

# Sports tourism strategies in Cabanatuan city: A sustainable developmental framework

Elizabeth D.S. Eduardo \* and Dulce Amor S. Padilla

*Graduate School, Wesleyan University Philippines.*

International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2025, 14(01), 1489-1497

Publication history: Received on 15 December 2024; revised on 21 January 2025; accepted on 24 January 2025

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2025.14.1.0247>

## Abstract

This study develops a sustainable sports tourism framework tailored for Cabanatuan City, positioning it as a prominent destination aligned with the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023-2028. Focusing on sports facilities, community engagement, and sustainable practices, this research evaluates current tourism assets, identifies improvement areas, and proposes strategies to attract local and international visitors. Utilizing a descriptive quantitative approach, data were gathered from sports facility managers and sports enthusiasts through surveys and analyzed statistically. Findings reveal that sports tourism holds strong economic and social potential for Cabanatuan, with community-centered strategies and sustainability initiatives highly valued by stakeholders. However, environmental development needs further emphasis. The study's framework provides a strategic path for Cabanatuan to realize sustainable growth in sports tourism, with future work focused on refining environmental practices. This approach not only strengthens the local economy but also contributes to social and environmental well-being, aligning with key Sustainable Development Goals.

**Keywords:** Economic Growth; Environmental Sustainability; Sports Tourism Development; Sustainable Development Goals; Tourism Strategy

## 1. Introduction

This research developed a sports tourism framework for Cabanatuan City, following the Department of Tourism's vision under Secretary Christina Frasco. This framework aimed to turn Cabanatuan into a key destination, attracting tourists from nearby areas. This effort aligns with the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023-2028 and taps into the city's potential to grow its tourism sector through sports.

Sports tourism has become an important part of the global tourism industry, accounting for roughly 10% of global tourism spending (UNWTO, 2023). This sector has shown remarkable potential for growth, with projections indicating a significant 17.5% increase in sports tourism activities from 2023 to 2030. Major international events, such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, are at the forefront of driving this growth.

These high-profile events attract substantial investments and enhance the visibility of the regions that host them (Smith, 2023). For instance, the Olympic Games not only generated excitement but also lead to extensive improvements in local infrastructure, including transportation, hotels, and sports facilities. Cities that host these events often see long-term benefits, such as increased tourism and enhanced global recognition.

Furthermore, as the world of sports tourism evolves, various new trends are emerging that shape the experiences of tourists. One significant trend is the integration of technology into the sports tourism experience. Innovations such as

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\* Corresponding author: Elizabeth D.S. Eduardo

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are enhancing how tourists engage with sports events and venues (Zheng Guan & Lifang Zhang, 2024). For example, VR technology can allow fans to experience a golf swing or a basketball game from the comfort of their homes, while AR can provide real-time statistics and information during live events. These technologies create immersive experiences, making visits to sports venues more interactive and memorable. Such innovations not only elevate the attractiveness of sports tourism destinations but also create unique experiences that appeal to modern travellers (Buhalis & Law, 2023).

The study looked at the current sports facilities in Cabanatuan, pointed out areas that need improvement, and suggested ways to make them more appealing for tourism. With the worldwide popularity of sports events and by recognizing the economic, social, and environmental benefits of sports tourism, this research aims to attract more visitors, boost local investments, and involve the community (Gutierrez & Vafadari, 2023).

This framework followed important Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by creating jobs and encouraging business growth through sports tourism; SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by improving infrastructure and supporting urban development; and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by promoting environmentally friendly practices in sports activities and facilities (Fitri, et al., 2022).

Specifically, the study sought to determine the strategies that are currently being used in Cabanatuan City to promote sports tourism in terms of social, economic and environmental. Additionally, the study looked how a sustainable sports development in the City as social, economic and environmental.

In the end, this study sought to create a strategy that may help Cabanatuan grow economically, socially, and environmentally, ensuring the city meets today's tourism needs while supporting sustainable growth for the future.

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## 2. Materials and Methods

The research design of this study adopts a descriptive quantitative approach to develop a comprehensive sports tourism framework for Cabanatuan City.

The respondents for this study included both sports facility managers and sports enthusiasts (tourists) engaged in activities at these facilities. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who possess relevant experience and insights into the sports tourism landscape in Cabanatuan City. In instances where the primary manager is unavailable, acting managers or designated managers in charge were also included to ensure the continuity of data collection.

The research focused on various sports facilities in Cabanatuan City, which play a vital role in promoting sports tourism. Key facilities include the Lakewood Golf and Country Club, which offers a wide range of activities such as golf, billiards, bowling, basketball, and swimming. Acropolis North Water Camp and Country Club also provide similar amenities, including billiards, basketball courts, and swimming pools, alongside multi-purpose courts that can accommodate badminton or tennis. Additionally, Microtel Cabanatuan and Harvest Hotel offered facilities that cater to both hotel guests and local patrons, further contributing to the city's sports and recreation options. For badminton enthusiasts, venues like Smash Cab Badminton & Fitness, Dominance, and Powersmash Badminton & Fitness Center cater to players of all skill levels, providing dedicated spaces for recreational and competitive play.

This study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire as the primary tool for collecting quantitative data on sports facilities, their impacts, and community attitudes toward sports tourism in Cabanatuan City. The questionnaire was designed specifically to align with the research objectives, facilitating the collection of numerical data that is essential for developing a comprehensive sports tourism framework.

The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, including Likert scale responses, to enable efficient statistical analysis. These questions covered various aspects of sports tourism, such as perceptions of sports facilities, economic contributions, and levels of community engagement.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, the questionnaire underwent a review by industry experts in sports tourism to refine it for clarity and relevance. Additionally, a pre-test was conducted with a small sample of respondents to assess the effectiveness of the questions in capturing the intended dimensions of sports tourism. The results of this pilot testing informed any necessary revisions, further improving the questionnaire's accuracy.

The data-gathering process for this study followed an ethical approach to ensure efficient, reliable, and high-quality data collection. The first step involved obtaining the necessary approvals from the research advisor to align the study with institutional guidelines and ethical standards. Once approvals were secured, questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents through in-person distribution at sports facilities. This approach ensured a broader reach and catered to respondent preferences, optimizing response rates.

The study focused on collecting quantitative data and were treated using appropriate statistical tools such as frequency, percentage and weighted mean.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. Current Strategies to promote Sports Tourism in Cabanatuan City in terms of social, economic, and environmental strategies.

**Table 1** Social Strategies

		Sport Enthusiasts		Sport Facility Managers	
	Social Strategies	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1	Offering discounts for families and friends encourages more visits to sports facilities.	3.20	A	3.77	SA
2	Hosting free community sports days attracts more people to try the facilities.	3.14	SA	3.51	SA
3	Making sports facilities accessible to all ensures everyone can participate.	3.29	SA	3.74	SA
4	Using social media helps keep the community engaged with sports activities.	3.43	A	3.60	SA
5	Working with local schools introduces kids to sports early and builds interest.	3.14	A	3.66	SA
6	Providing health programs and skill-building activities encourages more people to join in sports	3.13	A	3.60	SA
	<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	3.22	A	3.65	SA

The overall weighted mean for social strategies to promote sports tourism in Cabanatuan City was 3.22 for sports enthusiasts, described as "agree," and 3.65 for sports facility managers, described as "strongly agree." The highest-rated item for enthusiasts was "Using social media helps keep the community engaged" (3.43), while the lowest was "Providing health programs and skill-building activities" (3.13). For facility managers, the top-rated strategy was "Offering discounts for families and friends" (3.77), and the lowest was "Hosting free community sports days" (3.51).

These findings highlight the importance of social media and discount initiatives in engaging the community and attracting more sports tourists, aligning with studies by Miller and Roberts (2022).

**Table 2** Economic Strategies

		Sport Enthusiasts		Sport Facility Managers	
	Economic Strategies	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1	Offering membership packages makes sports facilities more appealing to regular visitors.	3.43	SA	3.69	SA
2	Organizing sports tournaments and events attracts more people to use the facilities.	3.29	SA	3.69	SA

3	Renting out sports facilities for private events enhances the experience for everyone.	3.14	A	3.66	SA
4	Providing pay-per-use options helps non-members easily access sports services.	3.14	A	3.66	SA
5	Teaming up with local businesses for joint promotions benefits both sports facilities and players.	2.86	A	3.69	SA
6	Adding fitness classes at sports facilities encourages more people to join in and enhances the overall experience	3.29	SA	3.54	SA
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>		3.19	A	3.65	SA

The overall weighted mean for economic strategies to promote sports tourism in Cabanatuan City was 3.19 for sports enthusiasts, described as "agree," and 3.65 for sport facility managers, described as "strongly agree." The highest-rated item for enthusiasts was "Offering membership packages" (3.43), while the lowest was "Teaming up with local businesses for joint promotions" (2.86). For facility managers, the highest-rated strategy was "Organizing sports tournaments" (3.69), and the lowest was "Providing pay-per-use options" (3.66).

The findings emphasize the significance of membership packages, sports tournaments, and local collaborations in enhancing the appeal and economic viability of sports facilities. These results align with Johnson & Lewis (2021), who highlighted the economic benefits of membership models and local partnerships in promoting sustainable sports tourism.

**Table 3** Environmental Strategies

		Sport Enthusiasts		Sport Facility Managers	
		Mean	VD	Mean	VD
	<b>Environmental Strategies</b>				
1	Implementing digital payment options and paperless operations helps reduce waste.	3.29	SA	3.71	SA
2	Offering plant-based food options sourced locally supports environmental sustainability.	3.43	SA	3.46	SA
3	Using reusable materials and promoting zero plastic waste enhances eco-friendly practices.	3.43	SA	3.60	SA
4	Investing in solar energy systems contributes to environmentally friendly operations.	3.33	SA	3.83	SA
5	Organizing educational programs about environmental awareness encourages responsible practices.	3.31	SA	3.77	SA
6	Providing reusable or rentable sports equipment helps reduce waste	3.26	SA	2.29	A
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>		3.34	SA	3.44	SA

The overall weighted mean for environmental strategies to promote sports tourism in Cabanatuan City was 3.34 for sports enthusiasts, described as "strongly agree," and 3.44 for sports facility managers, also described as "strongly agree." For sports enthusiasts, the highest-rated strategies were "Offering plant-based food options sourced locally" and "Using reusable materials and promoting zero plastic waste", both with a mean score of 3.43. The lowest-rated strategy was "Providing reusable or rentable sports equipment" (3.26). For sports facility managers, the highest-rated strategy was "Investing in solar energy systems" (3.83), while the lowest was "Providing reusable or rentable sports equipment" (2.29).

These findings underscore the importance of integrating eco-friendly initiatives such as solar energy systems, plant-based food sourcing, and reusable materials. Such strategies align with Harrison and White (2020), who emphasize that sustainability practices like renewable energy and waste reduction are essential for fostering long-term environmental health in sports tourism.

### 3.2. Sustainable Development in Cabanatuan City in terms of Social Development, Economic Development, and Environmental Development.

**Table 4** Social Development

		Sport Enthusiasts		Sport Facility Managers	
	<b>Social Development</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>VD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>VD</b>
1	Allowing sports enthusiasts to volunteer as coaches helps young athletes develop skills and confidence.	3.57	SA	2.97	A
2	Supporting local tournaments boosts community pride and involvement in sports.	3.29	SA	3.66	SA
3	Partnering with health organizations promotes healthy lifestyles through fitness programs and workshops.	3.43	SA	3.80	SA
4	Enhancing accessibility and parking options makes sports facilities more convenient for all community members.	3.57	SA	3.74	SA
5	Offering personalized services tailors programs to meet the needs of both new and existing sports enthusiasts.	3.43	SA	3.74	SA
6	Organizing community sports festivals brings people together and creates a fun environment for everyone.	3.29	SA	3.51	SA
	<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	3.43	SA	3.57	SA

The overall weighted mean for social development strategies in promoting sports tourism in Cabanatuan City was 3.43 for sports enthusiasts, described as “strongly agree,” and 3.57 for sports facility managers, also described as “strongly agree.” The highest-rated items for sports enthusiasts were “Allowing sports enthusiasts to volunteer as coaches” and “Enhancing accessibility and parking options” (both 3.57). Meanwhile, the lowest-rated items were “Supporting local tournaments” (3.29) and “Organizing community sports festivals” (3.29). For facility managers, the highest-rated strategy was “Partnering with health organizations” (3.80), while the lowest was “Allowing sports enthusiasts to volunteer as coaches” (2.97). These results highlight the value of providing accessible facilities and health-related programs while also addressing areas where community engagement and volunteering may need additional support. This aligns with Buchalis & Law (2023), who emphasize the role of community-based initiatives in promoting social bonds and promoting sustainable tourism development.

**Table 5** Economic Development

		Sport Enthusiasts		Sport Facility Managers	
	<b>Economic Development</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>VD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>VD</b>
1	Expanding sports facilities attracts larger events and increases overall usage.	3.29	SA	3.74	SA
2	Partnering with healthcare institutions provides sports medicine and wellness programs to benefit player health and performance.	3.43	SA	3.74	SA
3	Attracting new players through targeted marketing highlights the facility’s unique features and benefits.	3.43	SA	3.71	SA
4	Creating loyalty programs rewards frequent users with discounts and perks, encouraging retention of current players.	3.43	SA	3.69	SA
5	Increasing tourism through positive word of mouth enhances the facility’s reputation and attracts more visitors.	3.57	SA	3.71	SA
6	Arranging fun sports events for the community encourages participation and generates income	3.14	A	3.69	SA
	<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	3.38	SA	3.71	SA

The overall weighted mean for economic development strategies was 3.38 for sport enthusiasts, which was described as "strongly agree," and 3.71 for sport facility managers, also "strongly agree." The highest-rated strategy for sports enthusiasts was "Increasing tourism through positive word of mouth" (3.57), while the lowest-rated was "Arranging fun sports events for the community" (3.14). For sports facility managers, the highest mean was "Expanding sports facilities" and "Partnering with healthcare institutions" (3.74), while the lowest was "Arranging fun sports events" (3.69). These findings suggest that both groups highly value strategies that promote facility usage, tourism, and retention, in line with Beine and Salvatore (2022), who highlight the economic impact of community-based sports events and facility improvements in promoting tourism growth.

**Table 6** Environmental Development

		Sport Enthusiasts		Sport Facility Managers	
	Environmental Development	Mean	VD	Mean	VD
1	Promoting land and resource conservation helps maintain green spaces for community use.	3.44	SA	3.74	SA
2	Reducing neighborhood stress encourages community involvement in maintaining sports facilities and local ecosystems.	3.29	SA	3.71	SA
3	Ensuring clean air and water benefits both athletes and the surrounding community through eco-friendly practices.	3.43	SA	3.46	SA
4	Implementing proper waste collection and segregation minimizes environmental impact and promotes recycling.	3.43	SA	3.60	SA
5	Encouraging environmental ethics nurtures a culture of sustainability among athletes and visitors.	3.33	SA	3.83	SA
6	Monitoring carrying capacity ensures that sports facilities do not exceed their environmental limits.	3.31	SA	3.77	SA
	<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	3.26	SA	2.29	A

The overall weighted mean for environmental development strategies was 3.26 for sports enthusiasts, which was described as "strongly agree," and 2.29 for sports facility managers, which was verbally described as "agree." The highest-rated strategy for sports enthusiasts was "Promoting land and resource conservation" (3.44), while the lowest-rated was "Encouraging environmental ethics" (3.33). For sport facility managers, the highest mean was "Encouraging environmental ethics" (3.83), while the lowest was "Reducing neighborhood stress" (3.71). These results show a clear emphasis on sustainability, with both groups recognizing the importance of resource conservation and environmental ethics in maintaining eco-friendly practices at sports facilities, aligning with Buchalis & Law (2023), who emphasized the important role of environmental stewardship in sustainable tourism.

### 3.3. Proposed Sports Tourism Development Framework

**Table 7** Proposed Sports Tourism Development Framework

Key Area	Actions	Objectives	Responsible Stakeholders	Resources Needed	Source of Fund	Time Frame	Expected Outcome	SDG Alignment
Social Development	Enhance accessibility and parking at sports facilities for better community access.	Improve accessibility and convenience for locals and tourists	Sports Facility Managers, Local Government	Land, construction materials, signage	Local government budget	Short-term (1–2 years)	Increased attendance and satisfaction among visitors	SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

	Use social media to engage the community and promote sports activities.	Increase community engagement and awareness of events	Sports Facility Managers, Event Organizers, Local Media	Social media platforms, content creation	Facility budgets, sponsorships	Immediate and ongoing	Broader reach and community participation in sports events	SDG 10, SDG 11
	Organize community sports festivals to build engagement and a sense of community.	Promote community pride and participation	Local Government, Event Organizers, Community Leaders	Event space, equipment, staff, volunteers	Local government, sponsorships	Annual events	Higher community involvement and a positive local image	SDG 3, SDG 11
	Collaborate with schools to introduce sports activities for youth development.	Develop youth interest and skills in sports	Local Schools, Sports Facility Managers	Sports equipment, instructors	School and facility budgets	Short-term and ongoing	Increased youth participation in sports	SDG 4, SDG 10

**Table 7** (Continued)

	<b>Provide volunteer opportunities for coaching to engage the local community.</b>	<b>Engage community members in sports coaching and mentorship</b>	<b>Local Community Leaders, Sports Facility Managers</b>	<b>Training materials, sports equipment</b>	<b>Community contributions, donations</b>	<b>Short-term (1 year)</b>	<b>Improved community cohesion and skill development</b>	<b>SDG 8, SDG 10</b>
Economic Development	Introduce membership and loyalty programs to encourage regular facility usage.	Boost regular facility attendance and income	Sports Facility Managers, Local Businesses	Membership software, marketing materials	Facility revenue	Short-term (6 months)	Increased number of returning customers and steady income	SDG 8, SDG 12
	Host regional and national sports tournaments to boost facility use and tourism.	Attract local and national visitors	Sports Facility Managers, Event Organizers, Sponsors	Venue, promotional materials, event staff	Sponsorships, ticket sales	Mid-term (1–3 years)	Enhanced tourism revenue and increased facility usage	SDG 8, SDG 9
	Promote collaborations with local businesses for joint promotions and support.	Strengthen local partnerships and economic ties	Local Businesses, Sports Facility Managers	Marketing materials, communication tools	Local business partnerships	Ongoing	Mutually beneficial partnerships and increased visitor spending	SDG 8, SDG 12

	Launch targeted marketing campaigns to position Cabanatuan as a sports tourism hub.	Raise Cabanatuan's profile as a sports tourism destination	Local Government, Sports Facility Managers	Marketing tools, outreach staff	Local government, private sector	Short-term and ongoing	Higher visibility and visitor interest in sports tourism	SD G 8, SD G 12
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**Table 7** (Continued)

	<b>Implement flexible pay-per-use systems to increase accessibility and attract visitors.</b>	<b>Make sports facilities accessible for occasional visitors</b>	<b>Sports Facility Managers</b>	<b>Payment systems, marketing materials</b>	<b>Facility budgets</b>	<b>Immediate</b>	<b>Increased access and higher facility usage</b>	<b>SD G 8</b>
Environmental Development	Adopt sustainable waste management practices in all sports facilities.	Reduce environmental impact through waste minimization	Sports Facility Managers, Local Government	Waste bins, recycling facilities	Facility budgets, government	Short-term (1 year)	Cleaner facilities and increased community awareness of sustainability	SD G 12, SD G 15
	Invest in renewable energy sources (e.g., solar power) for sports facilities.	Reduce energy costs and environmental footprint	Sports Facility Managers, Local Government	Solar panels, installation labor	Government grants, sponsorships	Long-term (3–5 years)	Lower operating costs and enhanced environmental image	SD G 7, SD G 13
	Encourage eco-friendly transportation options for visitors (e.g., bike racks, shuttle services).	Reduce carbon footprint associated with visitor travel	Event Organizers, Local Government	Bike racks, shuttle vehicles	Facility budgets, sponsorships	Mid-term (1–2 years)	More sustainable transportation options for visitors	SD G 11, SD G 13
	Design and build environmentally friendly sports facilities using sustainable materials.	Create sustainable infrastructure	Sports Facility Managers, Contractors	Sustainable materials, labor	Local government, facility budgets	Long-term (3–5 years)	Enhanced sustainability and community pride	SD G 9

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:



- Social media engagement, family discounts, and economic strategies like membership programs and tournaments are key to promoting sports tourism. Both groups also support sustainable practices, but more effort is needed on waste management and eco-friendly facility solutions.
- There is strong alignment in perceptions of social, economic, and environmental sustainability, but differences exist in specific actions needed. Strengthening community involvement and supporting local businesses are crucial for sustainable development.
- The proposed framework emphasizes improving accessibility, community engagement, and supporting local businesses while prioritizing sustainability practices like renewable energy and waste management for long-term growth in sports tourism

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Acknowledgments*

The author would like to express her gratitude to her colleagues, professors, family and friends who have supported her during the conduct of this study.

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The author hereby declares that she has no conflict of interest related to this research and that no financial or personal relationships could influence the outcomes of this study.

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