



Achieving Sustainable Sport Tourism Management in Buriram, Thailand: Insights from GSTC and McKinsey 7S Frameworks¹

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Abstract

This study explores the application of sport tourism theories, the McKinsey 7S Framework and the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), to achieve sustainable sport tourism management practices in Buriram, Thailand. By employing qualitative methods, grounded theories and focus groups with eleven key informants, this research investigates multifaceted management practices driving Buriram's success. The results reveal how Buriram has uniquely balanced economic development, environmental responsibility and social well-being through a well-rounded approach that combines infrastructure development, cultural integration, and community engagement. The conclusion provides some practical recommendations for adopting a holistic management approach. This study serves as a valuable resource for developing successful initiatives in sustainable sport tourism. Moreover, the study results can be used as fundamental data by government or the private sector to make policies on practice or development of sport tourism that will create balance between the economy, the society and the environment.

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1. Introduction

Sport tourism in Buriram, a northeastern province of Thailand, combines cultural richness with modern sports infrastructure, adding to historical tourism rooted in Theravada Buddhist beliefs. Renowned as the 'Land of Stone Castles', the city of Buriram is notable for its volcanic landscapes, ancient Khmer sites and vibrant cultural heritage, including traditional arts such as silk production. Today, Buriram is gaining fame for its top-notch sports facilities, hosting international events such as MotoGP World Championship and pioneering the integration of sports competitions with tourism. This innovative approach contributes significantly to Buriram Province's economic growth and has garnered positive responses from tourists.

Buriram (Buriram Provincial Office, 2018), 1 of 6 provinces as a sport city, is located in the northeastern region of Thailand. Its area is 6,451,178 Rai consisting of 23 districts with a population of 1,566,740 people. After the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), the number of tourists has increased 17.51% from 2,935,465 persons in 2022 up to 3,449,347 in 2023. Meanwhile, tourism incomes increased 25.66 % from THB 5,894.87 million in 2022 up to 7,407.56 in 2023 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2024). Buriram has adapted and developed significantly. Many sport events are organized that causes more tourists travel to Buriram. Supporting such a large number of tourists has led to some problems for sport tourist attractions in Buriram such as problems of the sustainability of the environment at sport tourist attractions in Buriram (Yuvanont, 2018). The increasing number of tourists places demands on natural resources and environments of communities in the area. It also causes both positive and negative changes of those sport tourist attractions (Seedapeng, 2016). Therefore, resources of tourist attractions are important for supporting such an increase of tourists and creating sustainability of sport tourist attractions impacting related persons in sports tourism. It is very important in sports tourism management that if sports tourism management is inefficient, the tourist attractions will be unsustainable and lead to bad results for communities in the area. All sectors are important parts of sports tourism (Khunla, 2018) and one must consider their resources for supporting a large number of tourists.

For the reasons as mentioned above, the researchers studied documents, textbooks or related research and found that there is a study on the state of sports tourism management which included Buriram (Yuvanont, 2018), but the context of this study is inconsistent with the current situation. The researchers, therefore, are interested

in analyzing the sports tourism management of Buriram that can be used as fundamental data for managing sport tourist attractions and enhancing their sustainability. Also, it can be used for creating models for sports tourism management of Buriram to establish the sustainability of sport tourist attractions. Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), a framework of international standards, is used as a guideline for promoting the management of sustainable tourist attractions. GSTC is a leading global authority in setting and managing standards for sustainable travel and tourism that covers 4 dimensions: sustainability management, society, culture and environment. This can be applied with the sports tourism of Buriram for creating complete sustainability and reducing effects that happen in the future. Furthermore, 7s McKinsey Framework is a working framework consisting of 7 significant components: strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, style, and staff. All operations of sports tourism management of Buriram can be driven efficiently on models of working structure, sports management and skill development of staff. The researchers analyzed data by using Open Coding Analysis, Content Analysis, Open Coding, Axial Coding, Selective Coding and Development of a Logic Paradigm. Study results will be suggested as fundamental data for managing sport tourist attractions. Entrepreneurs and managers can deploy these results with their own places. Buriram Province and related sectors can also use the management data for the sustainability of Buriram. Moreover, work and income will be able to be provided for people and establish sustainability of the socioeconomic, cultural, natural and environmental system. Finally, researchers, students or interested people can use this study for further research related to sports tourism in other dimensions.

In line with Thailand's commitment to sports development, this study explores sport tourism management in Buriram. Grounded in sport tourism, it utilizes the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC, 2019) within the McKinsey 7S Framework (Waterman et al., 1980). The aim is to offer insights to stakeholders and guide the sustainable development of sport tourism in Buriram, aligning with key theories in this context.

2. Research objectives

To analyze sports tourism management in Buriram Province for sustainability using GSTC theory and McKinsey 7S Framework.

3. Concepts and Theories

3.1 Sports Tourism

Sport tourism, involving travel for sports participation or spectating, spans diverse experiences, from major events to recreational sports exploration (Gibson, 2005b). These events, as global platforms, enhance destination image and revenue (Getz, 2008; Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). Both active participation and passive engagement contribute significantly to global tourism (Getz, 2008; Gibson, 2005a; Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999; Weed & Bull, 2004). Cheng et al. (2023) did a bibliometric analysis of 379 articles (2013-2021) that highlights research focus, emphasizing tourism nostalgia (Cho et al., 2019), sport tourism risk perception (Zhang et al., 2023), and sports tourism event development (Zarotis, 2019). Growing attention to sustainable development (González-García et al., 2022; Herbold et al., 2020; Hinch et al., 2016; Pawid, 2023) reflects industry awareness of environmental and social responsibility.

Sport tourism as a significant economic driver for destinations worldwide (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) thrives on the interplay between a destination's resources and the theoretical frameworks guiding its development. Breathtaking landscapes and purpose-built facilities exemplify this. Thailand's beaches and rainforests provide an ideal setting for activities, including rock climbing, kayaking, and mountain biking, while the certified venues cater to specific sporting events (Tassiopoulos et al., 2008; Weed, 2010). Sport tourism theories further enhance success. Getz's (2008) Event Tourism Model emphasizes well-organized sporting events with strategic marketing and visitor satisfaction. Similarly, Weed's (2010) Push-Pull Theory highlights understanding tourist motivations (competition, cultural immersion, etc.) to tailor offerings (Getz, 2008; Weed, 2010). Thailand exemplifies this strategic approach. The country leverages its natural resources for adventure sports and develops sports infrastructure for international events, including MotoGP Championship Thailand (Preuss, 2007; Gibson et al., 2020). However, considering carrying capacity is crucial to maintaining resources (Freedman, 2009; Tassiopoulos et al., 2008).

The field constantly evolves with new trends, including adventure tourism requiring infrastructure adaptation (Gibson et al., 2020). Lee and Funk (2018) emphasize the growing importance of digital marketing and social media for reaching potential

tourists. Local community involvement is also crucial for long-term success by ensuring fair benefit distribution and cultural integration (Murphy et al., 2014). Thailand, for instance, could explore local participation through homestays and local food options (Kim & Lee, 2019). By understanding these dynamics, destinations can create successful and sustainable sport tourism experiences. Informed by relevant literature on sports tourism resource potential (Buhalis, 2000; Jittangwattana et al., 2013; Kamonwan, 2002; Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017).

Sport tourism shapes the global tourism landscape, offering opportunities for sustainable growth. Understanding evolving research trends and adopting best practices is exemplified by Buriram's success and positions destinations to capitalize on sport tourism's potential in the future.

3.2 Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria: GSTC

The GSTC comprehensive criteria define global standards for sustainable travel. Encompassing destinations (policymakers/managers) and industries (hotels/tour operators), these criteria establish a universal language for sustainable tourism (V. Horváth & Kenesei, 2023). Sustainable tourism involves responsible resource use, environmental impact consideration (waste, water, biodiversity) (F. Horváth et al., 2023) renewable energy, cultural heritage protection, and destination integrity preservation. It also considers job quality, local economic impacts, and hospitality quality (V. Horváth & Kenesei, 2023). The GSTC criteria serve multiple purposes (education, awareness, policy, measurement, evaluation) but focus on four key areas: Sustainable Management, Socio-economic Sustainability, Cultural Sustainability, and Environmental Sustainability (GSTC, 2019). Adaptable to local contexts, the criteria form the basis for accrediting bodies that certify sustainable practices in hotels, accommodations, tour operators, and transport providers (GSTC, 2019). Studies have applied the GSTC to assess destinations' sustainability (Ullah et al., 2021; S. N. Hamimah et al., 2022) while acknowledging implementation challenges (Sharpley, 2022).

Launched in late 2019, GSTC-D version 2.0 (GSTC, 2020) revises the Destination Criteria with performance indicators for compliance measurement. This version is widely adopted in research (Jonathon & Jennifer, 2020; Elena et al., 2020) and offers specific guidance through developing performance indicators. These indicators provide a checklist for evaluating destinations' adherence to the criteria, ultimately contributing to the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs (GSTC, 2020). As F. Horváth et al. (2023) noted, applying the GSTC v2 criteria is crucial for sustainable tourism development in nature conservation areas.

The GSTC (2019) oversees global standards for sustainable travel and tourism through the GSTC criteria. The GSTC criteria form the basis of accreditation for certification bodies, certifying sustainable policies and practices for hotels, accommodations, tour operators, and transport providers. While the GSTC does not directly certify products or services, it accredits certification bodies.

These criteria encompass the Destination Criteria for policymakers and managers and Industry Criteria for hotels and tour operators, providing a universal language for sustainability in tourism. Focusing on sustainable management, socioeconomic impacts, cultural impacts, and environmental impacts, the criteria are adaptable to local conditions and supplemented with specific criteria for locations and activities.

The GSTC Destination Criteria v2 is a foundational framework in studies on sustainable tourism practices, with its widespread adoption underscoring its relevance and applicability. It serves as a robust discourse and implementation framework for sustainability in various tourism contexts (Pjero & Gjermëni, 2020; Day & Romanchek, 2020; Sangsrisang et al., 2022; T. Hamimah et al., 2021; Wagenseil et al., 2022).

3.3 McKinsey 7S Framework

The McKinsey 7S Framework, developed by consultants at McKinsey & Company (Mohrman et al., 1982), has become a prominent tool for organizational analysis, offering a value-driven perspective for examining organizations include those in sports tourism (Suwanda & Nugroho, 2022). Introduced in "Structure Is Not Organization" (Peters & Waterman, 1982), the model categorizes seven critical elements into "hard S" (strategy, structure, systems) and "soft S" (skills, staff, style, shared values) (Waterman et al., 1980). Hard S elements are readily identifiable, while soft S elements are influenced by corporate culture. A key advantage is its use of internal variables to assess performance (Peters & Waterman, 1982), highlighting the importance of alignment between these elements for improved performance and a more decisive competitive advantage (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Carr & Pearson, 1999). In sports tourism, the 7S Model can be applied to analyze both tangible aspects, including planning, and intangible aspects, including staff values (Y. Hu et al., 2018). This alignment fosters effective management

and sustainable development, going beyond economic assessments to consider regional economic growth alongside environmental and social responsibility (Getz & Page, 2016; Kim & Lee, 2019). While the model on internal factors has limitations (Bateman & David, 2017) understanding internal dynamics through the McKinsey 7S Framework equips practitioners to adapt to external forces and make strategic decisions that promote sustainable development within the sports tourism industry.

In sport tourism, the McKinsey 7S Framework categorizes factors into hard (strategy, structure, systems) and soft elements (shared values, skills, style, staff). Y. Hu et al. (2018) applied this model to tourism, focusing on the role of the economic system in the regional competitiveness of tourism. Hard elements impact sport tourism management, while soft elements shape cultural aspects within this context. This model proves valuable for analyzing and aligning sport tourism facets, ensuring effective management and sustainable development (S. Hu et al., 2018). When applied to sustainable tourism, the model serves not only as an economic system but also as a development tool, stimulating regional economic growth.

4. Materials and Methods

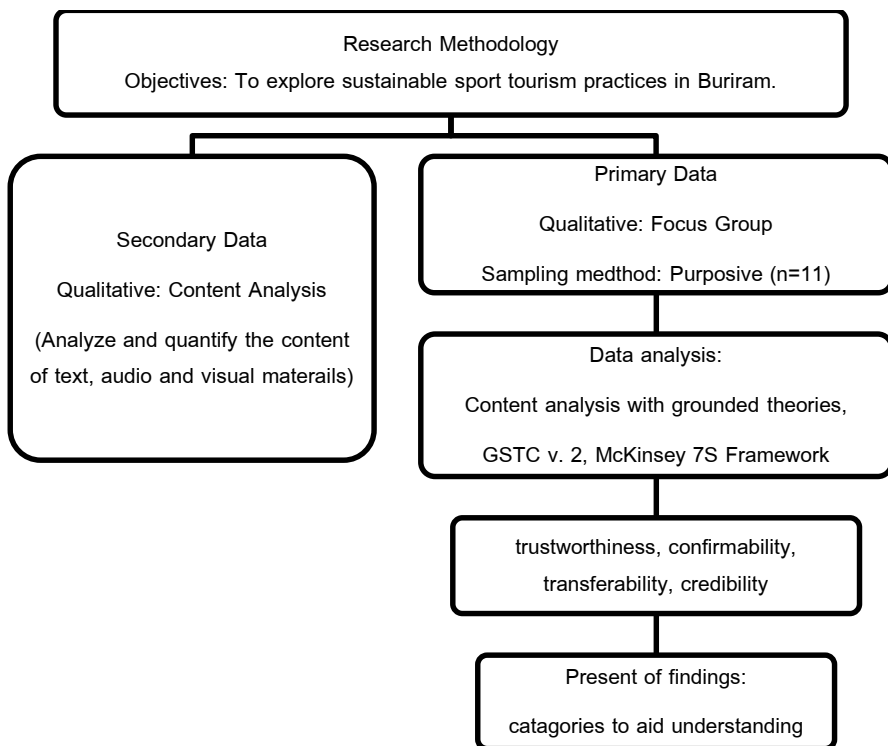
This study adopts qualitative research to understand tourism dynamics and employs a dual strategy for data collection from primary and secondary sources. Primary data are gathered through qualitative focus group meetings lasting 3-4 hours with diverse stakeholders in the tourism and sports industry in Buriram, addressing sustainable tourism criteria set by the GSTC. Secondary data are obtained by an extensive literature review of documents, textbooks, articles, theses, and scholarly materials to establish a robust foundation for the research. Eleven key informants are a football field manager, a motorsports and motorbike racing venue manager, tourism and sports representatives, the President of the Provincial Administration Organization, cultural representatives, the Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (Buriram Office), the President of the Buriram Tourism Business Association, the Dean of Faculty of Management Science (Buriram Rajabhat University), the President of the Provincial Tourism Industry Association, community development representatives and the Chairman of the Buriram Chamber of Commerce. The discussions centered on checking for accuracy in four dimensions of sustainability. The data obtained are analyzed by using the McKinsey 7S Framework,

introduced by Peters and Waterman (1980), and qualitative content analysis techniques. This comprehensive approach ensures a nuanced understanding of tourism dynamics, providing precise and complete research findings. The methodology is summarized in Figure 1.

Purposive sampling is used in this research by selecting samples from tourism network partners: government and private and public sector actors who are involved with sport tourism of Buriram for driving sport tourism and also sport organizers. Statistics used for analyzing data are content analysis, open coding, axial coding, selective coding and development of a logic paradigm.

Figure 1

Research materials and methods.



5. Results

In this section, a detailed overview will be provided for all the data obtained through the aforementioned methods. The specifics are outlined as follows:

5.1 Sustainable Management

Buriram stands out as a premier sports destination in Thailand, hosting diverse events such as football matches, motorcycle races, and marathons. Provinces are deeply committed to sustainability, with event organizers taking proactive measures to minimize environmental impacts. Collaborating closely with government agencies, private businesses, and local communities is a key aspect of sustainable management practices. This ensures that well-organized events contribute to the prosperity of local businesses and communities through tourism. Community involvement is pivotal, with residents actively participating in various event-related tasks, fostering a sense of community and ownership. To reduce environmental impacts, event organizers have implemented initiatives such as utilizing recycled materials (e.g., paper and plastic), minimizing energy consumption, implementing recycling and composting programs, and promoting sustainable transportation options. Noteworthy examples include the Buriram United Football team unveiling jerseys made from recycled plastic bottles in 2022, the installation of solar panels at the Buriram International Circuit for electricity generation, and the Buriram Marathon offering a free shuttle bus service to alleviate traffic congestion. These sustainable practices underscore Buriram's dedication to responsible and eco-friendly sport tourism management. Specific examples of sustainability practices in Buriram sport events are as follows:

Transportation: Buriram event organizers offer a variety of transportation options to help reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. These options include free shuttle buses from hotels and other accommodations to the event venue, public transportation such as buses and taxis, and carpooling and ridesharing.

Waste Management: Buriram event organizers work hard to reduce waste and promote recycling and composting. These efforts include providing recycling and composting bins at all event venues, educating event attendees about the importance of recycling and composting, and hiring waste management companies to collect and recycle waste.

Sustainable Materials: Buriram event organizers use sustainable materials whenever possible. These materials include recycled paper and plastic, wood from sustainable forests, locally sourced food, and beverages.

The research employed qualitative methods, grounded theories, and the GSTC to assess sustainable management in the context of sports tourism in Buriram, categorized within each element of the McKinsey 7S. The integrated framework analysis is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Sustainable Management Aspects in Buriram's Sport Tourism

| Category | Description |
|---------------|---|
| Strategy | Collaboration, community involvement, focus on sustainability practices |
| Structure | Strong partnerships between government, businesses, and communities |
| Systems | Recycling, composting, renewable energy, sustainable transportation |
| Shared values | Environmental responsibility, community engagement, economic development |
| Skills | Event planning, project management, environmental knowledge, community relations |
| Style | Collaborative, innovative, transparent, data-driven |
| Staff | Dedicated team with expertise in event management, sustainability, and community engagement |

In conclusion, Buriram's success in sustainable sport event management relies on a comprehensive approach that integrates all seven categories. Buriram provides a powerful example for other event organizers worldwide by fostering strong partnerships, implementing innovative systems, and promoting shared values.

5.2 Socioeconomic impacts

Buriram is dedicated to utilizing local labor and resources in the organization of sporting events, thereby generating employment opportunities and income for the community. This approach not only supports the local economy but also promotes indigenous products and culture. In addition to fostering economic growth, the province prioritizes the safety and security of all participants and spectators involved in these events.

The findings underscore specific strengths in Buriram, including job creation, local income generation, and the promotion of local products and culture, fostering sustainable tourism. Provinces have consistently organized activities to stimulate and promote tourism, contributing to the continuous economic and social development of the community. By prioritizing a local workforce and involving the community, Buriram promotes a sense of ownership and economic empowerment. Showcasing community products through competition and tourism not only elevates local brands but also enhances cultural awareness. Additionally, initiatives such as ‘walking streets’, volunteer training, and local product sales contribute to environmentally conscious tourism and community development. As a result, Buriram has become a sought-after destination for sporting events, witnessing a significant increase in tourism. The success of Buriram can be attributed to its local-centric approach, characterized by strong partnerships, active community engagement, and sustainable practices. This approach serves as a model for event management that mutually benefits the sports industry and the surrounding community. Buriram's approach is data-driven and flexible; it is adaptable based on feedback and data insights to ensure continuous improvement and resilience. The results of the integrated framework analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Socioeconomic Impacts of Sport Tourism in Buriram

| Category | Description |
|---------------|---|
| Strategy | Prioritize local workforce, community involvement, product showcase, sustainable tourism. |
| Structure | Partnerships with government, private, and local entities. |
| Systems | Skill training, volunteering infrastructure, community product promotion platforms. |
| Shared values | Cultural pride, community ownership, economic empowerment, environmental responsibility. |
| Skills | Event management, training delivery, community engagement, product marketing. |
| Style | Collaborative, transparent, data-driven, flexible. |
| Staff | Dedicated team with expertise in event management, community relations, and sustainability. |

Overall, the success of Buriram's socioeconomic impact lies in its local-centric approach. By combining strong partnerships, community engagement, and sustainable practices, Buriram offers a model for event management that benefits both sports and the surrounding community.

5.3 Cultural Impacts

In Buriram, each sporting event venue has well-defined access criteria, with designated viewing zones and issued rules and regulations. Typically, spectators are responsible adults who are socially aware and mature enough to behave appropriately. The organizers also consider cultural aspects, emphasizing preservation of the province's culture. This involves using the local language (e.g., Kui or Suay, Lao dialect, along with Thai.) in public relations, communication, and information. They actively promote and showcase the renowned foods of Buriram Province (e.g., stewed pork leg, stand eating meatball culture) and encourage participants, spectators, or tourists to immerse themselves in the community and lifestyle of the local people. This includes adopting a local lifestyle, enjoying local cuisine with ingredients from the province, and embracing the local language. Additionally, organizers promote the use of traditional Buriram fabrics as a means of fostering public relations.

Importantly, each tourist destination has travel guides while each sporting venue has its own guides. These guides are designed to help people understand how to use the facilities and to learn about the culture and way of life of the people of Buriram. Here are some specific examples of how sporting event organizers in Buriram are promoting local culture.

- Using a local language: At sporting events, announcements and signage are made in both Thai and the local language of Isan.
- Promoting local food: Local food vendors are given priority at sporting events, and food stalls are decorated with traditional Isan motifs.
- Encouraging visitors to learn about the community: Sporting events often include cultural performances and demonstrations, such as traditional dance and music.
- Providing information about local culture: Venue guides include information about local history, culture, and attractions.

These efforts on preservation and promotion of local culture are helping to make Buriram a more attractive destination for tourists and sporting events. The results of the integrated framework analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Cultural Impacts of Sport Tourism in Buriram

| Category | Description |
|---------------|---|
| Strategy | Promote and integrate local culture into event experience. |
| Structure | Partnerships with cultural organizations, local food vendors. |
| Systems | Language use guidelines, cultural performance platforms, travel/venue guides. |
| Shared values | Cultural preservation, community engagement, authentic visitor experience. |
| Skills | Cultural sensitivity, community relations, communication, information design. |
| Style | Inclusive, participatory, informative, experiential. |
| Staff | Dedicated team with knowledge of local culture and event management. |

Buriram's sporting events blend excitement seamlessly with cultural immersion. Through local language, cuisine, fabric crafts, and dedicated information guides, organizers weave local pride into every experience, leaving tourists and participants enriched and eager to return. This cultural preservation, along with clear regulations and responsible behavior, strengthens Buriram's unique appeal in the world of sports tourism.

5.4 Environmental Impacts

Apart from the thriving sports scene discussed above, the province is also home to several natural and cultural attractions, including the Dong Yai World Heritage Site and the Sarus Crane Conservation Center. Buriram's success as a sports tourism destination is due in part to its commitment to sustainability. The province has implemented several initiatives to reduce its environmental impact, including the following.

- Water conservation: The Chang Arena, home of Buriram United Football Club, has a system for recycling and reusing water. The stadium also uses solar panels to generate electricity.

- Waste management: Both of Chang Arena and the Chang International Circuit have recycling programs. Plastic bottles are recycled into football jerseys.

- Noise pollution reduction: Chang Arena has designated areas for motorcycle racing to reduce noise pollution for residents.

- Transportation: Shuttle buses are provided to transport participants, spectators, and tourists to and from events. This helps to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.

These initiatives make Buriram a more sustainable and attractive destination for sports tourism. The province is also a model for other regions that are looking for developing their sustainable sports tourism. Specific examples of sustainability initiatives in Buriram are as follows:

- At the Dong Yai World Heritage Site, farmers are encouraged to use organic farming methods. This helps to protect the environment and the endangered Sarus crane.

- The Sarus Crane Conservation Center educates people about the importance of crane protection. The center also provides a haven for injured cranes.

The Buriram Province has as its goal reducing carbon emissions by 20% by 2030. The province is implementing several initiatives to achieve this goal, including the use of renewable energy and the promotion of public transportation. Buriram's commitment to sustainability is a 'win-win' for the province and its visitors. It helps to protect the environment, promote economic development, and create a more enjoyable experience for all. The integrated framework analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Environmental Impacts of Sport Tourism in Buriram

| Category | Description |
|---------------|---|
| Strategy | Prioritize environmental protection and community engagement in sports tourism. |
| Structure | Partnerships with environmental organizations, local communities. |
| Systems | Recycling and water conservation infrastructure, organic farming programs, public transportation network. |
| Shared values | Environmental responsibility, community well-being, economic sustainability. |
| Skills | Sustainability planning, community outreach, environmental education, event management. |
| Style | Collaborative, data-driven, transparent, adaptable. |
| Staff | Dedicated team with expertise in sustainability, sports management, and community relations. |

In conclusion, Buriram stands out as a thriving sports tourism destination with a commitment to sustainability. Initiatives in water conservation, waste management, noise pollution reduction, and efficient transportation have made it an attractive and eco-friendly choice for visitors. The province serves as a model for sustainable sports tourism and has incorporated practices such as organic farming and crane conservation. Sustainable sports tourism seeks to integrate environmentally friendly and socially responsible practices into various aspects of sporting events, including agriculture and wildlife conservation. For example, a sports event can support local organic farmers, implement waste reduction measures, and contribute the conservation of local wildlife habitats, including those cranes. With the goal of reducing carbon emissions, Buriram actively implements initiatives such as renewable energy adoption. This commitment not only preserves the environment but also promotes economic development for ensuring an enjoyable and responsible experience for all.

The analysis of four key pillars is categorized for underpinning the approach into seven elements of the McKinsey 7S Framework and further classified as either “hard” or “soft,” as explained in Table 5.

Table 5
The model categorizes the seven elements as either “hard” or “soft”.

| Category | | Description |
|---------------|----------|--|
| Hard Elements | Strategy | 1. <i>Collaborative Synergy.</i> Strong partnerships with government, businesses, and communities form the foundation, fostering a shared vision for responsible tourism development. |
| | | 2. <i>Empowered Communities.</i> Prioritizing local workforce inclusion, skill development, and product promotion empowers communities, fostering economic self-reliance and cultural pride. |
| | | 3. <i>Authentic Cultural Immersion.</i> Seamless integration of local language, performances, and experiences into event programs to deliver enriching visitor experiences while preserving and promoting local traditions. |
| | | 4. <i>Environmental Stewardship.</i> Environmental protection takes center stage through sustainable infrastructure, community education, and collaborative conservation efforts, ensuring environmental well-being alongside economic growth. |

Table 5

The model categorizes the seven elements as either “hard” or “soft”. (Cont.)

| | Category | Description |
|---------------|-----------|---|
| Hard Elements | Structure | 1. <i>Tripartite Synergy</i> . Building robust partnerships between government, businesses, and local communities forms the bedrock for holistic tourism development. These guarantee support from diverse stakeholders, ensuring balanced economic growth, responsible resource management, and community empowerment. |
| | | 2. <i>Multilevel Engagement</i> . Extending partnerships beyond government to collaborate with private entities and local businesses amplifies the positive impact. This fosters wider economic participation, diversifies tourism offerings, and injects innovation into the ecosystem. |
| | | 3. <i>Cultural Immersion</i> . Partnering with cultural organizations and local food vendors fosters authentic visitor experiences. This showcases and preserves local heritage, creates cultural ambassadors, and generates income for community members. |
| | | 4. <i>Environmental Stewardship</i> . Joining forces with environmental organizations and local communities prioritizes environmental protection. This leads to initiatives like sustainable transportation, waste management, and conservation programs, ensuring long-term ecological viability. |
| Hard Elements | Systems | 1. Environmental Responsibility: <i>Infrastructure</i> . Recycling, composting, renewable energy, and sustainable transportation systems minimize environmental impact. <i>Engagement</i> . Organic farming programs promote ecological agriculture, while water conservation measures reduce resource consumption. |
| | | 2. Community Empowerment: <i>Skill Development</i> . Skill training and volunteering infrastructure equip locals with relevant skills and opportunities to participate in tourism. <i>Economic Participation</i> . Community product promotion platforms showcase local businesses, fostering economic empowerment and cultural preservation. |
| | | 3. Cultural Authenticity: <i>Language Preservation</i> . Guidelines for language use in sports events and venue guides ensure respect for local culture. <i>Immersive Experience</i> . Cultural performance platforms and informative guides provide authentic visitor experiences that celebrate local traditions. |

Table 5

The model categorizes the seven elements as either "hard" or "soft". (Cont.)

| | Category | Description |
|---------------|---------------|--|
| Hard Elements | Systems | 4. Collaborative Approach: <i>Partnerships:</i> Collaborations with environmental organizations, local communities, and cultural groups foster shared responsibility and knowledge transfer. <i>Data-Driven Improvement.</i> Continuous monitoring and adaptation based on data ensure efficient and sustainable practices. |
| | Shared values | 1. <i>Environmental Stewardship.</i> Prioritizing environmental responsibility through resource conservation, renewable energy, and community engagement in eco-friendly practices. This ensures minimized environmental impact while fostering community ownership of sustainability. 2. <i>Community Empowerment.</i> Embracing cultural pride and fostering community ownership. Local workforce inclusion, skill training, and product promotion platforms empower communities to reap economic benefits while promoting cultural authenticity. 3. <i>Authentic Cultural immersion.</i> Integrating local culture into the visitor experience through language use, performances, and educational initiatives. This fosters cultural preservation and provides visitors with an enriched experience. 4. <i>Balanced Sustainability.</i> Balancing environmental responsibility with community well-being and economic sustainability. This involves infrastructure like recycling systems and public transportation alongside organic farming programs and community development initiatives. |
| Soft Elements | Skills | 1. Event Management Expertise: <i>Event Planning & Project Management.</i> Ensuring smooth event execution while considering environmental and community impacts. <i>Environmental Knowledge.</i> Integrating sustainability practices into all aspects of event planning and operations. <i>Community Relations.</i> Building strong partnerships and engaging local communities for mutually beneficial outcomes. 2. Community Engagement & Empowerment: <i>Event Management.</i> Organizing events that showcase local culture and products, generating economic benefits for the community. <i>Training Delivery.</i> Equipping locals with skills relevant to tourism to increase employability and participation. <i>Product Marketing.</i> Effectively promoting local products and businesses to visitors, fostering economic sustainability. |

Table 5

The model categorizes the seven elements as either "hard" or "soft". (Cont.)

| Category | | Description |
|---------------|--------|---|
| Soft Elements | Skills | <p>3. Cultural Preservation & Authenticity:</p> <p><i>Cultural Sensitivity.</i> Understanding and respecting local customs and traditions to create an authentic visitor experience.</p> <p><i>Community Relations.</i> Collaborating with cultural organizations and communities to share their heritage with visitors.</p> <p><i>Communication & Information Design.</i> Developing clear and engaging communication materials that promote cultural understanding.</p> <p>4. Environmental Advocacy & Sustainable Practices:</p> <p><i>Sustainability Planning.</i> Implementing comprehensive environmental protection strategies beyond event operations.</p> <p><i>Community Outreach.</i> Educating and engaging locals in sustainable practices for long-term environmental benefits.</p> <p><i>Environmental Education.</i> Raising awareness among visitors about the importance of responsible tourism.</p> <p><i>Event Management.</i> Minimizing environmental impact through resource conservation, waste reduction, and eco-friendly infrastructure.</p> |
| | Style | <p>1. <i>Cohesive Collaboration.</i> Each area emphasizes partnership, fostering a unified effort between government, businesses, and communities.</p> <p>2. <i>Data-Driven Transparency.</i> Openness and data analysis guide decision-making, ensuring efficiency and continuous improvement.</p> <p>3. <i>Engaging Experiences:</i> Diverse styles cater to different aspects of tourism: collaborative cultural exploration, flexible socioeconomic support, and immersive environmental engagement.</p> <p>4. <i>Adaptable Innovation.</i> Each area prioritizes adaptability, allowing for ongoing improvements and responsive solutions to evolving needs.</p> |
| Soft Elements | Staff | <p>1. <i>Team Formation.</i> A dedicated team is crucial, with specialized expertise in event management, community engagement, sustainability, and local culture depending on the focus area.</p> <p>2. <i>Holistic Approach.</i> Teams should not only excel in event management but also prioritize community relations, sustainability, and cultural preservation for successful and responsible tourism.</p> |

Table 5

The model categorizes the seven elements as either “hard” or “soft”. (Cont.)

| Category | | Description |
|---------------|-------|---|
| Soft Elements | Staff | 3. <i>Specialized Skills.</i> Depending on the area of focus, teams need skills in sustainability planning, community outreach, environmental education, cultural sensitivity, and product marketing. |
| | | 4. <i>Collaboration and Adaptability.</i> A collaborative spirit within and across teams, combined with data-driven decision-making and flexible approaches, fosters continuous improvement and adaptability to evolving needs. |

6. Discussion

In line with the research objectives to explore sustainable sport tourism practices in Buriram, this study presents a comprehensive analysis of the management practices employed in the region. The research utilizes the GSTC and McKinsey 7S Framework, which assess both the hard and soft elements of the tourism ecosystem. The findings indicate that the management practices in Buriram effectively align with both hard and soft elements, establishing a sustainable sport tourism model. The ensuing discussion is organized based on the identified hard and soft elements, encompassing strategies, structures, systems, shared values, skills, style, and staff components.

GSTC, a framework of international standard, is used as a guideline for promoting the management of sustainable tourist attractions. It is a leading global authority in setting and managing standards for sustainable travel and tourism that covers 4 dimensions. This can be applied with the sports tourism of Buriram for creating complete sustainability and reducing effects that may happen in the future. Furthermore, 7s McKinsey Framework is a working framework consisting of 7 significant components that can drive operations of sports tourism management of Buriram efficiently on models of working structure, sports management and skill development of staff.

6.1 Hard Elements: Strategy, Structure, and Systems

The foundation of sustainable sport tourism management in Buriram lies in its hard elements, which emphasize collaborative synergy, empowered communities, authentic cultural immersion, and environmental stewardship. Tripartite synergy among

government, businesses, and communities ensures a balanced approach to economic growth, resource management, and community empowerment. Multilevel engagement expands partnerships to private entities and local businesses for fostering innovation and economic participation. Cultural immersion and environmental stewardship are pursued through partnerships with cultural organizations, local vendors, and environmental groups, this creates a holistic and responsible tourism development approach.

The existing systems further enforce hard elements, focusing on environmental responsibility, community empowerment, cultural authenticity, and a collaborative approach. Commitment to environmental responsibility is evident in sustainable infrastructure, organic farming programs, and water conservation measures. Community empowerment is facilitated through skill development, economic participation, and product promotion. Cultural authenticity is preserved through language guidelines, immersive experiences, and partnerships with cultural organizations. A collaborative approach involves partnerships with environmental organizations, local communities, and cultural groups for ensuring shared responsibility and continuous improvement through data-driven practices.

6.2 Soft Elements: Shared Values, Skills, Style, and Staff

Complementing the hard elements, the soft elements emphasize shared values, skills, style, and staff considerations. Shared values guide decision-making on environmental stewardship, community empowerment, authentic cultural immersion, and balanced sustainability. The required skills consist of event management expertise, community engagement and empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental advocacy. Styles consist of cohesive collaboration, data-driven transparency, engaging experiences, and adaptable innovation. Staff considerations underline the importance of specialized teams with appropriate expertise in event management, community engagement, sustainability, and local culture. Holistic approaches are necessary, where teams prioritize not only event execution but also community relations, sustainability, and cultural preservation.

The soft elements further highlight the importance of cohesive collaboration, data-driven decision-making, engaging experiences, and adaptable innovation. A dedicated team with specialized skills in event management, community engagement, sustainability, and local culture is crucial for successful and responsible tourism. Collaboration and

adaptability within and across teams, combined with data-driven decision-making and flexible approaches, foster continuous improvement and adaptability to evolving needs.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study thoroughly explores sustainable sport tourism practices in Buriram by using the GSTC and McKinsey 7S Frameworks. The findings indicate effective alignment with both hard and soft elements for establishing a robust model. Emphasizing collaborative synergy, community empowerment, and environmental stewardship, Buriram's hard elements involve tripartite synergy and systems reinforcing these principles. Meanwhile, the soft elements underscore shared values, skills, style, and staff considerations for promoting cohesive collaboration and adaptable innovation. A dedicated team with specialized skills is crucial for successful and responsible tourism. Through ongoing activities that ignite tourism, the province fuels a cycle of economic and social development as well as consistently enriches the community. Buriram serves as a model for sustainable sport tourism to contribute to economic development, environmental preservation, and visitor satisfaction.

8. Suggestions

8.1 By investigating the long-term impacts of Buriram's model on the environment, community, and economic outcomes, the data of such impacts can be used as a guideline to make some policies for providing activities of sports tourism in Buriram.

8.2 Buriram's approach was compared with that of other sport tourism destinations to identify transferable best practices. Buriram's example can be adapted and activities of sports tourism can be organized to meet the requirements of tourists in each type of sport or can be added to other types of sports in the area of Buriram province.

8.3 Exploring the role of technology in enhancing sustainable sport tourism practices can promote modern sports tourism for competition organizers, participants and spectators.

8.4 The government sector can utilize the study results as fundamental data for making policies on management of competition areas in Buriram Province. It should conform with each sport type and sustainability.

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