

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH SPORT CAMPS FOR SUSTAINABLE (TOURISM) DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. *When discussing tourism nowadays, one word should be added as a supplement - 'development'. What seems to be even more important is the term 'sustainability'. In the sense of sport tourism and sport development, we could consider sport camps and their role in sustainable (tourism) development. The aim of this paper is to point out the importance of establishing sport camps in the sense of sustainable (tourism) development and to educate all participants (children and young people at first) on how to act in the most responsible way. There is not much research related to sport camps and their role in sustainable (tourism) development – generally speaking they are connected with younger generations and the school age, and the idea is to establish sport camps for those who are young enough and want to learn how to behave in a responsible way through sport, games, etc. Sport tourism should fill the gap between development and responsibility; on the other hand, sustainability and responsible behaviour of all participants should be an imperative. Sport camps could be good basis for a better understanding of sustainable (tourism) development. The aim of this study is to provide a review on the connection between youth sport camps and sustainability through education of all the participants.*

Key words: *Sport camps, Sport tourism, Sustainability, Development.*

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a contemporary phenomenon and important segment of human life in the 21st century (Golubović et al., 2017). Nature protection should be an imperative in the tourist industry in the sense of the protection of natural areas, and natural and cultural heritage for future generations. In an effort to move towards sustainability, environmental education receives a great deal of attention. The idea that human interaction with the rest of the planet can become more sustainable in particular offers hope to many people (Santos et al., 2018). And in that sense tourism and specific sport tourism could assist in education with the goal of creating responsible tourists. Sport is an industry with a significant role in tourism growth (Higham, 2005). Sports tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organization (2010) as specific travel outside the customer's usual environment for either passive or active involvement in sport where sport is the prime motivational reason for travel. Sport tourism could be also defined as a type of tourism activity based on sports, which uses sports as a vehicle for providing tourists with recreational and cultural experiences (Kurtzman, 2005). One of the definitions states that it is sport-based travel away from one's place of residence for a limited time, where sport is characterized by a unique set of rules, and competition related to physical prowess and play (Hinch et al., 2011). Accordingly, one of the key challenges is to ensure that sport tourism development is sustainable (Hinch et al., 2017), and it is of the utmost importance to control sport camps and behave responsibly in educating children and young people about the importance of sustainable development. Sport is an integral part of all culture and, while often viewed as a separate activity, it is inextricably linked to tourism (Klaus et al., 2011). The catch is to involve all the participants in sustainable (tourism) development.

It has been suggested that greater attention should be paid to environmentally innovative forms of tourism which foster both environmental and social responsibility (Pásková, 2012). Sport tourism and sport camps could be important players in that type of tourism: all participants should improve their knowledge of nature protection and help the camps in terms of social responsibility and the working process. Sport camps sometimes take place in protected areas which could be open-air museums - so all the participants should learn how to "live in a museum - what they could touch, how they could use some goods or artefacts, etc." Sport has a chance to promote positive youth development (PYD) and that is recognized by researchers and health professionals (Super et al., 2021). The main idea of sport programs aimed at facilitating PYD is that young people acquire skills and competences while participating in sport that, when transferred to other life domains, can have a positive effect on the life prospects of young people, for example at school or in the community (Damon, 2004). Sustainable entrepreneurship and sports entrepreneurship should be a way to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda (Rosa, 2017), which is an international plan that pursues overall sustainable development. The Agenda also states that sport has proven to be a cost-effective and flexible tool for promoting peace and development objectives (<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/role-sport-achieving-sustainable-development-goals>). In that sense tourism has to capture all these positive vibes from children and young people and use them to promote sustainable (tourism) development. Entrepreneurship and sustainability are two closely linked concepts (Santini, 2021) and sport camps could play an important role in raising awareness about how important sustainability is: children and young people could do this through sport, games, and relaxation or leisure.

Camping can be considered a special-interest form of tourism (Brooker et al., 2013). Camp can be defined as an organized set of activities led by trained leaders with intentional goals, often held in a unique learning environment like the outdoors (Henderson et al., 2007). It would be good if all the participants had a brochure and a brief letter on how to behave during their time outdoors, in nature and/or a protected area. A lot of researchers defined camp as a setting for social emotional learning and character development (e.g. Thurber et al., 2007; Richmond et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2019). It is very important to understand that supplemental tourism activities in the context of sport tourism will play an important role not only in advancing sport tourism research, but also in maximising tourism benefits and opportunities, and developing sustainable sport tourism (Ito et al., 2020). This sustainable sport tourism will play a crucial role in achieving the goal of creating responsible tourists, and the right time to start is primary school. According to the American Camp Association (<https://www.acacamps.org/article/camping-magazine/putting-sustainability-practice-simple-strategies-implement-camp>) next to national, state, and municipal parks, camps manage some of our most important natural resources. Camp settings not only introduce children to natural resources, build their skills to find recreation in those resources, but can also act as a model for sustainable practices.

According to Richmond et al. (2019), research on camp-related outcomes has a long history that dates back to studies in the early 20th century that looked at character development (Henderson et al., 2007), to more recent studies on the short-term impacts of camp participation (approximately a year or less following participation, Bialeschki et al., 2007) and the lasting impacts of camp within a single camp community (Whittington et al., 2018). Indeed, there is a rich literature base on camp outcomes, with studies focusing on specific outcomes such as a sense of community and belonging (e.g., Godwin et al., 2011; Yuen et al., 2005), and on the unique outcomes of camps working with children with chronic illnesses or disabilities (e.g., Gillard et al., 2011; Knapp et al., 2015). However, there have been no studies that directly link sport camps and all the participants to tourist sustainability. Teaching young people to be responsible, to appreciate nature, and to increase their knowledge of natural (and cultural) heritage should be a requirement in the twenty-first century. “What is your role and how could you help sustainable (tourism) development?” – this should be the first and last question in the education process. Sustainable tourism also requires tourists who have satisfying experiences (Hinch et al., 2017). And satisfying experience could be connected with the destination – in the sense of being satisfied with nature and the natural and cultural heritage.

Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development (Lemke, 2016) and sport tournaments and special events have been acknowledged as contributors to feelings of national identity, social cohesion, and communal pride (Schulenkorf, 2012) – and in that sense natural heritage could also be promoted as a special place for tournaments and all activities that could help sustainable (tourism) development of (protected) areas. In the psychology of sport, motivation is emphasized as a key factor in sporting success (Gould et al., 2002). There is enough space for making success more interesting if some kind of sustainability challenge is added: for young people and children this could always be done through games. Playing games is an appropriate activity in the context of learning for sustainable development, and especially in the context of experiential learning (Dieleman et al., 2006) which is so important for children. As the Old Roman saying goes: *Panem et circenses* – so it should be enough to devise a good plan for those who will attend the camps – days for sport activities and days of learning about sustainable

development, which would alternate. In the end, a quiz or challenge with some awards could be added. For example, according to the American Camp Association, the challenge is not to have any waste by the end of camp. Other challenges could be related to camp trash output, energy use, water use, and fuel. In the on-line brochure of the American Camp Association, some steps which include taking baseline measurements of things such as leftover food, and then comparing those baselines to acts of sustainability, etc. are especially emphasized (<https://www.acacamps.org/article/camping-magazine/putting-sustainability-practice-simple-strategies-implement-camp>). For different groups, different challenges and games should be organized in order to achieve sustainable goals.

Learning and development for young people occur across a wide range and diversity of settings (Wilson et al, 2019) and learning *in situ* about sustainability goals is always a good idea. As a form of teaching and learning the activity material, games are one of the main components in each physical education program; therefore, physical education teachers must possess comprehensive knowledge about games (Batubara, 2020). Games in sense of sustainability should be developed by experts in several fields: psychology, gaming, natural sciences, and sustainability. The result should be more than useful for all the participants. Learning is an individual interaction with the environment. Sustainability covers all the elements that constitute a complete tourism experience (Zolfani et al., 2015). According to Sharpley (2000) 'sustainable tourism development' concerns economic, social, and environmental tourism development aimed at the continuous improvement of tourists' experience (Zolfani et al., 2015) and one of the goal should be understanding of sustainability values which could be defined as "strategies and practices that contribute to a more sustainable world while simultaneously driving shareholder value" (Hart et al., 2003). It is very important to involve an industry in sustainable development – at first to involve tourism as one of its most important parts. Also, tourism should be a leader in promoting sustainable development because the travel and tourism industries are among the largest industries in the world (Zolfani, 2015).

In recent years, the literature connected with protected areas, nature conservation, and sustainable development has increased. On the one hand, establishing protected areas in the form of a park or reserve is generally viewed as an effective way of preserving rural landscapes, biodiversity, and natural resources (e.g., Molina Murillo et al., 2016; Mukul et al., 2017). On the other hand, tourism induced through protected areas, designations in and around protected areas, is regarded as an effective way to promote the development of local communities, while the economic gains induced through tourism activity can partly be back-transferred to furthering, even more, the set conservation goals (Bello et al., 2016). Numerous articles have been written about the considerable importance of people dealing with nature – how to prepare nature for being used by some people and how to prepare others who are users. For both of them it is necessary to prepare a short course about sustainable (tourism) development goals. In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/envision2030.html>) and a few of them could be connected with this topic: Quality education (because well educated people should be also responsible), Sustainable cities and communities (connected again with education), Responsible Consumption and Production (a possible connection with education / but not necessarily), and Partnerships to achieve the Goal (*condition sin qua non*). Bocken et al. (2015) said that for thinking about sustainability, a more holistic view of value is needed, one that integrates social and environmental goals, to ensure balancing or ideally alignment of

all stakeholder interests to deliver “sustainable value” creation. Sport and sport tourism should be responsible nature consumers and through sport promote the idea of achieving all sustainable goals.

Sustainable development is defined as economic development that does not use up too much of the Earth’s natural resources or cause environmental pollution according to the Dictionary of Leisure, Travel and Tourism (McAdam et al., 2005). This phenomenon is envisioned as a process, a way towards sustainability, which represents the goal of sustainable development (Glibo et al., 2022). The travel and tourism industries are among the largest industries in the world. The degrading effects of tourism have become a big concern and need to be addressed quickly (Zolfani et al., 2015); therefore, sustainable (tourism) development should be an imperative. It has been defined as tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities (UNEP, UNWTO, 2005). According to “Our Common Future” (1987), humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. And needs seem to be essential in the service industry, and tourism as its main sector. Sports tourism has shown to have a considerable economic impact, not only via the staging of major sporting events, but also through the creation of sports resorts and sports attractions (Jafari, 2000). As a result, the number of participants and their impact on the environment, and natural and cultural heritage on the location should be limited.

This paper provides insight into the connection between sport camps and sustainability. It attempts to provide good recommendations for future work and for those who want establish sport camps, in the sense of teaching participants about environmental and social responsibility and sustainable development. In terms of sustainability, it is necessary to teach all the participants about tourism values / culture / tradition and explain to them the importance of the entire natural and cultural heritage.

GOOD PRACTICE RELATED TO SPORT CAMPS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The most clear example of a good practice is related to big sports events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the World Football Cup, Tennis Cups etc. But such big sport events, like the Olympic Games or the World Cup, are not or not only connected with sustainable development, or to be precise they do not refer to sustainability - it should be something that goes without saying (or big promotions). The United Nations – UN Chronicles issued a guide called “The Role of Sport in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals”. Lemke (2016) talked about the various importance of sport and one is that sport has proven to be a cost-effective and flexible tool for promoting peace and development objectives. Furthermore, Lemke (2016) stated that sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognize the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect, as well as the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities, as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives. Additionally, there are several sport camps worldwide (those connected with famous football teams) that earn (a lot of) money from sport activities and sport in general, and a percentage of it should be spent on sustainable development. Also, it should be obligatory for everyone who uses natural

resources to make some money through sport tourism and sport / camp activities. Take for example the Green Camps in the United States of America (greencamps.org) with the title “Now More than Ever, Local Action Counts”. They are eco leaders in camping in America and “help camps of all kinds, including summer camps and recreational vehicle parks, to reduce their environmental impact and inspire the next generation of eco-leaders” (greencamps.org). Another good practice came from Utah University in the USA - “Sustainable You! Summer Camp” and it is for children aged 9-12, but could be adapted for all ages (<https://ucanr.edu/sites/Ventura4-Hsustainabilityprogra/files/195011.pdf>). In the cover letter, according to the available info on the site mentioned above, it is stated that the “Sustainable You! Summer Camp was designed to help youth understand what it means to be sustainable through fun, interactive activities based around the five major areas of sustainability: land, air, food, energy, and water”.

In Serbia there are a lot of professional and amateur sport camps that take place in the natural environment. Some of them are connected with football, basketball etc. (several camps take place on the Zlatibor and Kopaonik mountains), and often the natural environment is used by them – they organize camps like a working sport holiday: children enjoy the nature and have sport exercises in the natural environment: so it is necessary to put in their daily agenda of learning just how important sustainable development is.

One of the great example of good practice took place in South Serbia in September 2022 - it was the 3rd Youth Change camp for young people from south and south-east Serbia as a part of the project “Perspectives for young people in rural areas in Serbia” financed by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and supported by the Serbian Ministry of Sport. Some of the topics were nature protection, sport, recreation, agriculture and the role of young people in all these fields (<https://www.mos.gov.rs/vest/ministar-udovicic-novi-projekat-je-od-visestruke-koristi-za-mlade-u-ruralnim-sredinama?lang=lat>; <https://jugpress.com/odrzan-treci-letnji-kamp-za-mlade/>).

The spirit of friendship is vital to understanding that responsible development is about people everywhere. Respect applies equally to people as well as the environment and its natural systems. Friendship and respect are inexorably intertwined with the promotion of peace since it is a pre-requisite for sustainable development in any community (Sustainability through sport: Implementing the Olympic Movement’s Agenda 21, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to point out the importance of connecting sport, sport tourism, and sustainable (tourism) development. People play an important part in achieving long-term goals in all activities and all goals should be stated before establishing camps or sporting events: goals may vary in different natural or protected areas. Also, the way to achieve sustainability goals could differ. A lot of strategies can be incorporated into the camp setting, but this depends on the camp type and the budget as well - more money gives more opportunities. It is important to establish a national network of camps - like those in North America - and to share knowledge and ideas in order to make all camps sustainable. The main direction must be sustainable production in order to eliminate a negative impact on the environment, community, and economy because economy benefits are very important for all industries. It is not easy to involve the local community in sport camps but it is not impossible either: local products could

be used in camps, the local community could organize tours around the camp, local people could be presenters of sustainable development along with the professionals, and they could explain to all the participants why some area or some product or some artefact is important for the local community. And, as previously mentioned, one of the sustainable goals is connected with partnerships with the aim of achieving that goal - so there are no limits in the sense of participation on the both sides – those who create camps and those who enjoy their time there. The main goal should be to establish sustainable camps and educate all the participants about how important responsibility is.

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VAŽNOST OMLADINSKIH SPORTSKIH KAMPOVA U ODRŽIVOM (TURISTIČKOM) RAZVOJU

Kada se danas govori o turizmu jedna reč se podrazumeva – razvoj. Ono što se čini još bitnijim jeste “održivost”. Kada se govori o sportskom turizmu i sportskom razvoju treba misliti o sportskim kampovima i njihovoj ulozi u održivom (turističkom) razvoju. Cilj ovog rada je da ukaže na važnost uspostavljanja sportskih kampova u smislu održivog (turističkog) razvoja te edukacije svih učesnika (pre svega dece i omladine) kako da se ponašaju i delaju u skladu sa principima održivosti. Ne postoji puno radova u vezi sa sportskim kampovima i njihovom ulogom u održivom (turističkom) razvoju – radovi i

istraživanja su povezana sa mladim generacijama i školarcima a ideja je da se osnuju sportski kampovi za one koji su dovoljno mladi i koji žele da kroz igru i sport uče kako da se ponašaju odgovorno. Sportski turizam trebalo bi da popuni prazninu između razvoja i održivosti a sa druge strane održivost i odgovorno ponašanje trebalo bi da budu imperativ za sve učesnike. Sportski kampovi mogu biti dobre baze za bolje razumevanje održivog (turističkog) razvoja. Cilj ovog rada je da da pregled veza između omladinskih sportskih kampova i održivosti kroz edukaciju svih učesnika.

Ključne reči: *sportski kampovi, sportski turizam, održivost, razvoj.*