promotion, lack of policy instruments like a master plan, an annual events calendar and a consolidated sport tourism database.

The promotion largely still relies on informally-established communities and social media, as opposed to a focused and sustained marketing plan. It also found under-performance in collaboration between the key stakeholders such as local government bodies, business players, sports communities and education institutions. Poor inter-sectoral coordination has limited the sports tourism initiatives in developing as major strategic sector at regional level. In addition, there are no local rules relating to the preservation of traditional sports which causes doubts about the sustainability of cultural value to be the main attraction for sport tourism in PALI District. The results in general highlight the idea that PALI District have strategic opportunities for culture and traditional sport–based sport tourism development as a contributory sector to LCL economic development. Sport Tourism has shown to offer the local community short term economic benefits in terms of rise self employment, creates(temporary employments) and promote social-cultural participation among residents. Long-term optimization entails systematic planning, including a master plan development, infrastructural upgrade, human resource capacity strengthening, marketing promotion of destination and continued multi-stakeholder engagement.

This discovery implies that the sport tourism development of PALI District is still in its infancy condition and has not been structured adopting a comprehensive regional tourism governance This view is in accordance with the opinion of Sukwika & Nurlestari (2024) who opine that sport tourism is more than just recreational sporting activity at tourist destinations but also needs policy support, facilities/infrastructure as well as community participation to generate economic benefits. In the case of PALI, sports culture expos and carnival games have created short-term spillovers for microenterprises and small enterprises, but these activities have not been at the scale that can push sustained economic growth.

Stakeholders, local residents including young people's participation in preparing and executing planned events is a good sign of developing human resources at the local level. This finding supports the promulgated hypothesis in sport tourism that 'active participatory' is a mandatory prerequisite of building sustainable destination over the long run (Qomara et al., 2024). How-

ever, the engagement is still sporadic and lacks any institutional anchor in terms of training or entrepreneurial mentoring, or even incubation schemes for micro-enterprises posed as barriers to PALI's ability to develop a creative economy ecosystem in a sustainable way.

An analysis of infrastructure has shown that the lack of appropriate sport facilities and complementary tourism facilities the destination´s competitiveness has been hampered. As also noted by Zardi (2025) the support of infrastructure in sport tourism, playing a role due to to visitor comfort and degree of service to compete with elsewhere. Discussion Under the circumstances of PALI, it can be argued that poor quality facilities in the vicinity of the heritage site Candi Bumi Ayu limit opportunities for a sports tourism form diversification as well as are problematic when seeking to implement principles of inclusive, sustainable and accessible tourism for visitors.

Strategic issues are also at stake in terms of policies and institutions. Relatively small funding, the lack of specific regulations aimed at tradition-oriented sports preservation as well as of general development planning formulating documents testify to the fact that sport tourism has not yet become one of the priorities for the regional development. Ideally, sport Tourism should be practiced with a long-term strategic vision and a clear destination narrative that would integrate stakeholders' collaboration in order to enhance its experience outcomes. The event-driven and short-term, unsustainable momentum based sport tourism programs would hardly realize such multiplier effects without these underpinnings. The issue of policy design and inter-actor cooperation is the main challenge addressed by this literature. 'Tourism-led sectors development is usually to be achieved by a synergetic governance encompassing the local authorities, the private sector, community-based organizations and academia. Structures like these can make decision making and resource allocation more unified. But within PALI collaborative architectures are underdeveloped and fractured, limiting the potential of a seamless strategic regeneration framework to join-up sport with cultural heritage and the creative economy.

The evidence of the empirical study shows that PALI has cultural tourism potential resources in the traditional sports practices and historical site of Candi Bumi Ayu can be developed as a sport-tourism product. But these resources have not shaped up into competitive edges. Institutional deficiencies, infrastructure shortcomings, lack of destination branding and an underdeveloped attitude to marketing has limited the region's capacity to exploit its cultural capital. A number of facilitators are necessary to move past this empirical stage. Urgent actions include developing an integrated sport tourism development plan, upgrading human resource capacity, and creating wider network of cooperation. These interventions should underpin a more cohesive and sustainable tourism destination development model that speaks to long-term, socio-economic returns at the local level.

CONCLUSION

The results suggest that the development of sport tourism in PALI Regency is still at an exploratory stage and has not been incorporated into a broader planning context by the local government. Traditional sporting events and folk celebrations have directly contributed to the development of small-and micro-sized enterprises and encouraged local participation, especially among young people. However, these effects have been short-lived and not transferred into long-term developmental results.

While the sport tourism potential of PALI remains high, on-going development is hampered by several infrastructural limitations: inadequate facilities, poor destination branding and lack of robust marketing strategies; absence of inter-sectorial harmony and cooperation among relevant stakeholders, as well as a dearth of policy documents that could have provided some strategic direction for sustainable planning and organizing. To maximise the potential for growth in sport tourism as a local economic driver, greater policy coherence is needed. This would comprise increased provisioning of infrastructure, capacity strengthening of local partners and formation of multi-stakeholder partnerships. Cumulatively, these are required to frame sport tourism as a sustainable industry offering viable social and regional economic contributions.

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